

Identifying an Improvement Goal

Step One: Think about what you would most like to get better at, or improve upon.

The goal you choose to work on during the upcoming ITC session should...

1. Connect to your top professional priority. Ask yourself: What is the one thing I could get better at that would help me most with my most important professional priority? What do you need to get better at in order to be the fullest version of the leader you want to be?
2. Be a "personal growth" goal rather than a "therapy goal"—e.g., "to be more decisive," "to be a better listener," "to speak up more," "to be more spontaneous," "to be better organized," "to be less critical." Not: "to get over my depression," "come to terms with my divorce," or "work through a trauma."
3. Be something you've tried to succeed at in the past, but have not made the progress you wanted (or the progress has been temporary). Or it might be something you've never tried before but you suspect will be challenging for you to accomplish, even if you had all the time you needed.
4. Matter to you enough that you will want to stay connected to it throughout the next few months, but should not feel so sensitive or raw that you would be uncomfortable sharing it with someone.

Write down the improvement goal you are considering. It is fine to write down two or three that you are weighing. You won't have to commit to one goal immediately—this is just a starting point so you can get some feedback before you decide. Include your reflections on the following questions.

- What information (from within or around yourself) has informed your thinking about your improvement goal?
- What information do you still want to gather before you hone in on a single improvement goal?

Step Two: Once you have a clear idea of your improvement goal, use the following checklist to assess its strength.

- Is this goal true for you?** If a goal is *true for you*, that means it is a goal that you genuinely feel in your own heart to be something that you want to improve. If you have chosen a goal that is based on what others want for you, but at the end of the day it is not something you are really committed to for yourself, it will be hard to have a powerful experience since it is unlikely you

will feel motivated enough to do the work necessary to make lasting change. We suggest you choose a new goal.

- **Does this goal implicate you?** Your goal implicates you if it is clear that **you** must get better at something. Your goal should focus on something you can control. It should focus on something specific about yourself that you want to improve. If your goal is about changes you are hoping **others** will make, think about what your own role in that might be. If you can't identify what you need to get better at in order to help others to develop, we suggest you choose a different goal.

- **Is there room for improvement?** 'Room for improvement' means that you have not yet come close to fully accomplishing your goal. You are not even close to having 100% success. You probably don't even have 50% success. You could not accomplish this change in a weekend. There is room for improvement if you have made a little progress but then gotten stuck in your efforts to change. Or, maybe you reached your goal temporarily but were unable to sustain that improvement. Or, maybe you feel you have gotten stuck before you even began to make improvements. If you have already accomplished your goal or are quite close to realizing it, you are unlikely to have a powerful learning experience in this course using that goal.

- **Is it very important to you?** A goal is important if it is one that could make a big difference in helping you reach your goals in your work life or your personal life (or best of all, both). You are willing to work hard on it. You are interested in spending time and energy on it and thinking about why you haven't been able to improve before now. You will probably only be willing to undertake this work if your Improvement Goal is quite important to you. If yours isn't, go back and identify one that feels very important to you.

Here are a few examples of strong improvement goals for our exercise:

- to be a better listener, to genuinely understand what a person says, or
- to get better at delving into different points of view, especially when I am in conversation with someone from a background that differs from mine in important ways, or
- to be more empathic with others
- to delegate more
- to better manage my time