

FIELD GUIDE

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO HUMAN INTELLIGENCE

LEAD FROM WITHIN™

A self-reflection resource for understanding your inner world and leading with greater intention.

Human Intelligence in practice

HEAD ✦ HEART ✦ GUT

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START HERE

WHY LEAD FROM WITHIN?

Most leadership tools focus on what to say, what to do, or how to get a better result. Those tools matter. I also believe we have to pay attention to what is happening inside us while we use them.

That is where Human Intelligence comes in. I use that term for the distinctly human capacities that help us notice our own reactions, think clearly under pressure, stay connected to other people, and make decisions we can stand behind. AI can give us information quickly. We still have to decide what to do with it, how to communicate it, and how we want to show up while we do.

This guide is designed to help you practice that inner work. You do not need to complete every page at once. Choose the section that feels most relevant to what you are living or leading right now. Come back to the others when you need them.

A USEFUL WAY TO APPROACH THIS GUIDE

The goal is not to become perfectly calm or perfectly self-aware. The work is to notice sooner, so you have more choice in what happens next.

A NOTE BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Use a real situation whenever you can. A conversation you are avoiding, a decision that feels complicated, a relationship that keeps activating you, or a moment when you did not respond the way you wanted to. Specific examples will take you further than answering in generalities.

YOUR INTERNAL OPERATING SYSTEM

WHAT IS RUNNING IN THE BACKGROUND?

I think of your Internal Operating System as the internal architecture you lead from. It includes your thoughts, beliefs, assumptions, emotional habits, values, identity, and the strategies you learned to use when a situation feels risky.

A trigger happens on the outside. Your system gives that moment meaning. Sometimes the meaning is accurate. Sometimes an old belief or a familiar pattern fills in the blanks before you have enough information. That can happen very quickly.

✦ TRY THIS

A useful practice is to separate what you know from what you are interpreting. Write the first sentence your mind offers about a difficult moment. Then ask yourself which parts are facts, which parts are interpretations, and which parts are assumptions.

Think about something that has been taking up mental or emotional space for you. What happened?

What was the first story your mind told you about it?

What part of that story have you actually verified?

THE FRAMEWORK

SEVEN PRACTICES FOR LEADING FROM WITHIN

These practices overlap. You may move between them in the same conversation. The Head, Heart, and Gut structure gives you a simple way to organize the work without pretending that human beings operate in neat categories.

Head

PRESENCE
Am I fully here?

AWARENESS
What is happening inside me?

BELIEFS
What am I believing?

Heart

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE
What am I resisting?

VULNERABILITY
Can I stay open and honest?

Gut

DISCERNMENT
What am I noticing, and what needs to be verified?

EMOTIONAL REGULATION
Can I stay grounded enough to choose my response?

HOW TO USE THE PAGES THAT FOLLOW

Read the short explanation first. Then work with one real situation. Give yourself enough time to write what is true, not what sounds good. You can return to the same situation across several sections and see it from a different angle each time.

01
PRESENCE

Am I fully here?

Presence is about attention. You can be physically in a room and mentally somewhere else. You may be rehearsing what you want to say next, replaying something that already happened, or trying to solve the next problem while someone is still talking.

When your attention leaves, you miss information. You can also miss the person in front of you. The practice is not to force yourself to stay focused every second. It is to notice when you have drifted and come back.

✦ PRACTICE

During one conversation today, notice the first moment your mind starts building a reply instead of listening. Let the other person finish. Notice your body. Then bring your attention back to the words they are actually using.

01 PRESENCE

REFLECT

Where in your life or leadership are you physically present but mentally somewhere else?

What usually pulls your attention away?

How does that affect the way you listen, decide, or respond?

What could help you return to the moment sooner?

02
AWARENESS

What is happening inside me?

Awareness is the ability to notice your thoughts, emotions, body signals, and reactions while they are happening. It gives you a little distance from the first story your mind creates.

This does not mean every thought is wrong. It means a thought deserves to be noticed before it is automatically treated as the whole truth.

✦ PRACTICE

When a strong thought shows up, try saying quietly to yourself: “I am having the thought that…” Put the thought after that sentence. Notice whether that gives you enough distance to look at it instead of immediately following it.

02 AWARENESS

REFLECT

Think of a recent moment when you felt defensive, overwhelmed, frustrated, or under pressure. What was happening?

What thoughts showed up first?

What were you feeling in your body?

What did you make the situation mean?

Looking back, what pattern do you notice in the way you think under pressure?

03 BELIEFS

What am I believing?

Beliefs sit underneath many of our reactions. A thought can come and go. A belief tends to keep shaping how we interpret situations, especially when we are under pressure.

Some beliefs are useful. Others were formed in a different season of our lives and keep giving us instructions we no longer need. The work is to find the belief underneath the reaction and decide whether it is still true enough to lead from.

✦ PRACTICE

Pay attention to beliefs that sound absolute: “I always have to…,” “People like this never…,” “I cannot…,” or “A good leader should…” Write one down and ask whether it still fits the person and leader you want to be.

03 BELIEFS

REFLECT

Think of a recent leadership or life moment that frustrated, worried, or challenged you. What happened?

What was the first story you told yourself about it?

What would you have to believe for that story to make sense?

What evidence supports that belief? What evidence challenges it?

What else could be true?

04 RADICAL ACCEPTANCE

What am I resisting?

Radical acceptance is about seeing reality clearly enough to work with it. You can dislike what is happening. You can want it to change. Acceptance simply asks you to stop spending energy arguing with the fact that it is already happening.

Resistance can keep your attention on the version of the situation you wish you had. Acceptance brings you back to the situation that is actually in front of you, where you can make a choice.

✦ PRACTICE

Name the reality in one plain sentence. Avoid adding a reason, prediction, or judgment. Read it back. Notice what changes when you work from what is true instead of from what you wish were true.

04 RADICAL ACCEPTANCE

REFLECT

What is happening right now that you wish were different?

What are you mentally replaying, resisting, or arguing with?

What is that resistance costing you in energy or focus?

What is true right now, even if you do not like it?

With that reality named, what choice is available to you now?

05 VULNERABILITY

Can I stay open and honest?

Vulnerability in leadership is not about telling everyone everything. It is the willingness to be seen honestly when your ego would rather protect you. That may mean admitting you do not know, owning your part in a mistake, asking for help, or saying the true thing you have been avoiding.

Healthy vulnerability also has boundaries. The point is not to hand someone else the job of taking care of your emotions. The point is to give them the truth they need so the relationship or the work can move forward.

✦ PRACTICE

Before a hard conversation, write three short sentences: what happened, what your part is, and what you will do next. Remove any detail that is mainly there to relieve your discomfort. Use what remains to begin the conversation.

05 VULNERABILITY

REFLECT

Where do you tend to hold back, avoid, or try to look more in control than you feel?

What are you protecting in that moment?

What truth have you not said yet?

What part of the situation belongs to you?

What does the other person actually need from you?

06 DISCERNMENT

What am I noticing, and what needs to be verified?

Discernment starts when something does not add up. It may be a number, a change in someone's behavior, a pattern you have seen before, or a physical sense that makes you pause. The signal matters, but it is not the same thing as a conclusion.

Your job is to get curious enough to investigate. Discernment asks you to pay attention to the signal and then look for the information that will help you understand what it means in this situation.

✦ PRACTICE

When you notice a gut signal, write down the signal first without interpreting it. Then write the question you need answered. Look for evidence before you decide what action fits.

06 DISCERNMENT

REFLECT

Think of a recent situation where something did not add up. What was happening?

What first made you pause?

What did your gut seem to be telling you?

What facts or observations support that signal?

What information are you still missing?

What could you investigate before you decide what this means?

07 EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Can I stay grounded enough to choose my response?

Emotional regulation is not about getting rid of emotion. The feeling is real information. Regulation helps you create enough space to decide what you want to do with that information.

Strong emotion often shows up in the body before you have a full sentence for it. You may notice your jaw tighten, your heart rate change, your face get warm, or your breathing get shallow. Learning your own signals can help you catch the reaction earlier.

✦ PRACTICE

In a moment of activation, name the feeling in a few words. Ground yourself in the room. Give yourself a little time before you respond. You may need one breath, a question, a glass of water, or a decision to continue the conversation later. The point is to keep the first wave of emotion from making the whole decision for you.

07 EMOTIONAL REGULATION

REFLECT

What kinds of situations tend to activate you quickly?

What do you notice in your body when that happens?

What emotion is present?

What might that emotion be pointing to?

What would help you create enough space to choose your response?

PUT IT TOGETHER

WORK ONE SITUATION THROUGH THE WHOLE FRAMEWORK

Choose one situation that is still unresolved. Move through these questions slowly. You may find that one section matters much more than the others. That is useful information.

PRESENCE: Am I actually here with what is happening now, or am I somewhere else mentally?

AWARENESS: What am I thinking, feeling, and making this mean?

BELIEFS: What belief is underneath my reaction?

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE: What reality am I still resisting?

VULNERABILITY: What truth do I need to be honest about, including my own part?

DISCERNMENT: What am I noticing, and what still needs to be verified?

EMOTIONAL REGULATION: What do I need in order to respond from a grounded place?

KEEP PRACTICING

WHERE TO BEGIN THIS WEEK

You do not need to master all seven practices. Pick the one that keeps showing up for you. Work with it in one real conversation or decision this week. Pay attention to what changes when you notice your internal response before you act on it.

✦ YOUR FOCUS

Choose one practice to focus on this week. Write the situation where you want to use it, and what you want to notice in yourself.

The practice I want to work with is:

The situation where I want to use it is:

What I want to pay attention to in myself is:

Afterward, what did I notice?

Thank you for doing the inner work.

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