



Noticing the Pulse— An In-Action Meditation

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The Source

Noticing the Pulse originated with Bill Torbert’s work on the Four Territories of Experience. It’s something we can practice to develop our moment-to-moment awareness and our capacity for timely action.

I found myself having trouble remembering the Four Territories (the actual words), and it was only when I translated them into an in-action meditation that they started to feel natural, grounded and useful for me. I have regularly use this as my own meditation practice, but have also adapted it when leading group meditations.

The Practice

When we aspire to change our thoughts, behaviour and actions, the first step is to become aware of them. It’s hard to change things we don’t notice, whether they are happening inside or outside of us. The Four Territories in-action meditation can be useful in moments when we need more attention and focus, yet with a broad awareness—for example, before or during a meeting, before making a presentation, or when engaged in strategic or theoretical work.

It’s a way to become more aware of what is going on for me in a given situation—how I am impacted by it, and what kind of meaning I am drawing out of it. With practice it can become a conscious habit.

First, take a few deep breaths. Then turn your attention to the outer world, and then to your own inner world. Next pay attention to how you are interpreting the situation you are in, what my intentions are, and how you are actually behaving.

First, **Notice the Outer world** (Perceiving/The effects the outer world has on me)

The nature of this space.
The colours.
The movements.
The sounds here and beyond.
How it all impacts me.

Next, **Notice the sensations and behaviours** on the edge between the outer world and the inner world (Sensing/Behaving)

Sensing in terms of touch: can I feel my skin?
My breathing.
The taste in my mouth.
The sensation in my body.
How am I holding my body?
How am I behaving right now?

Now, **Notice how are you feeling and interpreting** (Thinking/Feeling)?

What am I thinking?
How am I interpreting and judging?
My feelings.
The meaning of my feelings.
There is no need to change my thoughts or feelings—the point is just to be aware of them.

Finally, **Notice how do you want to be here**, and how are you actually being here? (Intending/Attending) Don't answer these last questions in the Thinking territory, just listen in the Attentive territory.

Why did I show up?
What was my intention?
How do I want to be in this situation?
What am I actually doing right now?
Is there a gap between my intention and my behaviour?





Now broaden your attention and try to develop a presence in which you simultaneously notice the outside world, its impact on you, your inner world, your body, your behaviour, your thoughts and feelings relating to being where you are right now, and the intentions you have set for yourself.

In the beginning it may feel a bit technical to try to remember these different territories and in which order to focus your attention on them. There is no right or wrong—just give yourself some time and you will find your own way of becoming more aware of the outer and inner world, and of their meanings and impacts.

When you are with others, you can add another territory and bring additional attention to

What is happening between us that is not put into words?

How are we interacting?

How are we communicating?

Street Smart Application

Start your day at the office with Noticing the Pulse of the office. Do it with your eyes open and possibly continue with a minute of journaling.

Notice the Pulse before going into a meeting that is important to you. When you have developed this into a conscious habit, you may even do it in the meeting, while still remaining attentive to the agenda. It's especially helpful when there is tension in the room, or the energy in the meeting is dying.

You can invite people in your team to Notice the Pulse at your team meeting and then invite them to share what they have noticed.