

An Ontological Approach to Thought Loops and Growth Edges

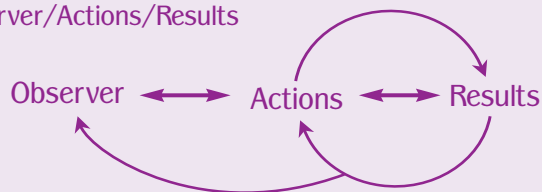
by Karen Staib Duffy

The Ontological Approach to learning offers a set of tools that can be applied to Thought Loops and Growth Edges. Thought Loops are the places in life where we find ourselves stuck. Growth Edges are the spaces in life where we are moving in a new direction or need a new skill.

The Ontological Approach incorporates two basic models: The Observer/Action/Results model and the Language/Body/Emotions model.

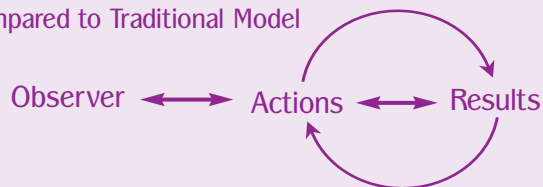
Ontological Model 1: *

Observer/Actions/Results



*Newfield Network

Compared to Traditional Model

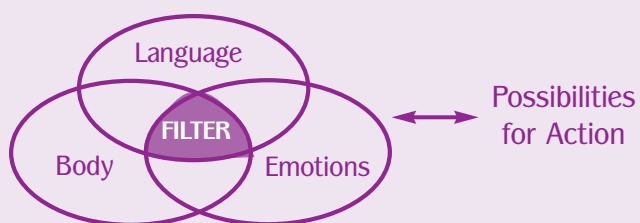


Ontological Model 2: *

Language/Body/Emotions

Observer=Filter

Coherence required between L, B, E



*Newfield Network

In a more traditional approach, we simply change our actions to try to get different results. We may try three or four different actions, none of which lead to a desired result, and we end up frustrated and unsure of what else might be done. We are stuck in a

Thought Loop. In the Ontological Approach to the Observer/Actions/Results model, we step back and look deeply at who we are as an Observer before we take the next action.

We then use the Language/Body/Emotions model to uncover who we are as an Observer. We examine how we are approaching life and this situation, in terms of the Language we use, the disposition of our Body, and the Emotions we are generating for ourselves. The Language, Body and Emotions come together in the middle, like three interlocking circles, to create our Filter. Our Filter is how we see the world and from which we generate our possibilities for new actions. Our Filter is who we are as an Observer.

The goal in the Ontological Approach is to be aware of our own mindset (filter) as a starting point in understanding our relationship with the world and what we want to change. When we are aware of our own physical feelings, thinking, values and beliefs, we are more likely to be able to assess behaviors, take actions and make decisions in a way that moves us toward mastery in life.

Being aware of what is happening within ourselves is the starting point for all deep learning. This awareness allows us to shift our own perspective for easier learning and quicker, more effective changes in our responses.

The key point is that we need to expand our awareness or we are still choosing from the same old perception. Our perceptions limit us. We cannot choose what we cannot see. We cannot assess or manage what we are unaware of. The expanded perception is more likely to generate new behaviors that will help us achieve desired results. The new actions will be generated more easily and more consistently, if we can change who we are as an Observer. Let's look at each of these three aspects: Language, Body and Emotions.

- **Language** is about how we describe things to ourselves. It is the adjectives we choose, the stories we tell ourselves, the beliefs that we hold. It is the conversations we have with others and it is the conversation we have with ourselves. Language both reflects our current mindset and creates our interaction with the world.

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We can even go so far as to state that *our conversation is the relationship*. When we uncover and understand the assessments (beliefs) that drive our actions, both for ourselves and for others, we can begin to manage our relationships with greater finesse. Everything we do takes place within language, and this gives it tremendous generative power in shaping our experiences.

- **Body** is about how we hold energy in our bodies. The body has a memory of its own and stores our experiences within it. The Body also reflects our current thoughts and emotions. It also gives us our overall physical disposition toward approaching life's challenges. In this physical world, we exist in and through our bodies. The knowledge of the body is nonverbal and hence is often ignored in our cerebral culture.

- **Emotions** include both moods and emotions. Moods are emotional states that are not connected to a specific event and are less intense, but longer lasting. Emotions, on the other hand, are event specific, very intense and of shorter duration. Whatever we do in life, we do

within an emotional state. Previously, emotions were viewed as a black box over which we had no control. Now, we know emotions can be monitored, and by using specific techniques, shifted when desired to a more useful emotional state for a particular situation.

Our Filter is a combination of all three — Language, Body and Emotions — and is unique to each of us as an Observer. Language, Body and Emotions must be coherent with each other. This means that our emotions will be mirrored in our body and choice of language and vice versa. Changing any one of them creates changes in the other two.

From within this filter, this mindset or worldview, we assign meaning, assess possibilities, and take action. Our Filter is where we make connections with each other in relationships and establish our relationship with the world. Our Filter determines our attitude. All the actions and choices we see as available to us flow from this attitude. When we shift our perspective, and shift our attitude, a whole new world can open up before us, previously unseen. ■

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