NANO TOOLS FOR LEADERS®

SELF-DESIGN: A TOOL FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

Nano Tools for Leaders® are fast, effective leadership tools that you can learn and start using in less than 15 minutes — with the potential to significantly impact your success as a leader and the engagement and productivity of the people you lead.

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THE GOAL:

Replace beliefs, behaviors, and emotions that are holding you back with ones that will better help you achieve your goals.

NANO TOOL:

A leader's effectiveness is a direct function of his or her behavior as interpreted by others. While it might be tempting to blame those you lead for their unwillingness to follow, it is your behavior that builds trust, motivation, and influence — or it creates suspicion, apprehension, and discouragement. Becoming a more powerful and influential leader, then, means replacing less effective behaviors with more effective ones. But trying to change through cognition alone ("mind over matter") doesn't work. It takes a blend of cognition and emotion working together.

The Self-Design method was created to help replace thoughts, behaviors, and emotions that aren't achieving desired outcomes. It is based on 35 years of longitudinal studies, and has been used by organizations, teams, and individuals for decades — with compelling results.

HOW COMPANIES USE IT:

- A highly successful salesperson at a large pharmaceutical company was a major irritant to everyone in his division, but no one wanted to confront him because of the income he brought to the company. Rather than trying to change the salesman's behavior (which could have resulted in undesired consequences), the team used Self-Design to avoid being irritated by him They individually created new sets of beliefs (e.g., "I decide how I feel and his behavior does not require that I feel irritated"), new emotional responses (e.g., calmness and even compassion), and new behavior patterns (e.g., "I will make a note of my newfound calmness in my calendar"). They then imaginatively rehearsed the new three-part program several times a day for the next three weeks until it became their automatic response. The head of HR reported that this change improved the morale and overall effectiveness of the division.

- At a large branch of a national bank, tellers and their supervisors were having trouble dealing with customer behavior. Angered over ATM malfunctions or stressed over money issues, customers often took out their frustrations on tellers, who in turn became upset and stressed themselves. Their negativity was then expressed to subsequent customers. To break the cycle, the tellers created a mental picture of a disgruntled customer, a new set of beliefs about the customer and the situation ("He must be having a bad day"), a new emotional response (e.g., calmness or even compassion), and a new image of themselves exhibiting the behavior that better suited them as profes-

sionals (e.g., courteous, efficient, and cheerful). Through the Self-Design method, they achieved ultimate empowerment: deciding how to feel regardless of external circumstances.

ACTION STEPS:

Step 1: Identify the old program (the belief, behavior, or emotion you want to change). Think of a situation you encounter regularly that makes you angry, upset, fearful, or uncomfortable. Write a one- or two-sentence summary of the belief or the circumstances that trigger the discomfort. Assess your old program by asking the following questions:

1. Is my behavior/belief based on fact?

2. Does my behavior /belief help me protect my life and health?

3. Does my behavior/belief help me achieve my goals now and in the future?

4. Does my behavior/belief help me avoid unwanted conflict with others?

5. Does my behavior/belief help me feel the way I want to?

(Most of our mental functioning takes place below consciousness and we tend to rationalize and justify negative thoughts, feelings, and actions. These questions bring the negative programs up to consciousness so that we can override them and become more of the person we consciously choose to be.)

Step 2: Design the new program. Identify a new belief, emotion, and action pattern that supports your best interests, and summarize the new program in a few short phrases or sentences. Use the five questions above to assess the value of your new program. Any beliefs/behaviors in the new program can only be maintained if you can answer yes to at least three of the five questions for both the behaviors and beliefs.

Step 3: Fill out a Self-Design Worksheet. [see below]. Use these definitions to help you complete it:

•   Activating Event: The situation that triggers your discomfort

•   Current Sincere Beliefs: What you believe about the situation now

•   Current Emotions: Any emotions the situation triggers in you

•   Current Behaviors: How you respond to the situation now

•   The Camera Check: A revised description of the Activating Event that is purely factual, without any "emotional charge"

•   Rational Beliefs: The new beliefs that you would like to hold

•   Preferred Emotions: How you would like to feel

•   Preferred Behaviors: How you would like to respond

SELF-DESIGN WORKSHEET

Response I Wish to Change (Belief, Emotion, or Behavior): _____ .

Current Dysfunctional Program	*New, Self-Designed Program*
1. Activating Event (AE)	5. Camera-Checked AE
2. Current Sincere Beliefs	6. Rational Beliefs
3. Current Emotions	7. Preferred Emotions
4. Current Behaviors	8. Preferred Behaviors

Step 4: Install the new program. For three weeks, repeat a mental (imaginative) rehearsal twice a day for 5-10 minutes. The more relaxed you are during the rehearsal, the more effective it will be. (Note that this replaces the common rehearsal of negative emotions we all perform several times a day (e.g., "he makes me angry").

- Picture the camera-checked activating event
- Rehearse the rational beliefs while picturing the activating event
- Rehearse your preferred emotions. Go into your memory and find a situation in which you experienced that emotion strongly, bring that memory forward, and attach it to the new program.
- Picture yourself engaging in the preferred behaviors

SHARE YOUR BEST PRACTICES:

Do you have a best practice for replacing undesirable beliefs or actions with ones that better serve you? If so, please share it on our blog at Wharton's Center for Leadership and Change Management. http://whartonleadership.wordpress.com/

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Change Your Brain, Change Your Life. Daniel G. Amen (Three Rivers Press, 1999). Offers "brain prescriptions," including cognitive exercises and nutritional advice, to address anxiety, depression, impulsiveness, excessive anger or worry, and obsessive behavior.

- Authentic Happiness. Martin Seligman (Free Press, 2003). Uses practical exercises and tests to show that happiness comes from a focus on personal strengths rather than only on weaknesses, and on using those strengths to improve all aspects of one's life.

- Rational Behavior Therapy. Maxie C. Maultsby, Jr., MD (Seaton Foundation, 1990). Presents scientific yet practical techniques for quickly discovering and dealing with problem-creating mental, emotional, and physical behaviors.

- Charles Dwyer teaches self-design in Wharton Executive Education's *Leading and Managing People* and *Building Relationships That Work*.

ABOUT NANO TOOLS:

Nano Tools for Leaders® was conceived and developed by Deb Giffen, MCC, Director of Innovative Learning Solutions at Wharton Executive Education. It is jointly sponsored by Wharton Executive Education and Wharton's Center for Leadership and Change Management, Wharton Professor of Management Michael Useem, Director. Nano Tools Academic Director, Professor Adam Grant.