

CHAPTER 2

Find Out about Yourself

If you have only a few minutes to skim over this chapter, this is what you should focus on:

- The Enneagram
- The personal baggage checklist

Personal Baggage

We will always be running with a few cylinders misfiring unless we fully understand our behavior patterns and those of the people around us. Skip the section on personal baggage and I promise you that you will never reach your potential. You will never be able to successfully implement large change as this requires advanced interpersonal skills.

We inherit *baggage* from our ancestry, along with many great things. This baggage is added to by our parents, with either too much smothering, too little attention, too much criticism, too little quality time (need I go on?). One course I attended, called “Turning Point,” stated that we all have baggage; our role in life is to lighten the load so that it is not crippling when we decide to start “management summiting.”

My point is, you owe it to your colleagues, staff, suppliers, contractors, family, partner, and offspring to do something about your personal baggage.

We have a choice: to grow and to challenge those behavior traits that will create havoc in the workplace, or to ignore them and seek new jobs like we do new partners, hooked on the romance period and leaving when the going gets tough. To make a major contribution, you will need to achieve through the contribution of others. This means acquiring a suite of behavioral skills.

Let us be clear: To be a leader today you do not have to have handled all your personal baggage. There are plenty of leaders “crippled” with the

weight of their personal baggage who are causing havoc within every organization that they work for. Yet there are those *Iconic leaders* who are a pleasure to work with that demonstrate the benefit of minimizing one's own personal baggage.

Courses to Attend

As I said before, you owe it to your colleagues, staff, suppliers, contractors, family, partner, offspring, and golfing partners to do something about it. Here are six courses that everybody needs to do as a basic minimum.

Course 1: The Enneagram

"The enneagram is a profound, elegant, and compassionate approach to people and their relationships. It describes nine basic world-views and nine different ways of doing business in the world. Each of the nine personality types is something of a pathway through life, with likely obstacles and pitfalls along the way."¹

Your principle motivation should be a better understanding of how you work and what will benefit your family, friends, and colleagues. A by-product will be that you will have an understanding of the likely worldview/personality type of your boss, and thus be in a better position to make the relationship work. (See www.enneagraminstitute.com/ennagram.asp.)

Course 2: Hermann's Thinking Preferences

This entertaining workshop looks at the way people think. It is broken into four types. It is important to understand the thinking preference of your boss, colleagues, and staff reporting to you so you can communicate effectively with them. Attend a local course as soon as you can or visit www.hbdi.com/

Course 3: Myers-Briggs Profiling

This helps you understand how you perceive the world and make decisions. It is particularly useful to use it as a team exercise so members can better understand each other. Even though there are only 16 different profiles you will be surprised how accurate the profiling is for you.

Visit www.myersbriggs.org and read *Quick Guide to the 16 Personality Types in Organizations: Understanding Personality Differences in the Workplace*.²

Course 4: Neuro-Linguistic Programming

The importance of Neuro-Linguistic Programming has been discussed in Chapter 1. Go on the Web and search “NLP+course +New York”(your location) to find a local course.

Course 5: Transactional Analysis

Transactional analysis says that each of us is made up of three alter egos parent, adult, child. When we communicate, as a manager to our staff, we need to understand that it will be more productive if we communicate as an “adult” rather than reverting to our parent or child egos. In addition we need to be aware when having a discussion with a staff member what ego they are using. If a staff member is emotional they are using their child ego thus it is not productive to use one’s adult ego (structured reasoning) as the staff member needs your nurturing side (parent ego) for the communication to work effectively.

I hope I have said enough to encourage you to explore more in this area. A practical explanation can be found on www.businessballs.com/transact.htm.

Attending a Transactional Analysis course will help you understand communication styles and why sometimes our communication does not work. It is particularly useful in improving relationship communication with our direct reports, our partner, and our family members.

Course 6: Intensive Life Skills Course

Life skills courses have various titles. I have attended courses called “Turning Point,” “Point of Choice,” and “Essentially Men;” there are many others, such as “Money and You.” Some of your friends and relatives will have attended a course. Go to one that is highly recommended and that has made a difference to that person. The personal development courses of longer duration have the most chance of changing your behaviors. The experts in behavioral change say that it takes up to 12 to 16 weeks of weekly exercises to change behavior. These courses help you to develop a decent toolkit to handle disappointment, anger, and loss. If you do not learn to handle these events, there will be plenty of opportunities for them to screw up your life.

I went to one course, as a skeptical accountant would, expecting to be mildly challenged. It turned out to be a vastly more challenging and rewarding experience. I soon realized the extent of my baggage. Part
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of the major load was that I had never grieved properly for the loss of my dear sister-in-law, who died of cancer before she reached 30. With the flowing of my tears I have found life more rewarding, as I now am able to express sadness and loss as any normal person would do.

Locking in a New Behavior Trait

If you ask management at a weight-loss company or at a fitness gym how long it takes for clients to lock into a new behavior, one they will continue with, they may well say “at least 16 weeks.” It is no wonder that very often training does nothing to influence behavior change. Yet behavior change is the fundamental thing that is necessary if an organization is to lift itself to another level.

To make any breakthrough you have got to realize the impact of your current behavior on the organization. The behavior change process takes so long because you need to travel along a path of enlightenment as set out in Exhibit 2.1.

Exhibit 2.2 provides some of the basic behaviors that will make a difference. How do you score?

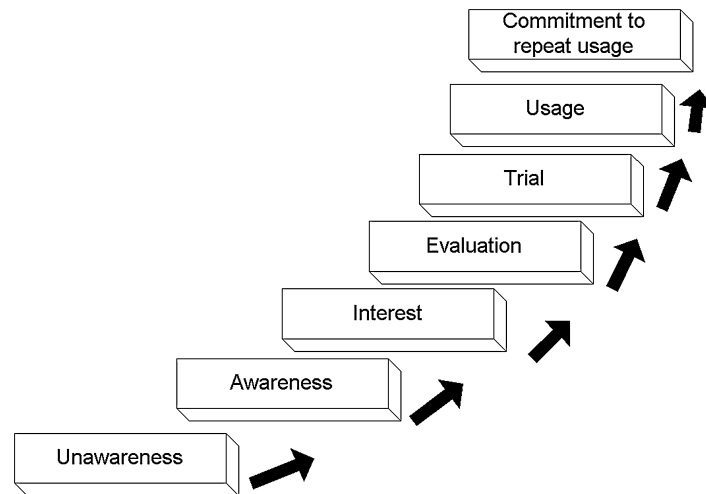


EXHIBIT 2.1 Behavior Change Process



EXHIBIT 2.2 Personal Baggage Checklist^a

Focus

- Do you allocate large parts of your time to the major goals in your life? (as per your treasure map) Yes No
- Have you determined what your goals are for the next two to three years? Yes No
- Do you treat email as you would mail and read it at an appropriate time? (you can set up filters to help manage your emails and better channel your time) Yes No
- Do you avoid being sucked into “nonurgent, not important” issues? Yes No
- Do you inoculate yourself from the diversion disease? Yes No
- Do you have a clear understanding of all the loose ends that are outstanding? Yes No
- Do you carefully check the purpose and intent of a meeting before you agree to attend? Yes No

Ability to Finish

- Do you have specific times for finishing (e.g., a finishing week or two weeks each month)? Yes No
- Do you minimize your involvement in new projects until your previous ones are finished? Yes No
- Do you occasionally work away from your office (from home or a quiet location) so that you can focus on projects uninterrupted? Yes No

Interpersonal Skills

- Are you able to make sufficient eye contact, at least 50% of the time, when a conversation is taking place? Yes No
- Are you able to demonstrate “humility” when you consider yourself an expert in the subject matter? (showing that you are open to others’ suggestions and opinions) Yes No
- Can you remain open to ideas, which initially you would like to reject out of hand? Yes No
- Do you listen to tone and context of the spoken words so as to ascertain what the person really means? (the poor choice of words commonly leads to misunderstandings) Yes No
- Do you allow others to complete their conversations? Yes No
- Are you using your mind to create more linkages from the conversation? Yes No
- Do you show interest and give back verbal and nonverbal signals that you are listening? Yes No
- Are you aware of all the nonverbal cues you are giving from your body language? Yes No

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EXHIBIT 2.2 (Continued)

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Can you be courteous with people and ruthless with time? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Can you be as patient with other people as you would wish them to be with you? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Calm in Adversity | | |
| Can you avoid taking adversity personally? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Can you look at the funny side when adversity strikes? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Can you realize that adversity is part of life and deal with it? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Can you still be courteous to people when you are on a tight deadline? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Addiction Management | | |
| Do you limit stimulants that adversely affect your behavior? (e.g., caffeine can make a substantial impact on how argumentative you might become especially if you have more than two strong coffees during the working day) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have you limited any addiction to the adrenaline rush of completion in the 11 th hour? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have you controlled the need to work harder (or longer) than anyone else on your team? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Anger Management | | |
| Do you see anger as a negative trait rather than a good release valve? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Do you handle your angry feelings in a safe way? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are you aware that you have a choice and alternatives? (there are many good behavioral change programs) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are you aware that frustration with oneself is one of the great initiators of anger? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Do you use the “time-out” technique to avoid expressing anger to your colleagues, staff, and family? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Do you view events as challenges to be overcome rather than roadblocks to your progress? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Personal Learning and Growth | | |
| Have you attended any personal development courses to overcome the defense mechanisms that you have put in place from childhood onward which may be limiting your effectiveness? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have you attended any personal development courses to challenge your negative behavior traits? (we all have them) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Do you know where you lie on the Enneagram? (a worldwide program to help individuals understand their behavioral weaknesses) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Do you know your Myers-Briggs personality type? (a worldwide program to help individuals understand their personality type) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have you attended a “Transactional Analysis” course? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Have you run a Myers-Briggs team wheel course for your team? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

EXHIBIT 2.2 (Continued)

Creating Win-Win Situations

- Do you analyze the situation from the other side? Yes No
- Can you honestly say you are focused on a mutual win-win? Yes No
- If your trade suppliers, customers, and others were contacted, do you think they would say you are fair and reasonable? Yes No

Functioning Team Member

- Are you able to curb your own desires in order to function fully as a team member? Yes No
 - Are you able to put other team members' needs alongside yours? Yes No
 - Do the administration staff willingly help you? (because you have linked well with them) Yes No
 - Do you share praise from others with the team rather than "bag it" for yourself? Yes No
- Your score of "yes" ticks.
 Your mentor scoring you, number of "yes" ticks.

Number of Ticks	My Advice to You
less than 20	Treat it as an urgent priority
20–25	Time to get serious with personal development
25–30	Still more could be done
over 30	Congratulations, you have made good progress minimizing your personal baggage (suggest you get a number of your staff to score you—there may be a difference)

Inner Disarmament

The Dalai Lama talks about inner disarmament. It is a beautiful concept, one that says we must invest time and energy to find our inner peace. It is an endless search, I know, but as you get closer to your hidden treasure, it has significant impact on all your relationships. Your colleagues, boss, partner, children, and extended family will all notice and appreciate the difference. You owe it to yourself and them.

Lack of anger management is the real relationship destroyer. The aggressor often believes that saying "I'm sorry" sets all things right, whereas the recipient can remember each incident as if it were yesterday. A number of us, myself included, suffer or have suffered from an abusive behavior pattern; we have a tendency to be sarcastic, antagonistic, and take it out on those around us—our colleagues and family. This problem needs to be dealt with before it creates havoc in the workplace and at home.

One of Sir Edmund Hillary's selection criteria was to find people who could see the funny side in a crisis. He pointed out that when he was selecting staff for his expeditions he was looking for people who were self-effacing, and could handle adversity with a smile. It is a special gift. So many of us can very easily add to the problem with more personal drama—"Why me? Why has this happened to me?" We need to accept crisis as a part of life. Graham Dingle, a mountaineer and explorer, says that life is about "95% hard work and 5% joy."³

An interesting point made by Professor Marshall Cook is that "by venting your anger, you're actually feeding it, becoming more angry for a longer time. You're also compounding the harm to your body and psyche by prolonging the physiological responses (adrenaline surge, rapid heart-beat, elevated blood pressure)."

Thus, sorting out an anger management problem is beneficial to your health, your colleagues, staff, and, of course, your family and friends.

It took a failed marriage for me to realize that I had an anger management problem. The classic trait was that when I was frustrated about my own performance, I would take it out on those close to me—my colleagues and partner. I went to an anger management course that provided a learning venue for those who expressed their anger violently and those, like myself, who expressed it verbally. After eight weeks, I figured it out. I realized that the anger was in most cases transference. In addition I realized that I had a *choice* whether to get angry or not. Now I never lose my temper. Soon after the course a flooring company laid my entire house with the wrong patterned carpet! I worked my way around the problem without ever losing my temper, to the amazement of the flooring company CEO. I created a win-win and at the same time felt very proud of my newfound skill.

Notes

1. Michael J. Goldberg, *Getting Your Boss's Number: And Many Other Ways to Use the Enneagram at Work*, HarperCollins, 1996.
2. Linda V. Berens, Sue A. Cooper, Linda K. Ernst, and Charles R. Martin, *Quick Guide to the 16 Personality Types in Organizations: Understanding Personality Differences in the Workplace*, Telos Publications, 2002.
3. *Management*, New Zealand Institute of Management, December 2002.