

Relationships

Freeing Myself from Certainty

I spent a good deal of my twenties and thirties searching for antidotes to my educated mind. I stopped reading so much and began meditating. I immersed myself in the esoteric realms and began to explore working with energy. I excavated my emotional body, unearthing the deep doubt, grief, and anger that proved the invisible backdrop for my deeply conditioned know-it-all persona from college. I went on vision quests and began opening up to the vastness of the universe, humbly acknowledging how little I truly understood of life. I learned to pray.

It was during this chapter that I had the great fortune of working with Paula Underwood Spencer (Turtle Woman Singing), whose father's clan hailed from the Oneida nation of the Iroquois Confederacy. I learned many things in my precious years with her before her spirit left her body. However, the wisdom practice she shared that has influenced me the most is the Rule of Six.

The Rule of Six (Rof6) says that for each apparent phenomenon, you should devise at least six plausible explanations. There are probably 60, but if you devise six, this will sensitize you to the vast array of potential options and prevent you from locking in on the first thing that sounds "right" as the truth.

After you've fully named six possible explanations for whatever phenomenon you are seeking to understand, you then apply your personal probability factor (PPF) to each of your six explanations. This PPF is determined by your own unique life experience, so there is no right or wrong answer, but your PPF cannot be 100 percent or 0 percent for any explanation. It also is not important that your PPF add up to 100 percent, as you are not determining a "winning" thought; instead, you are evaluating your beliefs

and assessing which of the possibilities strikes you as being the most likely.

Here's an example of using the Rof6 from this morning.

My question was:

Why did my sweetheart not say good-bye this morning when he knows I am not feeling well?

I applied the Rof6 like this:

1. He's an inconsiderate jerk (PPF 20%).
2. I'm so pathetic, he's lost interest in me romantically (PPF 15%).
3. He's afraid of catching whatever I've got (PPF 25%).
4. He was afraid I might ask him for help, which would put him behind schedule (PPF 40%).
5. He assumed I needed to rest and didn't want to disturb me (PPF 55%).
6. He was running extremely late because he was up most of the night with me (PPF 30%).

By the time I imagined those six possible answers, my mind was much more receptive and much less agitated. Remembering to apply this simple practice has broadened my perspective and loosened the grip of both the righteousness and doubt that plagued my early years. Paradoxically, learning to identify so many possible reasons for any situation has helped me develop more clarity in my choices, not less. Being less wedded to my habitual stances and more open to possibilities has been a wisdom path for this recovering know-it-all.

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