

ESD.801 Leadership Development Assignment 2B: Self Assessment

An important learning objective of this leadership seminar is to 'Assess behavioral tendencies in a variety of professional and social environments.' We will assess behavioral tendencies from both (1) a feedback perspective, and (2) a self-reflection perspective.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

This assignment has two parts. Assignment 2A was about your reflections and the feedback you received on the Thompson Island Outward Bound experience, (Sep 19-20, 2014). Assignment 2B is about the structured DiSC assessment exercise taken in class on Friday October 3, 2014.

Assignment 2B is due on Course site on Friday October 10 at 10:00 am – please see the assignment prompt below.

Assignment 2B

You may choose to structure your response in the following way, but you can also choose an alternative structure if you can make it compelling.

- **Prepare a profile** of your discussion group as a whole based on the DiSC results for each individual in the group.
 - The dimensions you can use are individual DiSC emphasis categories like 'Dominance' or 'Conscientiousness', intensity descriptors, or classical patterns.
- **Arrange a meeting** with ONE classmate who is in a DIFFERENT discussion group than yours. Engage in "**Mindful Conversation**" (guidelines below in the boxed paragraphs, excerpted from Tan, *Search Inside Yourself*). Spend 6 minutes speaking, 8 minutes 'looping,' then trade roles and repeat for 6 + 8 minutes. Discuss (and listen to) the following:
 - Each partner's Discussion Group Profile based on DiSC
 - Each partner's concept of an optimal or desired Discussion Group based on DiSC
 - Each partner's ideas on how to accommodate or compensate for the discrepancy, given that members of Discussion Groups have to collaborate closely in the coming weeks
- Recall the addressee of your memo in Assignment 2A. **You will continue to address your response in the form of a letter memo to this individual in 2B.** Synthesize for this individual your results from the DiSC assessment, how and why you find them useful (or not) and your conclusions for making Discussion Groups effective in light of the DiSC profile for the group.

Submit your response in the form of a brief letter memo (no more than two pages) addressed to your role model with appropriate font, spacing, margins and formatting. You may think of this as the executive summary of a report or extended abstract of a paper. Include any graphics, charts and references you believe will make your arguments more insightful or credible.

Mindful Listening

Courtesy of Chade-Meng Tan. Used with permission.

Excerpted from Chade-Meng Tan, Search Inside Yourself the (2012)

Instructions for the speaker: This will be a monologue. You get to speak uninterrupted for 3 minutes. If you run out of things to say, that is fine; you can just sit in silence and whenever you have something to say, you may continue speaking again. The entire 3 minutes belong to you, you can use the time in whatever ways you want, and know that whenever you are ready to speak, there is a person ready to listen to you.

Instructions for the listener: Your job is to listen. When you listen, give your full attention to the speaker. You may not ask questions during these 3 minutes. You may acknowledge with facial expressions, by nodding your head, or by saying, "I see," or "I understand." You may not speak except to acknowledge. Try not to over-acknowledge, or you might end up leading the speaker. And if the speaker runs out of things to say, give her the space for silence, and then be available to listen when she speaks again.

Mindful Conversation

We can extend mindful listening into the extremely useful practice of **mindful conversation**. This practice came to us from our friends in the legal community and is especially useful in mediation. Specifically, master mediator Gary Friedman taught it to Zen master Norman Fischer, who in turn taught it to us at Google.

There are three key components to mindful conversation. The first and most obvious one is **mindful listening**, which we have already practiced. The second is something Gary called "**looping**," short for "closing the loop of communication." Looping is simple. Let's say there are two people involved in this conversation—Allen and Becky—and it is Allen's turn to speak. Allen speaks for a while, and after he is done speaking, Becky (the listener) loops back by saying what she thought she heard Allen say. After that, Allen gives feedback on what he

thought was missing or misrepresented in Becky's characterization of his original monologue. And they go back and forth until Allen (the original speaker) feels satisfied that he is correctly understood by Becky (the original listener). Looping is a collaborative project in which both people work together to help Becky (the listener) fully understand Allen (the speaker).

The third key component to mindful conversation is something Gary called "**dipping**," or checking in with ourselves. The main reason we do not listen to others is that we get distracted by our own feelings and internal chatter, often in reaction to what the other person said. The best way to respond to these internal distractions is to notice and acknowledge them. Know that they are there, try not to judge them, and let them go if they are willing to go. If feelings or other internal distracters decide to stay around, let them be and just be aware of how they may affect your listening. You can think of dipping as self-directed mindfulness during listening.

Dipping is also useful for the speaker. As the speaker speaks, it is useful for her to dip and see what feelings arise as she is speaking. If she likes, she may talk about them, or if she prefers, simply acknowledge them, try not to judge them, and let them go if they are willing to go.

Our class participants often ask how we can give our full attention to somebody speaking and dip at the same time. The analogy we give is peripheral vision. When we are looking at something, we have central vision and peripheral vision. We can see the chosen object clearly (with central vision), and at the same time, we have a visual sense of what is around it (using peripheral vision). Similarly, we can think of our attention as having a central component and a peripheral component, so we can give our central attention to the other person for listening and still maintain a peripheral attention to ourselves for dipping.

You can practice mindful conversation either formally or informally. The formal practice involves creating an artificial environment for each person to practice the three techniques of listening, looping, and dipping. The informal practice is simply to use those techniques in everyday conversation.

Formal Practice of Mindful Conversation

The three parts to this skill are listening, looping, and dipping. Listening means giving the gift of attention to the speaker. Looping means closing the loop of communication by demonstrating that you have really heard what the person is saying. Do not try to remember everything: if you really listen, you will hear. Dipping means checking in with yourself, knowing how you are feeling about what you are hearing. Part of the practice is becoming able to give full attention to the speaker, with full awareness of your own feelings.

Part I: Monologue

Person A speaks in monologue for 4 minutes. When you are speaking, maintain some mindfulness on your body (this is the dipping part). The entire 4 minutes belong to you, so if you run out of things to say, you can both sit in silence, and when you have something else to say later, you may just say it.

Person B listens. Your job is to give your full attention to the speaker as a gift, while at the same time maintaining some mindfulness on your body (this is again the dipping part). You are giving him the gift of your attention, without losing awareness of your body. You may acknowledge, but do not over-acknowledge. You may not speak except to acknowledge.

Part II: Resolution

After that, B repeats back to A what she thinks she heard. B may start by saying, "What I heard you say was..." Immediately after, A gives feedback by telling B what he feels B got right or wrong (for example, what she missed, what she misrepresented, etc). Go back and forth until A is satisfied that he is completely understood by B. Do this for as long as it takes, or until 6 minutes are up. (This is the looping part).

Then we switch places, so B gets to be the speaker and A the listener.

After the exercise, spend 4 minutes in meta-conversation discussing the experience.

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

ESD.801 Leadership Development
Fall 2014

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.