

Preparation for Individual Exercises

During the Thinking Tactics workshop, there are several individual exercises. In these, you will test out the techniques on a topic of your own choosing. The exercises will be easier if you have some possible topics in mind before class. The best time to think of topics is a day or two beforehand.

1: A Topic for Thinking

For the exercise in unit 1, you need a question of modest difficulty, such as:

- How could I get more free time to do _____?
- What am I going to do about the _____ problem?
- I keep putting off _____. Do I need to do it? And if so, what's the plan to get it done?
- What are my priorities for _____?

Choose a question with no obvious answer. Make sure it is a question you care about answering—it should be worth at least five minutes of your time.

(It is fine to keep this topic private. During discussion, you can describe the process without discussing the actual issue.)

2: A Floundering Task

In unit 3 we will discuss floundering. Floundering means exerting effort, without making reasonable progress toward your goal. Since thinking is your guide to action, floundering is always an opportunity to do some hard thinking about how to guide yourself better.

For the exercise in unit 3, think of a task on which you are making very little progress. It could be a long-term goal or a current project that's bogged down, e.g.:

- A New Year's Resolution that you aren't keeping
- An amorphous project that you're avoiding
- A task that is taking much longer than you think it should

You will have an opportunity to think about how to get this project moving forward.

(Again, it is fine to keep this topic private. During discussion, you can describe the process without discussing actual issue.)

3. A Decision You Need to Make

In unit 5, you will have an opportunity to try out a decision process that helps you untangle the positives and negatives involved in a decision.

For the exercise in unit 5, think of a decision you need to make, which seems hard, although you think you have enough information. It could be a large decision or a small one, as long as it is one you think you “should” be able to make, and you could easily list 2-3 (or more) options. I also suggest you choose a topic that is not intensely emotional, since you may not have the time and space to deal with emotions around it during class.

Some suggestions:

- A decision about how to tackle a project, where you see more than one option with no clear best option.
- A decision about when to do a particular task that needs to be done soon, but it hasn't been scheduled, and you're not sure when to do it.
- A decision where all the choices are “bad.”
- A decision about what to do first thing tomorrow (or Monday) morning (if you don't already know).

You will have an opportunity to work through this decision in class.

(Again, it is fine to keep this topic private. During discussion, you can describe the process without discussing actual issue.)

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If you have any trouble coming up with topics, feel free to email me before the class, or chat with me during the breaks. The tactics from class will help with many work and personal issues, so I'm sure we can find one that will be suitable for the in-class exercises.