The Courage to Be a Beginner

A REFLECTION TOOL FOR INDIVIDUALS AND TEAMS

Most organizations say they value innovation, but innovation requires something many of us avoid: being bad at something.

Every breakthrough, every new skill, every successful strategy began with uncertainty. Yet many high-achieving professionals spend years building expertise, then stop putting themselves in situations where they might feel inexperienced.

The problem isn't a lack of intelligence or capability. It's that **competence feels safer than curiosity**. When individuals and teams lose the ability to be beginners, they often become less adaptable, less creative, and less willing to take the kinds of risks that meaningful growth requires.

This month's exercise is designed to help you identify where you may be choosing comfort over learning—and where a little more curiosity could open new possibilities.

WORKSHEET

Part One: Take Inventory. Think about your work, leadership, or life over the past year.

When did you last learn for the first time? What was it?

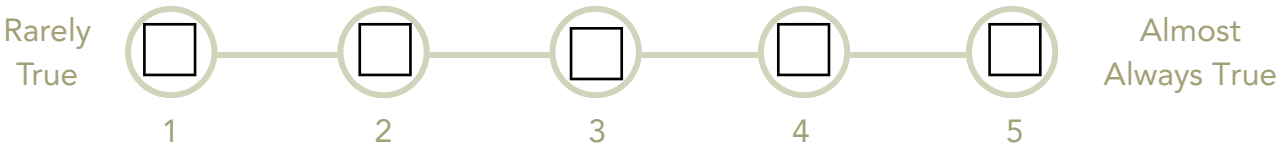
What is something you attempted that you weren't immediately good at?

What is something you've avoided because you might not be good at it?

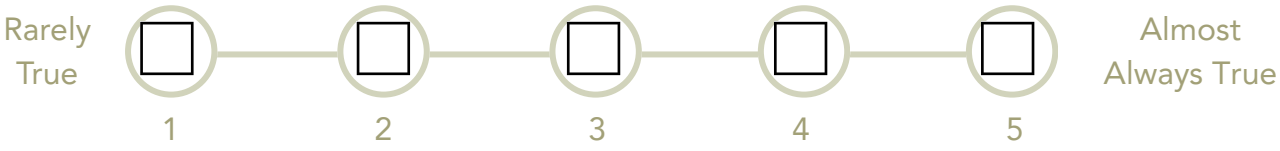
What skill, practice, or opportunity have you been telling yourself you'll try "someday"?

Part Two: Notice the Pattern. For each statement, rate yourself from 1-5.

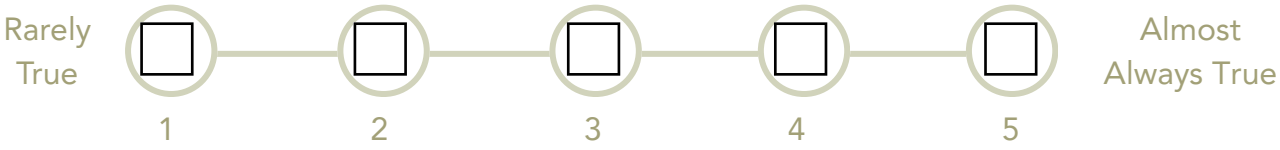
I avoid situations where I might look inexperienced.



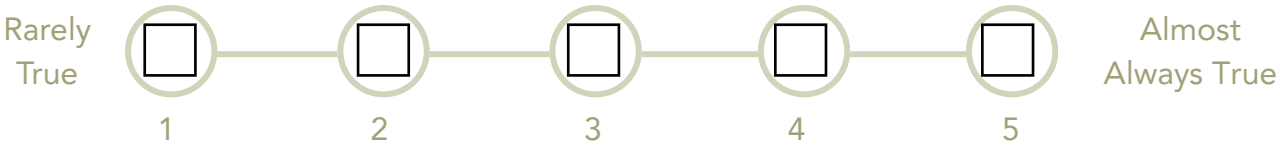
I share unfinished ideas before they're fully polished.



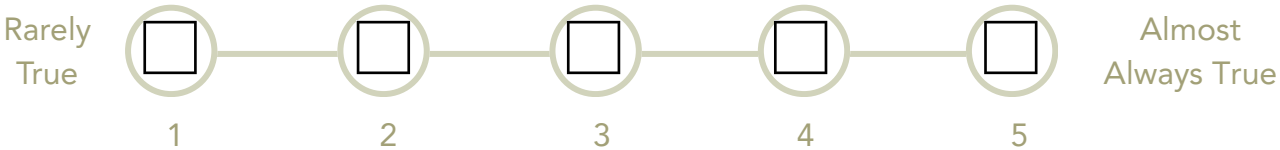
I ask questions even when I think I "should" know the answer.



I am comfortable receiving feedback while I'm still learning.



I give myself permission to be a beginner.



Part Three: The Cost of Staying Comfortable. Consider a current challenge

What would you attempt if failure, embarrassment, or judgment were not factors?

What might become possible if you allowed yourself to learn publicly?

What opportunity are you postponing because you want certainty first?

What are you protecting?

What might you be sacrificing in return?

Part Four: Team Reflection. Discuss together...

What have we stopped trying because we weren't immediately successful?

Where are we choosing polish over possibility?

What ideas might people be hesitant to share? What ideas have I personally been hesitant to share?

How do we react when someone says “I don’t know”?

What would make our team feel safer experimenting?

Where does curiosity need more room?

Part Five: One Small Experiment. Learning does not require a dramatic leap. Choose one action for the next 30 days:

- [ ] *Ask a question you've been afraid to ask.*
- [ ] *Try a new skill.*
- [ ] *Share an unfinished idea.*
- [ ] *Have a conversation you've been postponing.*
- [ ] *Volunteer for something outside your comfort zone.*
- [ ] *Ask for feedback on work in progress.*
- [ ] *Start something before you feel fully ready.*

Closing Reflection

Many people think courage is confidence, but more often courage looks like curiosity. It looks like admitting you don't know and trying anyway. It looks like learning in public and trusting that being a beginner is not evidence of weakness—it's evidence that you're still growing.

If this worksheet surfaced questions about your leadership, your team culture, or the way your organization approaches learning and change, we'd love to hear about it. At Connection Collaborative, some of our most meaningful work begins with conversations like these. Send us an email at annalisa@connectioncollaborative.com to continue the conversation.