

DO Therapy | Building My Capabilities

From "I Don't Know How" to "I'm Learning How"

We all have capabilities that come naturally, others we've developed through experience, and some we haven't had much opportunity to practice.

Sometimes we interpret difficulty as evidence that something is wrong with us. We tell ourselves, "I'm not good at that," "That's just not who I am," or "I should already know how to do this."

But there's an important difference between being incapable of something and not having learned how to do it yet.

Capabilities can include practical skills, emotional awareness, communication, relationships, problem-solving, adaptability, and the ability to respond effectively in unfamiliar situations.

The objective isn't to become good at everything. It's to recognize what you're already capable of, identify what you want to develop, and create opportunities to learn through experience.

NOTICE | What Can I Do? What Do I Want to Develop?

Begin by considering your existing strengths and capabilities.

- What comes naturally to you?
- What have you become good at through experience, repetition, or practice?
- What challenges have you learned to navigate more effectively over time?
- What capabilities do you admire in other people?
- What would you like to become more comfortable or confident doing?
- Are there abilities you've avoided developing because they feel unfamiliar, difficult, or outside your usual way of operating?

Consider: You may already have some of the underlying skills needed to develop a new capability. The opportunity may be learning how to use them in a different situation.

REVIEW THE GAME TAPE | What's Getting in the Way?

Choose one capability you would like to develop and explore your current experience with it.

- When or where would this capability be useful?
- What happens when a situation calls for it?
- What thoughts, beliefs, or expectations influence your willingness to try?
- Is the challenge a lack of knowledge, experience, confidence, opportunity, or something else?
- What do you typically do instead?
- Have there been times when you've demonstrated even a small part of this capability?
- What conditions or support might make it easier to practice?

Look for the distinction: Is this something I can't do, something I haven't learned, something I haven't practiced enough, or something I can do but find difficult under certain conditions?

These are different challenges, and they may require different approaches.

PRACTICE | Build the Skill

Choose one capability to work on.

Rather than trying to master the entire capability, break it into smaller behaviors you can observe and practice.

Example: Becoming more comfortable expressing appreciation

Instead of the broad goal "Be more expressive," try:

- Notice something specific you appreciate about another person.
- Put that appreciation into a simple sentence.
- Express it directly rather than assuming the person already knows.
- Notice how it feels to communicate something you might ordinarily keep to yourself.

Now consider:

- What specific behavior would demonstrate the capability I'm developing?
- What is the smallest version I could realistically practice?
- Where and with whom could I try it?
- Would observing someone, rehearsing, asking for feedback, or practicing with support be helpful?
- How will I recognize that I've made an effort, regardless of the outcome?

Try This: Create a small experiment. Choose a specific situation, decide what you will practice, and give yourself permission to be a beginner.

BUILD REPS | From Practice to Capability

Capabilities develop through experience, feedback, adjustment, and repetition.

Over the coming week:

- Create two or three opportunities to practice your selected behavior.
- Notice what gets easier and what remains challenging.
- Pay attention to the circumstances that support or interfere with your efforts.
- Use feedback as information rather than as a judgment of your worth or ability.
- Adjust the difficulty or approach as needed.
- Recognize progress, even when the outcome isn't what you hoped for.

Reflect:

- What did I practice?
- What worked better than expected?
- What was challenging or uncomfortable?
- What did I learn that I can apply next time?
- What is the next small step toward developing this capability?

TEST & LEARN

You don't need to become a different person to develop new capabilities.

You can maintain your strengths, values, personality, and identity while expanding the range of things you know how to do.

Being unfamiliar with something doesn't mean you're incapable of learning it. And feeling uncomfortable doesn't necessarily mean you're doing something wrong.

Capability isn't simply what you can do today. It's also what you can develop through curiosity, experience, and practice.