

Deliberate Doubt Participant Guide

Thinking traps, questions, and leadership practice

Deliberate Doubt is the practice of interrupting certainty with curiosity so our first answer doesn't become our only answer.

Three Thinking Traps

Thinking trap	What to notice	Deliberate Doubt question
Availability Heuristic	Relying on information that comes to mind quickly and easily. Watch for the information that comes first.	What might I not be seeing?
Binary Thinking	Assuming there are only two solutions to a problem or challenge. Watch for either-or choices.	What else could be true?
Confirmation Bias	Favoring information that supports what we already believe. Watch for evidence supporting the first answer.	What evidence could challenge that?

The Readiness Decision

- 01 A cross-functional rollout will launch in three weeks. The project team reports that it is on track.
- 02 A respected director whose team will be most affected says, "We are not ready to move forward."
- 03 When asked why, they offer no specifics. They also missed the last two planning meetings.

The explanation that came to me first

What that first answer assumed about motive, meaning, or context

Thinking trap(s) I noticed ☐ Availability ☐ Binary ☐ Confirmation

One question I could ask the director before deciding what to do

After the new information: What changed?

Apply Deliberate Doubt to a Current Situation

Choose a leadership situation you are currently navigating. You have an initial read, but you have not decided what to do. Choose something that matters, but not one that feels too raw to discuss here.

Triad Practice

- Share the situation and your current first answer. Keep this to about one minute.
- Name the thinking trap that may be influencing your answer. The case owner chooses the trap.
- Use the matching Deliberate Doubt question. Identify the evidence or conversation you need next.

Partners ask questions and reflect what they hear. They do not diagnose the trap or advise the case owner.

1 What is the situation?

2 What is your current first answer about what it means?

3 Which trap may be influencing that answer? ☐ Availability ☐ Binary ☐ Confirmation

Availability: What might I not be seeing?

Binary: What else could be true?

Confirmation: What evidence could challenge that?

What in your thinking makes you choose that trap?

4 What changed when you asked the matching Deliberate Doubt question?

5 What evidence do you need, or what conversation do you need to have?

My Plan

The trap I will watch for

The question I will use

The real decision or conversation where I will use it
