



The Practice of Self –Awareness

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In the development of our leadership we acquire tools that serve us during a specific time in our career and others that meet the test of time. I have a dozen tools that I have learned over the course of my 30-year career and still use today. Here is one of them.

I became acquainted with a tool 20 years ago that has served me both with groups I'm facilitating or leading as well as with my own internal processing. You've probably seen it in some form or fashion. It's simple. It consists of only four questions we can ask ourselves in any given situation to help understand how we need to best address the situation at hand. The situation might call for a decision, an opinion, a charge, an action, or just a response.

Four questions: What? Gut? So What? Now What?

These four questions need to be asked and answered in the order they are presented. They are constructed to mirror how we take in information. **The What:** We take life in with our senses—we see something, we hear something, we taste something, and/or we touch something. **The Gut:** We then have some response to that data—we like it or don't like it, and/or it reminds us of something in our past. **The So What:** We then make meaning out of that response—the significance or value. We think about options or possibilities. **The Now What:** We do something with all of that—we form an opinion, decide on our course of action, and do something.

Try it! Think of a situation you were involved in recently.

1. **The What:** What happened? What did you notice? What did you hear?
2. **The Gut:** What was positive about what happened? What was negative? How do you feel about the situation?
3. **The So What:** What did that situation mean to you? How might you respond? What are your options? How might each option impact your work? How might each option impact others? What decision seems to be the best given this situation?
4. **Now What:** What will you do? How will you put it to action? How will you know you are successful?

You can use this tool with others by asking individuals or groups these questions. You can also use it yourself when you are in a situation where you need to process quickly.

Try it a couple of times and let me know how it works!