

## THINKING AT THE EDGE (TAE) STEPS

### STEPS 1- 5 : SPEAKING FROM THE FELT SENSE

#### MAIN INSTRUCTIONS

#### HELPFUL DETAIL

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#### Step 1: Let a felt sense form

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Choose something you know and cannot yet say, that wants to be said. **Have this knowing as a felt sense (a distinct bodily-felt unclear edge)** to which you can always return.

Write a few paragraphs from your felt sense in a very rough way.

From your felt sense, write the central crux in **one short** sentence, with one key word or phrase, even though the sentence doesn't really say it.

Underline **the** key word or phrase in the sentence.

Write down one instance.

What you choose to work on needs to be in a field in which you are knowledgeable and experienced. Do not work on a question, but on something that you know. There is **something** that you know very thickly from years of experience but which is difficult to talk about... it may seem illogical...marginal... unconventional...awkward...or it may simply be that language seems not to work here. If having a felt sense is unfamiliar to you, please consult [www.focusing.org](http://www.focusing.org).

To find the crux, ask what **in this** do you wish to articulate? Then, **within this**, what is the live point for you?

The sentence is just a starting point. It does not need long deliberation. For the moment it states the crux of what you are tracking.

To help find the key word, you can ask yourself if you had a whole theory which word says what the theory would be about.

You may want to find a specific example first and then write the sentence.

You need a specific example, an event or a time when it actually happened.

**MAIN INSTRUCTIONS**

**HELPFUL DETAIL**

**Step 2: Find what is more than logical in your felt sense**

Find what does not make the usual logical sense and write an illogical sentence.

What seems illogical may be the most valuable part. Please assure yourself that you are not dropping this out.

If you have difficulty writing an illogical sentence, you can write a paradox.

In a paradox something is said to be “x and also not x.”

**Step 3: Notice that you don’t mean the standard definitions of the words**

Write the usual (dictionary) definition of the underlined word in step 1 and notice that it is not what you mean.

You recognize, “that’s not what I meant.” This word would communicate something else. If you are saying something new, none of the words in their usual public meanings will say it exactly.

Take out the underlined word and write your sentence with a blank slot.

Return to your felt sense and let another single word come to say what you mean.

Make sure it is not just a synonym, but a word with a somewhat different meaning.

Write the usual definition of the second word.

When you consider its existing public meaning, you see that the second word does not fit either.

Return to your felt sense and let a third word come.

Write the usual definition of the third word.

The public meaning of the third word is also not what you meant.

Accept the fact that there is no established word for this knowing.

No word fits. None should, if this is new.

## MAIN INSTRUCTIONS

## HELPFUL DETAIL

### **Step 4: Write a sentence or fresh phrase to say what you wanted each of the three words to mean**

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Put the original first word back in the slot in your sentence from step 1.

Although you cannot change the public language, you can write a whole fresh sentence or phrase to say what you had wished the single word to mean. Write what you wanted the word to mean, what this word pulls out from your felt sense which the other two do not.

Now put the second word in the slot. Write a phrase or sentence to say what it pulls out from the felt sense.

Do this with the third word.

This time, do not give up your sense. Insist that your sentence does speak from your felt sense. Do not let the word say what it usually says. **Wait until you feel this whole sentence speaking from your felt sense,** even though most people might not understand it so.

You will need fresh new phrases to say what you wanted the word to mean in your sentence. Rather than large public words, let a new phrase come straight from your felt sense.

### **Step 5: Expand what you wanted each word to mean by writing fresh, linguistically unusual sentences**

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Using the main words or phrases from step 4, write a somewhat odd sentence or two in order to expand even further what you now mean by each of the words or phrases.

In each of the new sentences, underline what is new and important.

Check whether you used any major public words in step 4. If so make fresh phrases to replace those words. Let what is new and specific in your felt sense express itself into freshly phrased language. Your sentences might make no sense unless they are understood as you mean them. Here are examples of linguistically unusual sentences: "Knowing the rules is a container from which new ways open." "Definitions stop cellular growth." "Be-having shows something it has." If you let your felt sense speak directly, something linguistically unusual can come.

### MAIN INSTRUCTIONS

Write a “string” of the three original words and the main fresh phrases in the underlined slot in your sentence from step 1. At the end of your string add “...”. Now you have an elaboration of what you are trying to say.

### HELPFUL DETAIL

Play with the grammar and order. Eliminate excess words until you have a sentence you like.

The “...” indicates that you are taking the felt sense along with all the words.

## ***STEPS 6 – 8 FINDING PATTERNS FROM FACETS (INSTANCES)***

### **Step 6: Collect Facets**

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Collect facets, any instances that have actually happened.

Choose three facets and write them with the details which relate to your felt sense. Underline specifics that bring something you might want to keep.

Copy your original facet from step one here. Now you have four facets.

A facet need not illustrate all of your felt sense. A facet can be anything that relates to the felt sense, including times when it came up, what someone said, any incidents even if you cannot tell yourself why they are relevant. Include odd or private things such as “the time the dentist said....” Ask yourself “what has ever happened that has something to do with it?”

General ideas and metaphors are not facets. It isn’t an actual event that happened to say “it’s like heating something to agitate it.”

Any instance is superior to a higher order generalization because it has internal specificity. In any real life event you can discover some complex structures which are actually there.

## MAIN INSTRUCTIONS

## HELPFUL DETAIL

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### Step 7: Allow the facets to contribute detailed structure

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With each facet:

Notice that there are many intricate relationships between details. Find a relationship between some details that is relevant to your felt sense.

Apply this relationship to an entirely different kind of situation.

Then restate this relationship in general terms so that it becomes a pattern which can fit many other situations.

In any actual experience there are relationships between details which can give you a new elaboration. Let each facet give you one specific pattern which you did not have before.

*Example:* The dentist has his thumb in my mouth holding a piece of cotton while he tells me his politics. Children, employees and prisoners are powerless to talk back. The pattern is: Speaking to a person who cannot talk back can be intrusive.

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### Step 8: Cross the facets

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You might want to ask: "What does looking from the second facet let me see in the first facet, that I could not see just from within the first facet?"

Write a sentence to capture any new pattern that you want to keep.

You might already have done this. "Crossing" means attributing the point of one facet to the other. What new aspect of the first facet might become visible if you try to say that it has the same pattern as the second facet?

"Crossing" two things involves considering the one item as if it were an instance of the other. Then you can get something more if you also consider the second as an instance of the first.

If no facet contains the whole central thing, this may be found by crossing them.

**MAIN INSTRUCTIONS****HELPFUL DETAIL**

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**Step 9 Write freely**

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Write freely what you are thinking at this juncture.

This is a free space to write where you have come so far, what you have understood, what excites you.

**STEPS 10 – 14 BUILDING THEORY**

One purpose of TAE has now been achieved — to articulate an implicit knowing and make it communicable. If you wish, you can go on to build a formal, logical theory.

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**Step 10: Choose terms and link them**

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Choose three words or phrases to be your temporary main terms. Name them “A,” “B,” and “C.”

A term is not a sentence. For example, “something that moves from the inside” is a term. A sentence always has at least two terms, a subject and a predicate.

Look at your words, phrases and patterns from all of the preceding steps. Make a list of possible candidates for main terms. Choose what feels most important.

Imagine a triangle connecting the three terms. Choose the terms so that most of your territory and your central crux fall within the triangle. Other important ideas can be brought in later at step 12.

Now define A in terms of B, and also in terms of C. First write each equation as an empty formula: “A = B.” “A = C.” Replace the = sign with the word “IS.” Fill in the words or phrases which A and B and C stand for. Now you have two sentences which might be quite right or quite wrong.

Since the terms arose from the same felt sense, there will be a way in which such a connection is true.

## MAIN INSTRUCTIONS

If necessary modify the sentences. Keep the word “IS” to hold the place where the new pattern will emerge. Don’t fill the relations in with old familiar connections. Insure that you keep the crux of your felt sense.

You can be free to play with many possible sentences that relate the terms. Since  $A = B$  and  $A = C$ , perhaps B is some kind of C, or C is some kind of B, or B which has A in it is in some special way C. You can play with logic that is open, not fixed.

Also without logic, be free to make sentences in which you split up the terms, combine them, or make a new term or two.

You can guide by zeroing in on an “IS” between terms that centrally expresses your felt sense.

End step 10 when the crux of your felt sense is centrally expressed by two or three terms with “IS” between them. If your terms have changed, freshly choose the central terms and name them A, B, and C.

Write them as “A IS B” and “A IS C.”

## HELPFUL DETAIL

If the sentence is grammatical and true and speaks from your felt sense, let it stand. If not, keep the word “is” (or “are”) and add or change as little as possible so that the assertion is true and speaks from your felt sense. For example, instead of “A produces B” you can say “A is something which produces B.” If the sentence seems too inclusive, you can say “some A is,” “A is at least,” “A is one kind of B.”

Now you have one true sentence that connects A and B, and one that connects A and C.

Your partner can help by suggesting sentences to relate the terms, so that you can respond more exactly from your felt sense.

## MAIN INSTRUCTIONS

## HELPFUL DETAIL

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**Step 11: Ask into the inherent relations between the terms**


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Add the word “inherently” after the “IS” in each of your two sentences. A IS inherently B. A IS inherently C. You do not yet know what this will turn out to mean.

Now dip into the intricacy of the felt sense to find out why A is inherently B. How are these two things **inherently** connected? What is the **very nature** of “A,” such that it **has to be** “B” or **has to be in this relation** to B? Write down what you find. Name the inherent connection. Now you have a link between A and B. This link is a new term.

Do this also with “A IS inherently C.”

Since “A” and “B” come from the same felt sense, it will be the case that “A” is **inherently** “B,” not only that it happens to be “B.”

The inherent link is not something that is already well known in the public space. It is rather your meaning of A which is already something which is B. For example: “What is the ability to wait such that it is inherently something which allows new growth?” The inherent link is **not** the obvious public fact that waiting takes time and time is needed for growing. The inherent link that was found in this example was “waiting is a gift of attention, and the gift of attention is something that makes for new growth.” So “gift of attention” is the new term.

This requires entering into the felt sense behind the two terms. Ask “What is A?” “What is B?” You discover some respect in which your meaning of A is already in your meaning of B. There has to be an “**Aha, of course!** A always was nothing but the sort of thing that has to be B.”

You may get “A is X, and “aha, I see that B is also X.” So via the fact that they are both X, they are inherently related to each other. X is an inherent link between A and B.

A TAE theory is both logical and experiential. The equal sign does not eliminate the different intricacy of each term. That is why equating can be exciting and informative. On the formal logical side the two terms are interchangeable, but on their experiential side the inherent equation is an understanding. It is not really an equation of identical units like  $1 = 1$ .



## MAIN INSTRUCTIONS

## HELPFUL DETAIL

### **Step 12: Choose permanent terms and interlock them**

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Freshly build your “illogical” crux. Ask yourself how your central crux should be stated using some of the terms and inherent links you found in step 11. Formulate the sentence so that one main term “**IS**” a combination of the other terms that you choose to state your crux.

Now take the term following the “**IS**” from the above crux statement. Rewrite the crux statement to assert that this second term **IS** some combination of all of the other terms in the statement.

Now do this for the third term. Each term is now defined by a statement which consists of some combination of all the other terms.

Consider each sentence in this rotation. Does it really say what your meaning of that term is? Even though the sentences may seem to say the same thing but in a different order, you will probably find that some of them need more specificity which will enable you to make more inherent link terms in order to express your meaning.

If you have developed more specificity in any sentence, build the additions back into the other statements. How the other terms are now defined includes the changes and additions you have made in any one term. This is one way your theory develops further.

Choose three or four main terms. You will be able to bring in more terms later on.

This is what is meant by “interlocking” your terms. The illogical crux is defined into each term, not just between them. You will end up with sentences in the form of: **A IS B which IS C**, **B is A which IS C**, **C is A which is B**, or some variant of these.

One needs to ask oneself: “Is this really a sensible definition of that term?” This leads to the discovery of more specific meanings and link terms.

Since **A IS B which IS C**, if you have added **D** in how you define **C**, then **A** is now defined by **B which IS C and D**. So you need to insure that this fits your felt sense of **A** and **B**. If it does not, you need to change or add something. You are building new logical relationships between new terms so you do not want to impose the usual relationships.

**MAIN INSTRUCTIONS**

Now ask which of the phrases from earlier steps your theory needs next, so it can say what you set out to say. Add these one by one. Derive each from the terms you just defined. “Derive” means to find the inherent relation between the new term and one of the earlier ones. Explain and write the inherent relation.

Now that the terms are logically and experientially linked by your odd pattern you can generate interesting sentences by substituting terms for each other in the following way: If  $F = A$  and  $A = B$  then  $F = B$ . The sentence  $F = B$  is new. Or if  $F = A$ , which includes  $G$ , and  $A = B$ , then  $F = B$ , which includes  $G$ .

By substitution you can develop the inferential power of a formal progression of sentences to lead to conclusions. The conclusions may or may not be acceptable to your felt sense. If they are not acceptable you must re-enter your felt sense to make a further distinction. In this way the power of logic and experience help elaborate your theory.

Repeat these instructions as many times as necessary to bring

**HELPFUL DETAIL**

Once you have a term, keep it the same for every occurrence of that term. The logical power depends on the terms staying the same. Later you can create many differently worded versions, for instance in letters, papers, or conversations.

There is an excitement because you can see you are going to be able to derive and define each next thing from your theoretical nucleus. The pattern of your theory enters into each new term and may provide internal explanations of it.

Each new term becomes inherent in each of the other terms through their logical linkage. Check to see if this accords with your felt sense.

Some substitutions may surprise you and extend your theory. When you obtain a new sentence but it seems wild or false, pinpoint what seems wrong and make a change **without losing what was new.** For example, suppose by substitution you get  $F$  is  $B$ . This might seem ungrammatical and false but it can be exciting to rethink the nature of “ $B$ .” Might “ $B$ ” have this odd patterning? How might that be true of “ $B$ ”? Then — aha! — it might suddenly emerge for you that this is indeed so! It might say more about the nature of “ $B$ ” than is generally known.

### MAIN INSTRUCTIONS

in the terms you need from the earlier steps.

Less formally, some of the words and phrases which you have not yet used can be grouped under one or another of the main terms to which it could be equivalent. You can then substitute them into your odd pattern, to generate more sentences which logically follow. In this way you can immediately make many statements which are generated by your new pattern.

### HELPFUL DETAIL

Once a logical system exists, its inferences are “formal,” which means the inference happens from the logical connections regardless of the content. If your terms lead to a logically tight inference which your felt sense will not accept, some change is needed. Small changes or additional terms at that point will usually correct it. If not, then the logical system has to be re-opened. Otherwise keep the logical system closed so that it can operate. When the system operates **both** logically **and** in accord with the felt sense then its further “formal” inferences can be powerful, surprising and significant.

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### Step 13: Apply your theory outside your field

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This step is an intermission.

The new pattern in your terms can serve as a model. Apply just the pattern to one or more large areas such as art, religion, education, metaphor.

Write a sentence with the form: Something about \_\_\_\_\_ (an aspect of some topic) is like \_\_\_\_\_ (your pattern). Now wait for something to leap up which makes the sentence true. Write an explanation of what you find.

Any small topic or event might also be understandable in an interesting new way through your theory.

How might your pattern allow you to say something about human nature, or society, the state, groups, interpersonal relations, the physical sciences, truth, beauty, ethics, writing, sexuality, language — any large idea?

In the dentist example in step 7, the pattern applied to education might be: non-intrusive education requires an active role for students.

For example: “Something about learning (a topic) is like the inside having two outsides (the pattern).”

We know that the pattern you have articulated can happen in human experience because it did happen in your facets. Applying your theory may reveal something that is or should be true.

***(Main Instructions)***

***(Helpful Detail)***

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**Step 14 Expand and apply your theory in your field**

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This is the serious development of your theory. It may continue for years. To expand your theory you can ask: what next question arises, or to what further understanding might the theory lead, or what closely related factors are not covered?

Add inherent links if necessary so that the further terms you add become derived.

After a new term is linked, see by substitution what your other terms are able to say about it.

You can expand your theory further and further in this way.

Apply your theory to any related areas or observations in your field which you would like to be able to explain or clarify. Where might your theory make an important difference? Freshly define this in the terms of your theory.

If your theory implies something you don't mean, what further term or distinction would correct it?

Recalling an actual instance may help you formulate a new distinction.

Once a theory is developed, further distinctions and implications follow without you inventing them. Then you ask, "What is this?" You may suddenly realize you have derived an important thing which you had not even wondered about.

Sometimes your theory refuses something which is expected or which would be elegant or neat. Since the theory emerges from the intricate connections implicit in the felt sense, when it "talks back" it has reasons you can find.

Your novel pattern can restructure any specific aspect of your field.

You are creating new concepts. Do not let fixed definitions or old ways of thinking limit what you say, even if your topic falls under a large category with a well established view. Do not hesitate to restructure it, as you did with a large area in step 13. We call such restructuring a "reversal" of the usual way in which anything new and specific tends to be quickly submerged under the existing assumptions about the larger topic. Rather, for example, one specific concept about apes may require a restructuring of Zoology as a whole.

People sometimes believe that their new theory "must be" what some older existing

theory “really means,” if correctly understood. But the older theory alone does not give people this precise understanding.

The function of a theory is social. Being able to speak **precisely** from your felt sense builds your understanding into our world.