

Your Internal Observer

How to use this card:

*Pass this card around. Each person please state your name and read a small section of the content on *Your Internal Observer*:*

Concept 8: Your Internal Observer

The part of you that notices but doesn't judge

Inside each one of us is an observer. If you ever tried meditation, you may have learned this already. It is the part of you that witnesses what you're doing while you do it or shortly after. Your internal observer is your best friend as you try to break a habit. The trick is to learn to make the observation before your internal judge takes over and charges it with uncomfortable emotions. For today, just start noticing that part of yourself that observes what you're doing while you're doing it.

Charlie's Story: A Recovering Black and White Thinker

My way of thinking is the all-or-nothing kind. It helps me feel safe and I don't want to change, because I have a history of doing bad things with gray areas. In the old days, if I thought I could do a little of this or a little of that, I'd have gone right back to square one with substance abuse and bad company.

So it made me nervous when I found out that I would advance through the dietary guidelines of Suppers at my own pace. I wanted black and white instructions, absolute clarity, and a money-back guarantee that if I followed the directions, the desire to drown my sorrows with food or drink would weaken. My Suppers friend told me that persisting with black and white thinking might be one of the reasons I'm plagued by acid reflux. I am so sick of this pain, and stress definitely makes it worse.

My friend suggested that I think of black and white thinking as an option, not a default setting. I could turn it on at the lab where I work, and tone it down in my personal life. She suggested I do a simple exercise: list diet and lifestyle changes people can make to improve their digestion, whether I was willing to make them or not. I could think of several things: eat more fruit, eat steamed vegetables instead of fried, prepare my own simple meals like soup, avoid heavy meals like pizza, stop eating at the computer, remember to slow down and taste the food, and never eat when stressed but wait until I can sit down. For every change I was to ask myself, am I willing to do it today? Do I refuse to do it? Might I be willing to do it sometime?

I tackled the "willing" list. That was easy. I was willing to eat more fruit. I was willing to eat steamed vegetables and lay off the fried stuff. Eventually I did all the ones on my "willing" list and when I was done, a few ideas from the "might" list had migrated over, like starting to cook. I still take my plate to the computer when I'm alone; I don't like feeling alone. I put the "refuse" list in a drawer for future consideration. If I never ate when stressed, I'd never eat at all. Besides, I don't want to get compulsive.

I'm also trying to make good observations about how my body feels; the pain provides clear feedback. Boy, is it clear: I might as well dig my hands in my guts and twist them around as eat pizza. Information about what I can and can't do, can and can't eat is slowly emerging as I let go of my black and white thinking and rely on my own ability to observe what's going on inside me.

Continue around the table by briefly sharing how you relate to the Suppers concept of Your Internal Observer.

Make an observation about how you feel right now. Check in with your body, your emotions, and your thoughts.

Discussion Prompts (Each person select a prompt that works for you.)

- Describe what you do or have done to improve your ability to observe your experience.
- If you identify with being a harsh judge of yourself, describe what triggers judgment.
- Share what's on your list of healthy changes that you are willing to make.

Ideas for Next Steps:

Experiments and Observations:

- Start a Suppers meal with five minutes of silent eating and just notice how it affects your experience of the meal.
- During a Suppers meal, set an intention (like chewing each mouthful 20 times, or slowing down, or putting down your fork each time you take a forkful, or remembering to taste) and just notice how it affects your experience of the meal.
- Do a thought experiment and contemplate adding a portion of brightly colored vegetables to your meal; note how you feel.
- Do a thought experiment and contemplate subtracting a favorite processed food for a week; note how you feel.

Between Meetings:

- Read how other Suppers members related to this concept.
 - For people who have trouble being authentic, read [Birdie's story](#), page 135 in the 2nd edition of Logical Miracles and on the Suppers website.
 - For people who are thinking giving up coffee may help them, read [Jim's story](#), page 140 in the 2nd edition of Logical Miracles and on the Suppers website.
- Do the Mindfulness Exercise, page 143 in the 2nd edition of Logical Miracles and on the Suppers website..
- Do the [Suppers Breakfast Challenge](#), page 152 in the 2nd edition of Logical Miracles and on the Suppers website.