

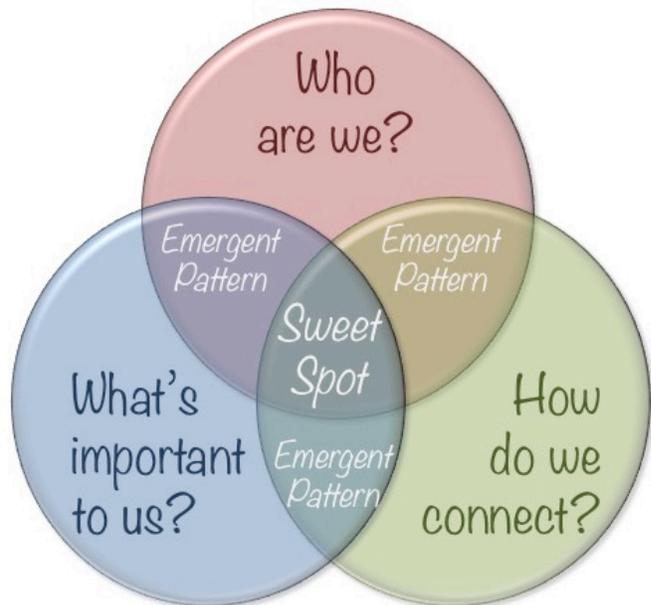
Radical Inquiry: Setting Conditions for Success

by Royce Holladay

A few years ago I was doing some informal coaching as a colleague was going through significant life transitions. She wanted help thinking about possibilities and directions she stepped into new areas of work. We talked about patterns of decision making, interaction, and creativity she wanted and how she might shape those patterns across different areas of her life. In a less than an hour, she had defined what she wanted and identified several possible steps for moving forward. Over time she has continued making progress, refining her personal vision and moving forward.

Since then this approach became the heart of **Simple Rules: A Radical Inquiry Into Self**, a book I co-authored with Mallery Tytel. It has also been used in HSD-based coaching models. While it's always helpful to have an objective "outside" view to walk through the reflection with you, it is possible to step into a Radical Inquiry on your own. Refer to the image as you work through the protocol of the Radical Inquiry.

1. The first step is to name patterns you want in your life. Start with the essence or the "sweet spot" of what you want. Refine that description down to a concise word or phrase that has particular meaning to you, and put it in the center of the diagram where all three circles overlap. That sets the tone and direction for the rest of the work.
2. Then ask yourself what general, overarching patterns will you see in your life, when you are functioning in that sweet spot. And in this part of the exercise, remember the definition of a pattern: *Similarities, differences, and connections that have meaning across space and time.*



Patterns are not one-word descriptors like "Trust," "Confidence," or "Honesty." Single word descriptors help me know what's important, but it's hard to use that to inform my actions. To see and understand a pattern, you have to use a whole sentence to describe it:

“I want to integrate what I say with what I do in such a way that people know they can trust me.” Now that’s a pattern that will inform my actions, helping me build patterns of behavior that are trustworthy.

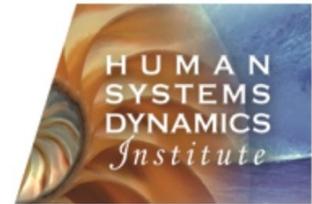
Identify three or four words that represent what you want and then create powerful sentences with the power to inform your actions. Those are the patterns you want to shape across the different areas of your life.

- Now, consider the conditions you need to create to shape those patterns. A Radical Inquiry is based on three deceptively simple questions, shared by Leslie Patterson and her colleagues at North Stars Writing Project at University of North Texas. These questions align with the Eoyang CDE model. The following table describes those questions.

Know the Conditions...	Explore the Questions...	Understand What You Are Looking For...
Container (C) <i>bounds the system as the patterns emerge.</i>	Who am I? <i>or</i> Who are we together?	This question forces you to consider your necessary stance, if you are going to live out that “sweet spot” you put in the center of your Radical Inquiry. Who do you have to “be” to live out the essence of your most desirable patterns?
Difference (D) <i>establishes the potential for change.</i>	What’s important around here?	When you identify what is important, then you can begin to focus on those differences that matter in your quest to achieve the essence of your most desirable patterns. You can look at the difference in degree (<i>more or less of what is important</i>) or difference in kind (<i>one idea or focus is more important than another</i>).
Exchanges (E) <i>allow for sharing resources, energy, and information across the system.</i>	How do we connect?	Consider the patterns you want to create to define how you will engage with your world. How will you explore, communicate, and connect to others to move toward the essence of who you want to be?

These simple steps of a Radical Inquiry can help you build a “road map” toward significant transformation in your life. Beyond using the image of your Radical Inquiry as a visual reminder, one important benefit of engaging in a Radical Inquiry lies in the deep reflection and exploration that goes into the process. The other benefit is the long-term value of an ongoing engagement with the ideas to see, understand, and influence your own patterns of being in the world. Use the model to begin this exploration and launch your own Radical Inquiry.

Be in touch and let us know about the patterns that emerge.



Radical Inquiry

