



## Episode 53: One Easy Question for Self-Reflection

Welcome to In the Right Direction podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum, and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness, one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hi everyone, it's Deb. Here are my starting questions today: how do you make time in your life for self-reflection? How often do you pause and consider which leadership experiments you've tried recently and what you learned?

The process of personal and professional growth requires self-reflection. To ensure that we're growing and developing in the direction we want, we need to pause, reflect, and integrate our realizations and learnings.

On our journey of self-development, we need to regularly take time to lift up our head and see where we are and how far we've come. This allows us to then resume our life and work with clarity, intention, and direction.

Said simply, self-reflection is taking time to think about our recent thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, so that we can clarify and choose how we want to be in the world next. Self-reflection is an opportunity to sort through the data of our recent hours and days to determine where we've been putting our mental, emotional, and physical energies. We can then use this data to determine where we want to continue putting our energies next.

Self-reflection is a gift. It illuminates who we are and the type of life we're creating for ourself.

Most of my clients know the importance of self-reflection. They know that when they take time to think and reflect, it's incredibly helpful.

Yet, many of my clients find that their days and weeks go by without having taken the time to consider how their life and work is really going. Busy-ness and the business of life overrides self-reflection.

With hundreds of emails and hours of meetings each day, we often feel like we have no time to pause and think.

Or when we do have time that's not scheduled, we might take care of everyone else's needs first. We let ourselves drop to the bottom of the priority list. When that happens, our self-reflection time gets pushed to the next day or the next week or the next month.

The other thing that gets in the way of self-reflection is feeling confident about how and when to do it. What does self-reflection look like? Talking to yourself? Journaling?

With our limited time, we want to know that any effort we put toward self-reflection will be beneficial and helpful to us.

That's the goal of today's episode, I'll share an easy and powerful concept and question that can help you feel confident with your process of self-reflection. This coaching question is one you can ask yourself, to help you quickly see and understand where you've been putting your energies.

This question can help you both recognize the old patterns and habits you've been reinforcing, as well as see where you've been courageous and intentional about how you're showing up in your life.

When you have the leisure of time, it's a question to be pondered. When you have only a few moments, it will help you gather and clarify your thoughts about what you've been doing, feeling, and thinking.

Here's the one powerful question for self-reflection:

What have I been practicing?

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The word practice is a powerful one. It's both a noun and a verb. As a noun, it refers to a way of doing something, an application of an idea or belief. It's the behavioral and external manifestation of our thoughts and feelings.

Practice is also a verb. It's about exercising and performing an activity or skill to increase proficiency. It's recognizing that achieving goals takes time, repetition, and commitment.

Years ago, at a workshop, the leader said this to our group: "We are what we practice, and we're always practicing something." That statement has stuck with me.

It's true. We're always practicing something. When we step out of our comfort zone, we're practicing courage. When you ask more questions instead of jumping to conclusions, you're practicing curiosity. When I work on my podcast episodes, I'm practicing creativity.

It feels good to see that we're practicing our values and purpose.

At the same time, we all have daily practices that keep us from being our best selves.

When we let our inner critic get really loud and say hurtful things to us, we're practicing listening to our critic. We're practicing focusing on our shortcomings.

We are what we practice and we're always practicing something.

People come to coaching because they want something. They have goals that are important to them personally and professionally. And because personal growth can take time, it's sometimes hard to recognize progress.

That's when self-reflection helps. Taking time at the end of every day or every week to ask yourself this question is practicing self-reflection. Answering the question, What have I been practicing? can help you see your growth and your continued opportunities.

I often use this question in a coaching session to help clients see where their energy is going. At the beginning of a session, clients share updates and tell me what's been going on. They share what they've thought about and tried.

In other words, they tell me what they've been practicing.

They might tell me that they're proud of asking more questions, of being in an observer mindset, or of pausing so they don't feel so reactive.

After they share, I reflect their practices back to them. I might say: I hear you've been practicing asking open-ended questions. You've been practicing pausing and putting space before responding. You've been practicing different mindsets.

Then I ask them, What else are you practicing?

This question gives them a moment to collect their thoughts, think about their recent interactions and efforts, and then share their realizations. They might say, I've been practicing taking breaks. Or, I've been practicing concise communication.

As they share the practices they're proud of, I often notice them sitting up straighter. They recognize their efforts and they see themselves as someone who has been intentional. This feels good.

Learning happens when we can see and build on our successes. Reflecting on recent practices helps us see ourselves as capable, confident, and competent. And that helps us continue to grow into the leader and human being we know we can be.

Let's bring this to you.

When this podcast ends, I invite you to take a moment of self-reflection. Ask yourself, what have I been practicing?

Think about the conversations you've had, the things that have been on your mind, and the work you've done. Maybe you're practicing supporting others. Or being analytical. Or setting boundaries. I hope it feels good to recognize your practices.

Then, if you have another moment, ask yourself a follow-up question like, what do I want to practice next? More courage? More connection to nature? More curiosity?

Our life is created from our practices. Our practices define us, and our practices can evolve. For example, if you want to show up more confident in the world, it's time to practice another behavior. You could practice using a confident tone, or asking for what you want. If you want deeper relationships, there might be an opportunity to practice gratitude or seeing a situation from another person's perspective.

I invite you to think about your life as a series of practices. Taking time to reflect on your current practices will help you be clearer around which practices serve you and your growth, and which practices might be undermining how you think, feel, and act.

We are what we practice, and we're always practicing something. You get to choose what you practice today.

Thank you so much for listening and being part of my community. If you would like to reflect on the practices you want to start, stop, and continue, please reach out. Email me at [deb@debelbaum.com](mailto:deb@debelbaum.com) or go to my website [debelbaum.com](http://debelbaum.com) to schedule a consult. I look forward to it. I'm here to help you create your best self at home and at work, so that you're confident you're moving in the right direction for you.

Until next time!

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