

The Paradox of Leadership

Navigating the new realities

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WBECS



The new realities

1

Things are changing faster

- Leaders need to learn faster and better
- Organizations need to adapt faster

2

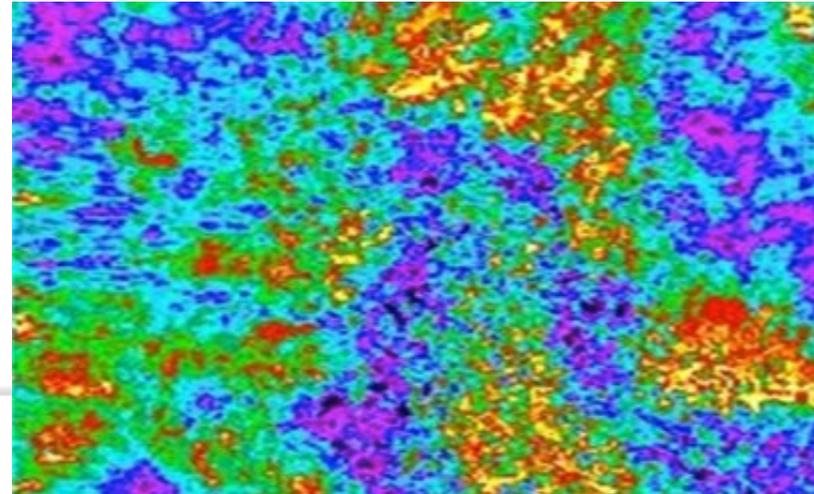
Different kinds of things are changing, in different ways

- Leaders need to learn different kinds of things faster, in different ways
- Organizations need to adapt and innovate in new ways, faster

3

Navigating and thriving in face of:

- cmplx
- dsrptv chng
- rdcl nprdctblt
- mbgt
- chs
- trtfgrthsnt





*The world is becoming
more turbulent faster than
most organizations are
becoming more resilient.*

— Gary Hamel (2012) —

Stable vs. dynamic environments

1

In **stable** environments, leaders will be most successful by optimizing performance around current needs.

2

3



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In **dynamic** VUCA environments, leaders will be most successful by *sub-optimizing* current performance and investing in robust strategies that enhance flexibility and adaptability for the future: Experiment, try new things, take risks...

3



Stable vs. dynamic environments

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In dynamic VUCA environments, leaders will be most successful by *sub-optimizing* current performance and investing in robust strategies that enhance flexibility and adaptability for the future: Experiment, try new things, take risks...

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Key dilemma: Making the tough choices

- Sub-optimizing the parts to optimize the whole
- Managing ST/LT tradeoffs: Sub-optimizing current performance to enhance future performance
- Disrupting: Routinely questioning and proactively letting go of what worked in the past





The greatest attribute a producer can have is the ability to see the whole picture. Most artists, when they record something, don't listen to the whole thing. They listen to what they're doing. When the music is played back, he'll be listening to himself. The producer must sit back, view the whole thing in perspective and make sense of it.

Paradox – A statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet may be true. A person, situation, or action having seemingly contradictory qualities or phases.

Polarity – The state of having two opposite or contradictory tendencies, opinions or aspects.

Dilemma – A problem involving a difficult choice. A difficult, persistent, or puzzling problem.



When the path is clear and easy | Leadership doesn't matter that much



Leadership¹ is most critical when direction and decisions are not clear

- VUCA – Complexity, ambiguity, uncertainty, change
- Different interests and agendas
- Disagreement, conflict
- Confusion
- Diverse needs, goals, and values
- Multiple perspectives
- When should we let go of what got us here?
- When and how do we need to disrupt ourselves?



¹ And coaching



How wonderful that we have met
with a paradox. Now we have some
hope of making progress.

— *Niels Bohr* —

Complexity Framework

Unpredictable world

Predictable world

Complex

Cause and effect relationship is unpredictable and does not repeat

No right answers; managing polarities and dilemmas

Problems and solutions evolve

Emergent practice

Complicated

Cause and effect are separated in time and space; can be researched

Open-ended problems with range of possible answers

Good practice

Longer timeframe

Chaotic

No clear cause and effect relationship

Unclear what data is useful

Novel practice: Crisis management; creative action

Shorter timeframe

Simple

Cause and effect relationship is repeatable, predictable

There are correct answers

Best practices

Puzzles, problems, mysteries

Puzzle	Has a correct answer, clear criteria
Problem	No correct answer, but reasonable criteria
Mystery	No correct answer; hard to define criteria

1

Complexity = rich interconnectivity

2

Complicated vs. complex

- You can decompose a complicated thing into its original parts: An airplane
- Complexity involves a phase transition: things go into a different state that is not decomposable back to the original state: Mayonnaise, global financial crisis, re-orgs

3

Complexity is about emergence – your thinking has to change.

Complexity and ambiguity → desire for control → structure, bureaucracy

4

Organizations have two systems: Entrepreneurial and administrative

- Administrative system has the power, authority, control
- Leadership is required to find the right balance between the two polarities; maintain the dynamic tension

Adult levels of development | Cognitive complexity and perspective-taking

(Bachkirova, 2010, 2012; Kegan, 1994; Petrie, 2014, 2015)

K3

Socialized

- Shaped by the expectations of those around us and seek validation from others
- Find sense of what's right and true outside of self

K4

Self-authoring

- Find our sense of what's right and true from inside our selves – values, direction
- Integrated perspectives of others
- Sense of self is aligned with our own belief system, personal values

K5

Self-transforming

- Have our own ideology, but can recognize its limitations
- Able to hold contradictions and opposites without need to polarize
- Accept there is no absolute truth; see multiple perspectives as valuable
- Comfortable with questions without answers

*You have to **systematically
create confusion**, it sets
creativity free. Everything that
is contradictory creates life.*

— Jasper Johns —



Two critical capabilities for effective leadership in VUCA

Cultivating empathy

- See things from multiple perspectives
- Appreciate things from others' perspectives
- Anticipate reactions from diverse audiences
- Foster sense of inclusion

Managing cognition

- Manage focus and attention
- Multitask
- Manage tradeoffs
- Make decisions in uncertainty
- Suspend judgment; comfort in ambiguity
- Recognize and address cognitive biases and heuristics

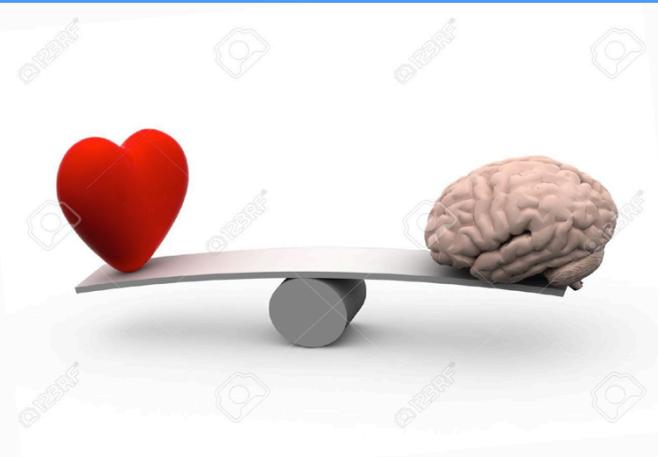
Two critical capabilities for effective leadership in VUCA | A paradox

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Neurological see-saw (Lieberman, 2013)

Reciprocal inhibitory relationship between the brain's

- default mode network – empathy; social cognition
- task positive network – analytic



“Leadership is not defined by the exercise of power but by the capacity to increase the sense of power among those led. The most essential work of the leader is to create more leaders.”

Mary Parker Follett
The Creative Experience (1924)

Framework for coaching and developing future-ready leaders

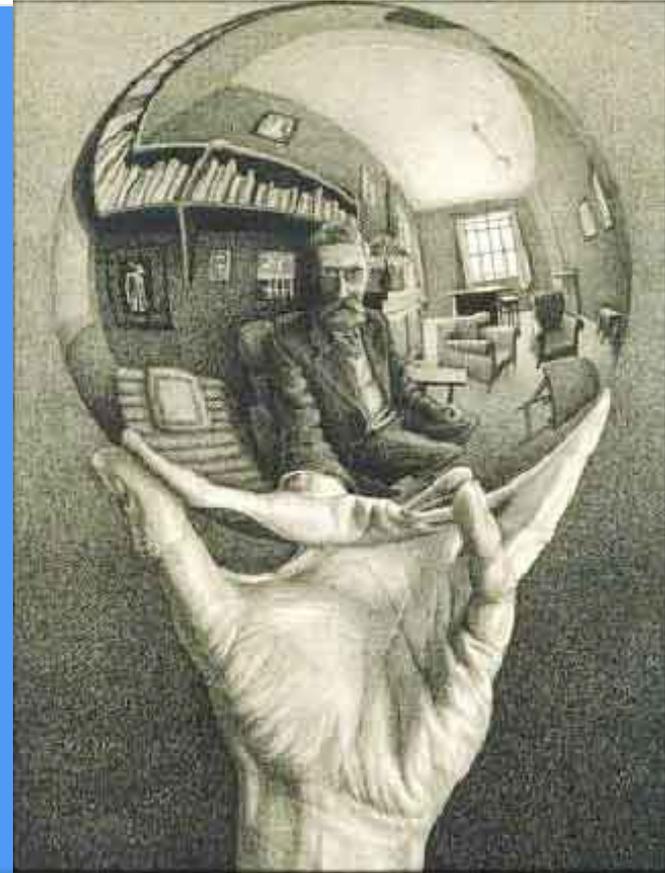
(Peterson, 2014)

Look inward	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance insight and self-awareness: Capabilities, style, motivations, passions• Craft a compelling leadership purpose, mission, values
Look outward	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand knowledge and insight around market ecosystem, competitive dynamics, users/consumers/customers• Enhance strategic thinking and organizational acumen
Look forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase capacity to think creatively, drive innovation, make better decisions in face of complexity, uncertainty, change, and ambiguity
Look around	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• See clearly what is there and what it means• Assess current state, resources, opportunities• Reflect deeply and cultivate new insights on what is possible
GDSA	Go Do Something Amazing
L,G,D	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build leadership capabilities, maturity, and perspective• Build learning and meta-capabilities

Reflection | Four directions for learning

(Peterson, 2010)

- Look inward**
 - Who do I want to be?
 - What am I trying to accomplish?
 - What principles and values matter most?
- Look outward**
 - What does it take to be successful?
 - What matters to others?
 - How do others see me?
- Look back**
 - What new things have I tried?
 - What worked? What didn't?
 - What have I learned so far?
- Look forward**
 - What will I do differently?
 - What do I need to do to keep learning?



Action * Reflection = Learning

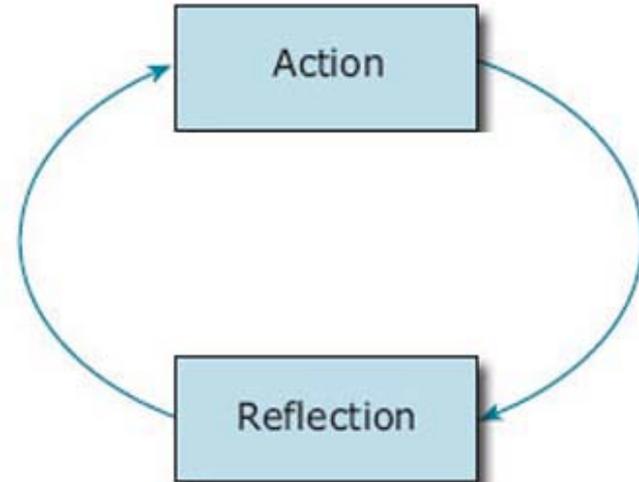
(Peterson, 2014a)

Learning Ability

- ◆ Learn quickly and apply knowledge and skills effectively -- for a given topic or situation

Learning Agility

- ◆ Learn quickly and adapt appropriately to navigate novel, complex, and diverse situations
- ◆ Make new connections; apply ideas and skills in new ways **across** time, topics, and situations



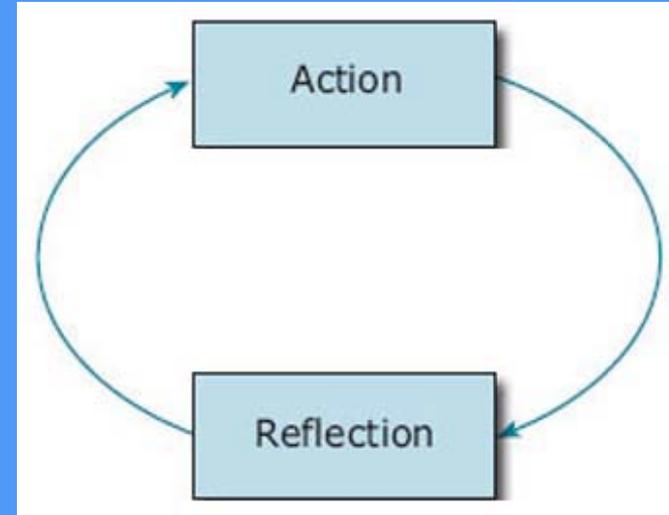
Action * Reflection = Learning

Action → Acquire and apply new behaviors, in new ways & situations

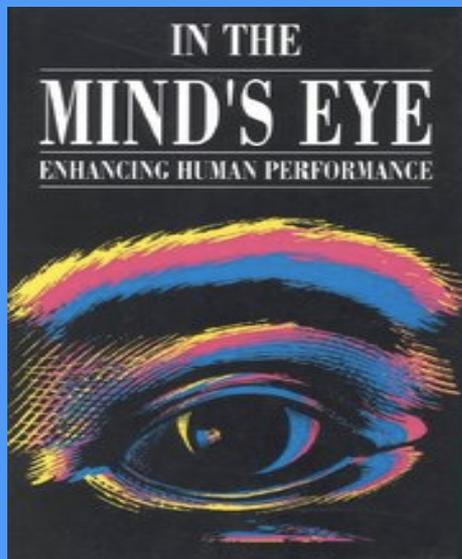
- Try new behavior, experiment, push comfort zone
- Seek new experiences, new situations
- Seek input & ideas: Advice, feedback, observe others, read
- Build skills: Programs, workshops, practice, teach others

Reflection → Extract maximum learning

- **In action:** Pay attention to what's happening
 - Step back to observe bigger picture
- **After action:** Examine cause and effect
 - Find underlying patterns - Generate hypotheses
 - What worked, what didn't, what could I do differently?
- **Before action:** Be intentional
 - Proactively identify opportunities - Generate action plans



Introducing difficulties in learning



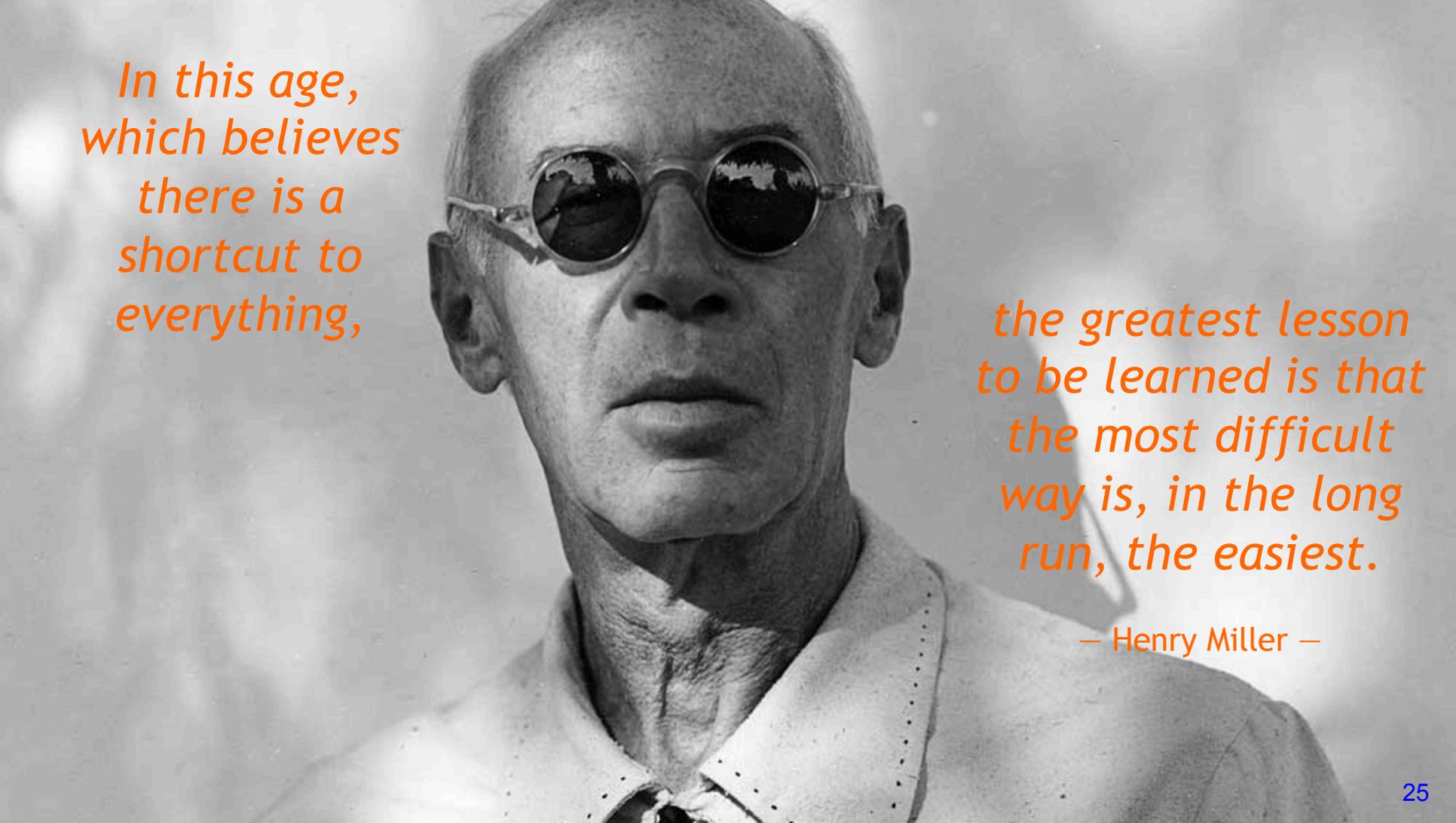
The crux of the problem is that learning and performance are not the same... procedures that enhance performance during training may or may not enhance long-term retention and transfer; conversely, procedures that **introduce difficulties for the learner and impair performance during training** may foster durable and flexible posttraining skills.

— Druckman & Bjork (1991, pp. 24-25) —

“Desirable difficulties” in learning | Bjork, Dunlosky, & Kornell (2013)

Activities such as spacing and interleaving, generating answers, testing oneself, and varying the conditions of learning are known as desirable difficulties... They impair performance—and, hence, apparent learning—during acquisition, but enhance long-term learning.

People... tend to be drawn to techniques that lead to the best performance during study. Making study activities easier—by, for example, massing practice—tends to increase judgments of learning, which is problematic because conditions that make learning seem easier can actually decrease long-term learning.



*In this age,
which believes
there is a
shortcut to
everything,*

*the greatest lesson
to be learned is that
the most difficult
way is, in the long
run, the easiest.*

— Henry Miller —



First, you have to have **fun**.

Second, you have to put **love** where your labour is.

Third, you have to go in the **opposite** direction to everyone else.

ATOMIC MEDICINE
Progress on a New Frontier

TIME

THE WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE



ELEANOR ROOSEVELT
The jet plane with a fringe on top.

*It is today that we
must create the
world of the future.*

— Eleanor Roosevelt —

The Future of Leadership for Conscious Capitalism

(Brown, 2013)

1. Consistently immerse yourself in complex environments (interpersonal, work, educational)
2. Consciously engage in life's problems (e.g., inquiry, deep dialogue)
3. Become increasingly aware of and consistently explore your inner states
4. Consistently engage in (over a long period) practices that enhance inner awareness (i.e., meditation)
5. Hold a strong desire and commitment to grow
6. Be open and willing to construct a new frame of reference when difficulties arise
7. Cultivate a personality which is open and agreeable (interpersonally warm)



It is the stretched soul that makes music, and souls are stretched by the pull of opposites — opposite bents, tastes, yearnings, loyalties.

Where there is no polarity — where energies flow smoothly in one direction — there will be much doing but no music.

— Eric Hoffer —

III. How do leaders develop these capabilities?

How can coaches help?

Reflection

1. **Daily** (1 min.)

- What new thing did I do today?
- What worked well? What didn't?
- What did I learn?
- What one thing will I do differently tomorrow?

2. **Weekly** (2 min.)

- What progress did I make last week? Am I satisfied with that?
- What do I need to focus on next week?

3. **Monthly** (5 min.)

- How am I doing on my development?
- What do I need to do to keep growing?
- How will I get meaningful feedback?



Reflection calendar | ʌɹɔɹɔɹɔɹɔ ɹɔɹɔɹɔɹɔ

1. **Daily** (1 min.)
2. **Weekly** (2 min.)
3. **Monthly** (5 min.)

4. **Quarterly** (15 min.)

- Given my key priorities for the quarter, what capabilities should I be developing?
- Where am I making excuses for something I need to take personal responsibility for?
- What do I need to do to manage my personal growth and professional development more effectively?

5. **Annually** (One hour every year)

- Who do I want to be? What values do I want to live by?
- What inspires me and fuels my passions?
- Am I living my life the way I want to? Where do I stand relative to what truly matters?
- Am I on the best path to become the person I truly want to be?
- Where do I want to be a year from now and how do I get there?



Reflection calendar | Դրանով լի է իմ օրը

1. **Daily** (1 min.)
2. **Weekly** (2 min.)
3. **Monthly** (5 min.)
4. **Quarterly** (15 min.)
5. **Annually** (One hour every year)
6. **Triennially** (Three hours every 3 years)
7. **Decadely or quinquennially** (One day every 5-10 years)



8. **Periodically** (Anytime you're in a reflective mood)

- What have I done lately to become a better person?
- What have I done to bring joy to someone's life today?
- When is my next opportunity to act with compassion and love?
- What else should I be asking myself and reflecting on?

Managing cognition

As a rule, I am very careful
to be shallow and
conventional where depth
and originality are wasted.

Lucy Maud Montgomery

