

## Single-loop, Double-loop, and Triple-loop learning

These examples show how deeper levels of learning lead to greater awareness and transformation.

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**Client Scenario:** A mid-level manager, Alex, struggles with delegation. He often feels the need to control every task, leading to burnout and frustration with their team's performance.

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### 1. Single-Loop Learning:

**Coach:** *“Alex, what are some ways you’ve tried delegating tasks to your team?”*

**Client:** *“I give clear instructions and set deadlines, but they still don’t get it and then don’t deliver as expected. Maybe it’s complicated for them..I dunno...actually ...”*

**Coach:** *“What could you adjust in how you communicate tasks to ensure better execution?”*

- ◆ *Single-loop learning focuses on refining existing actions. Alex might start giving more detailed instructions, using a project management tool, or scheduling check-ins.*
  - ◆ *However, the assumption that ‘clearer instructions = better delivery’ remains unquestioned.*
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### 2. Double-Loop Learning:

**Coach:** *“Let’s step back—Am wondering if there are assumptions here about their capabilities?”*

**Client:** *“Ha ha ...Yes, I assume they need my constant direction, or things won’t get done right by themselves.”*

**Coach:** *“How does that assumption shape your delegation?”*

**Client:** *“It makes me micromanage. Maybe I don’t trust them enough. I want to control how they do things. This delegation is difficult for me, tbh”*

**Coach:** *“What could shift if you operated from an assumption of trust?”*

- ◆ *Now, Alex is questioning their belief that ‘people need control to perform well.’ This opens the door for them to experiment with different leadership approaches, such as coaching their team instead of micromanaging.*
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### 3. Triple-Loop Learning:

**Coach:** *“Let’s go deeper. What is your view about this difficulty ..that you face?”*

**Client:** *“If I don’t control things, they might make some fatal mistakes. and then it’s on me And if I fail, I’ll be seen as .....”*

**Coach:** *“So, I hear delegation isn’t just about trust—it’s about how you see yourself?”*

**Client:** *“...Yes. I realize I tie my worth to always getting things right.”*

**Coach:** *“What if you had to look at yourself as someone different than the controller ... May I suggest ...Like an empowering person ...*

**Client:** *“That’s a completely different way of seeing it. If I redefine that, maybe I don’t have to prove myself through control.”*

◆ *Triple-loop learning shifts Alex’s self-concept. They move beyond changing behavior (single-loop) or assumptions (double-loop) to redefining their identity as a leader. This is where transformation happens.*

### 4. Another Context: Giving Feedback

- **Single-loop learning:** Alex refines how they phrase feedback (e.g., using more positive reinforcement).
- **Double-loop learning:** They question their belief that “giving negative feedback will make me unpopular” and reframe it as “feedback helps my team grow.”
- **Triple-loop learning:** They realize their discomfort with feedback is linked to their fear of conflict and explore deeper identity shifts to become a confident, transparent leader.

### 5. Another Context: Work-Life Balance

- **Single-loop learning:** Alex sets stricter boundaries (e.g., logging off at 7 PM).
- **Double-loop learning:** They realize they equate long hours with being valuable, which fuels their overworking.
- **Triple-loop learning:** They reflect on their deeper fears of inadequacy and begin redefining success beyond productivity.

**Key Takeaway:** 1st loop improves actions. 2nd loop challenges assumptions. 3rd loop transforms identity.

By moving through the loops, Alex experiences **true awareness, insight, and transformation**—not just behavior change, but a shift in how they see themselves.