



Leading through Liminal Space: A Reflection Tool

What is liminality? The Latin root, "limen," is a noun that means threshold, border or beginning. "[Liminal](#)," the adjective form, has been defined as:

1. Relating to a transitional or initial stage of a process
2. Occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold

Liminality implies an inherently powerful and almost "pregnant" space. It carries an intensity to it that signals an elemental shift is afoot – and that both destruction and construction are simultaneously occurring at a dizzying pace. It's a time of disorientation...and re-orientation. Of being unmade...and re-made. Some refer to it as a time of "no longer and not yet." Still others refer to it as "crazy time."

A crucial differentiator of liminality from a time of change is that liminality is about how we grow and are transformed by the time spent in liminal space. The following practices and related reflections are meant to support you in growing through a liminal time in your personal or professional life.

Setting Your Intention.

1. Who do you want to be you carry yourself through this liminal time? Write a couple of paragraphs describing the qualities and values you want to use as operating principles for your behavior.
2. What practices will you use to activate your intention on a regular basis? Some ideas: journaling at the beginning or end of the week to reflect back on how you have honored your intention that week and how you commit to acting on it in the coming week; building a vision board that contains images and key words that bring your intention to life and then using that board as a visualization tool every morning; and/or communicating your intention to a trusted friend or colleague and asking for feedback from him/her periodically.

Monitor from Whence You are Acting.

Above the line:
What do I want to create in these circumstances?
What contribution can I make?

The "Line" _____

Below the line:
To what extent is ego or fear driving my behaviors?
In what ways am I acting from a place of feeling I am a victim, villain or hero?

1. Using the metaphor of "above-the-line" and "below-the-line behavior," assess periodically how much of the time you are spending in both positions. How do you feel about those percentages – do you want to create any shifts to more time being spent above the line?
2. If you need to shift to more time above the line, reflect on the questions in the above-the-line box and determine how you want to act on any insights created.



Embracing Paradox and Uncertainty.

1. What paradoxes or opposing forces are creating uncertainty, tension or anxiety for you during this liminal time? (e.g. I know my job is going away but I don't yet know what my new job is going to be.)
2. Try making an "AND" statement out of each paradox or set of opposing forces, such that both can be true at the same time. ("I can both work through the end of my current role AND trust that my new role will become clear with more time.")
3. When you read through your new "AND statements," how do you feel? How can you make sense of the new perspective represented in each compound statement?

Shifting Your Theory of Knowledge.

1. Study Otto Scharmer's Theory U that can be found on page 6 of the article (the 8th page of the pdf): http://www.ottoscharmer.com/sites/default/files/Theory_U_ENG_Exec_Summary.compressed.pdf or in his book *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges*. At which stage (Scharmer calls them "movements") are you or your organization?
2. What are you sensing about that which might be emerging for you, your team or organization with more time? What are the various possible futures that you can imagine? Which feel most likely as you tune into your inner sense of knowing (head, heart and gut)?
3. What might you, your team or your organization need to either do or let go of during this time, in order to contribute to the possible future you find most desirable, most energizing?

Balancing the Aloneness with Being with Others.

1. How would you assess the quality of your connection to your inner self and the experiences you are having during this liminal time? What adjustments might you want to make?
2. Which relationships are most important during this liminal time: who else might be feeling the liminality that you are feeling? Who might you want to call on for support or additional partnership? How would you assess the quality of your connections with any of those individuals?
3. What adjustments might you want to make based on questions 1 & 2?

Being Kind to Yourself.

1. What practices do you have or might you need to put in place for:
 - Self Care
 - Recovery & Recharging
 - Fun
 - Contemplation & Renewal of Spirit
2. What kind-to-yourself [narrative](#) might you create to make sense of this time of transition? How might you want to be able to tell the story of this time of your life in twenty years?