



DOUG SILSBEE, PCC

## Week Two: Self-Observe

I coached a “C” level executive once who was both brilliant and insecure. He was a razor sharp business strategist. However, when anyone questioned him, he interpreted it as lack of confidence in him, and instantly felt defensive and under-confident. This expressed itself as shortness and impatience with others, who understandably became reluctant to disagree or ask tough but important questions.

I invited him to self-observe. To write down, on a daily basis, situations in which this reaction was triggered in him. He paid attention to the nuances of his own experiences with this, becoming intimately familiar with how a rather unhelpful pattern arose. Over time, and with related practices, he became able to recognize when he was going into his habit, interrupt it, and replace it with a different behavior.

Through familiarity comes early recognition. When we are able to recognize an unhelpful habit arising, we can couple it with last week’s move (Stop!) and choose something different!

Choose some habit that you tend to do, and that makes you less effective than you’d like to be. Could be interrupting. Could be giving unsolicited advice. Could be jumping in too fast to care-take others.

Now, observe that habit on a daily basis. Don’t try to change it, or eliminate the habit. Simply become familiar with it. When does this habit show up? What triggers it? What’s the earliest, most subtle sign that the habit is starting to kick in? Where in your body does the first hint of the habit originate? Write down, daily, a brief summary of these observations.

The act of noticing a habit arising provides a moment of choice, a moment of presence in which the future is not yet written. Noticing interrupts the inevitability of habit.

Doug Silsbee is a leadership coach, author and master teacher in Asheville, NC. His most recent book is *Presence-Based Coaching*. More information on Doug’s work is at <http://dougsilsbee.com>. Inquire at [ds@dougsilsbee.com](mailto:ds@dougsilsbee.com) or 828-254-2021 for a free consultation.