

Thought Partner, Transformation & Peace of Mind



A number of things come to mind about insight. First, I find that I now have a much greater interest and willingness to watch my thoughts and look for new thought rather than thinking through everything. I was trained as an engineer, so my normal mode of addressing issues has been to think them through to come up with a logical approach. I tend to think everything through, even small things, to find the best way. While this approach has always worked for me (although my wife and others would say that I often over-think things), I now also see the value of not thinking and allowing new thoughts to enter my consciousness.

One of the things I do is to serve as a Thinking Partner for CEOs, Executive Directors and other leaders. I meet with them, typically once a month, to give them the opportunity to process their own thinking and to explore solutions to their problems/issues/concerns. While I often know some of the issues my client may want to discuss because of prior conversations, basically, I walk into a situation with no clue about what is *now* on the mind of the person I'm dealing with. My approach to discussing the issues is to just be present, not think and instead look for what comes up. Invariably, some new thought or question emerges which ultimately ends up fostering a new, better approach to addressing the issue. In almost all cases, these new approaches would have been outside of the conclusions I would have formed if I had just used my normal think-it-through process, and they are better. I don't know where it comes from or why, because it's not something rehearsed in advance.

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For example, one of my clients manages an organization that provides training programs. In one particular meeting, my client raised a new concern that too many of the people who attended the training programs were not ready for the training. It seemed that, in some cases, their organizations were sending them, and they did not fully understand what the training was for, why they were taking it and what was expected of them. As a result, valuable time was taken up in the training program getting them ready and interested in going further. As we were exploring possible solutions together, I suddenly had an insight that appeared unrelated—how were the trainers getting *themselves* ready to lead each training? How were they getting focused? How were they getting themselves present so that they could sense whether the participants were following what was being taught or, instead, getting bored or disinterested? This new thought led to further conversations and explorations and a much more comprehensive approach to addressing the issue.

I am thrilled at the value my clients have gotten as a result of insights. In almost every case, we come out with a significant new thought they didn't have before that addresses their issues. Lately, I have been noticing that I am coming up with so many insights or questions based on insights and enjoying the process so much that I have not been allowing enough time for my clients to have most of the insights. I think, but don't know for sure, that the process would produce even greater value if my clients had more of their own insights so, going forward, I want to be more diligent in bringing forth their insights to see if there is an additional impact.

I now have an expectation that insights will emerge all the time. As an example, I was talking with one client about insight and we were sharing our experiences about it. So I looked for an insight to get a better understanding, and I had an insight about insight.



The new clarity I got was to be looking for whether there is a sense of “I” present when speaking. When the thoughts are coming from me, wisdom is not present and vice versa. What I saw more clearly than ever before is that when I am present, or better said “when there is just presence”, and a wise thought appears, it is in a moment before a sense of “I (in this case Steve)” comes up. It is the difference between seeing a flower and experiencing beauty and perhaps even saying “How beautiful.” And “Steve” then saying “Wow, that flower was beautiful” or “Wow, this is great” or “Wow, I’m in such a great space right now” or even “Wow, I am present.” In the later, there is an awareness that “I, Steve” am seeing, experiencing or speaking.

I’m not sure about this, but I think it’s true — my negative moods are shorter because I’m more aware of them and their affect on me. I used to be pretty unconscious of my moods. I would just ignore them and bull my way through them. I assumed that the quality of my thinking and my actions was unaffected by my mood. I am now much more aware that the quality is greatly affected by my mood. An interesting example, which I still struggle with, is my tennis. When I hit a few poor shots, I tend to get down on myself. I am now noticing that when I get down on myself, I play even worse. I get more in my head and less relaxed. As a consequence, my strokes don’t flow, I tighten up so my shots are short and not very accurate. It clearly affects the quality of my play.

I also find that, because I am more aware of my moods, when in a bad mood, I am sometimes able to look for a good feeling which results in moments of experiencing a good mood, although sometimes the bad mood comes back anyway.

One big change is that I think I understand transformation in a way I never understood it before, although I’ve been interested in it for a long time. Now, I think I can explain it to people (and how it’s different from *change*) so they can say, “Oh, now I understand what you mean.” I don’t know if this necessarily helps anybody, but, at least, I can express it in a much more down-to-earth way, one that’s less philosophical, less conceptual, and is just in very tangible terms. It’s nice to take something I haven’t been able to really describe well with words and make it clear.

In all the other transformation models, someone was doing something to you, the result of which is you become transformed. The beauty of the insight ‘frame’ is that *you* become aware of what transformation is and can “do it” to yourself, which means you have the ability to “do it” to yourself forever after, instead of losing it and not knowing how to get it back.

The real genius about framing this around “insight” is that it changes what was psychological, conceptual or philosophical into something everybody can grasp. All people have to do is become aware of what it was like when they had an insight, instead of thinking they need to learn something brand-new. To me, that was the big link. Every one of us has the capacity for insight and has experienced it many times. Now, we just need to reach the level of “conscious competence.”

One of the biggest changes that has occurred for me out of understanding what transformation is and out of being able to just be, to be present, is that I am no longer a seeker-- searching for presence, searching for ‘enlightenment’, searching for transformation, searching for spiritual growth. I have found what I was looking for and I now see that it has always been right in front of me, just like all of the wise sages have always said. Great peace has come over me as a result.

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