

## Self-Reflection Techniques: Journal Writing and Thinking Out Loud

### Journal Writing

Journal writing is one technique for self-reflection. Approached in the right way, it can be a process of **discovery** rather than mere **reporting**. Productive journal writing takes very little time and can be of great benefit. It can be a powerful tool for reflection, self-discovery, problem solving, learning, and integration. Here's how it works:

1. Think about a situation at work with which you are currently struggling or feeling unsettled. (This technique is also good for situations in your personal life.)
2. Write down a set of questions you want to reflect on concerning the situation. Put each question on a separate page, to allow lots of room to write. For starters, try these questions:
  - a. What about this situation is uncomfortable or difficult for me?
  - b. What did I learn about myself and/or the situation?
  - c. What are all of the possible steps I can think of to take, based on what I've just learned?

As you become familiar with this technique, you can vary the questions to accommodate your own needs for personal growth.

3. Decide on a time limit (for example, 3 minutes per question). If possible, set a timer so you don't have to watch the time.
4. Begin writing. Write about the first question **continuously** for the allotted time. Write whatever comes to your mind. Don't worry about grammar or punctuation. Just **do not stop writing** until the time is up.
5. Respond in the same manner, writing continuously, to each question.

Try this technique every day for a week before you decide whether this approach is a good one for you.

### Thinking Out Loud

Thinking out loud is another self-reflection technique. It is quite simple and can be done with a partner or alone, using a tape recorder. These are the ground rules:

1. The partner has only one role: to listen. He or she should not provide suggestions, advice, or insert himself or herself at all in the speaker's process.
2. Select a situation with which you are currently struggling or feeling unsettled, which you will talk about.
3. You may wish to set up a timeframe in advance (e.g., 1 minute to set the context and 4 minutes to speak).
4. Talk.
5. Afterwards, review what you said: Either discuss it with your partner or replay your tape. Many people find that having a sounding board—someone who will listen without trying to solve their problem—unleashes their creative problem-solving abilities.