The EDGE
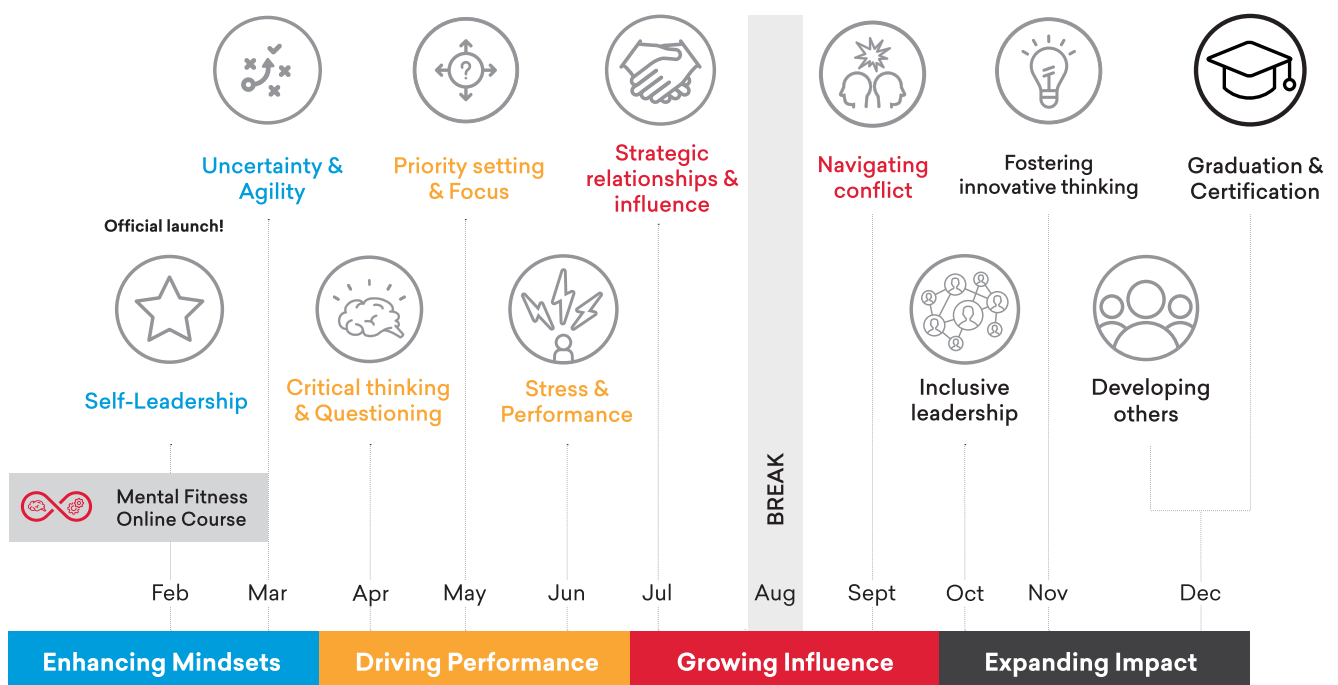
Welcome to The EDGE recap for zone 2

Driving Performance

Session 3: Critical Thinking & Questioning

Uncertainty & Agility

Priority setting & Focus

Strategic relationships & influence

Navigating conflict

Fostering innovative thinking

Graduation & Certification

Official launch!

Self-Leadership

Critical thinking & Questioning

Stress & Performance

Inclusive leadership

Developing others

Mental Fitness Online Course

BREAK

| Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec |

| Enhancing Mindsets | Driving Performance | Growing Influence | Expanding Impact |

This module helps you understand what drives **motivation, momentum and productivity**. You'll enhance your ability to cut through the clutter of our always-on world with its endless urgencies and priorities. Why? Because the way to accomplish more isn't to do more—it's to do strategically less.

Ready to get behind the wheel of your success? Hop into the driver's seat and crank up the engine—it's time to **drive performance!**

Driving performance

Driving performance

Critical Thinking and Questioning
Move from executing requests to uncovering the why that drives them

Priority Setting and Focus
Gain clarity on what really matters and optimize your capacity

Stress and Performance
Capitalize on positive stress and thrive in chaos

Session 3: Critical Thinking & Questioning

Date: 20th March 2023
Trainer: Jodie Rogers

In this session, we 'got' **clarity**. We explored how to fully **understand what's being asked of us** to deliver meaningful, impactful results. We learned how to **ask the right questions** to ensure that people feel heard and supported. And we also uncovered the most important question of all: '**What's the question behind the question?**'

The Critical Thinking Gap

We started with a **critical thought exercise**, with a splash of **barnyard humour**: 'A rooster is on the roof of a barn facing east. The wind is blowing to the west at 10 miles per hour. The rooster lays an egg. Which direction does the egg roll?'.

Polarities

But there's a fox in the henhouse of this riddle: it's filled with **false information.**

We often assume that the information we've been given is useful, and don't reflect on whether the information is true.

One of the most **important lessons** you can learn in life: *everybody isn't you*. We all make the mistake of thinking that **other people think the way we do**. Wrong!

Tip: remember to step up and step out of the data you're given and ask what **assumptions may be at play.**

When we did that in this case, we realised: **roosters don't lay eggs!**

That brought us full circle back to session 2, when Dr David Wilkinson had us play a 'chess' game that **turned out not to be chess**. Reactions had been very strong, and we wanted to examine that.

One definition of critical thinking: it's a mindset that involves being open to **challenging assumptions**–and the assumptions you should be most open to challenging are often **your own**!

Critical thinking

The Merriam-Webster dictionary:

the mental process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information to reach an answer or conclusion

Cambridge dictionary:

the process of thinking carefully about a subject or idea, without allowing feelings or opinions to affect you

Critical thinking: The skills that pay the bills

Learning to exercise critical thinking is essential to performing at your best. It's not just about **cognition**, but also about **emotions**.

What <u>skills</u> does critical thinking require?
It requires both cognitive and affective skills

Interpretation
seeing things from different perspectives, categorising, decoding meaning, clarifying

Open minded Analysis
ideas, identifying and analysing arguments without emotion

Problem solving
When used correctly, critical thinking helps you solve any problem—from a workplace to life challenges

Evaluation
assessing claims and arguments, looking for evidence and validated sources

Observation
look beyond face value. Embrace multiple points of view to identify potential problems

Explanation
ability to articulate choices, justifying methods and approaches, communicate arguments

Self-regulation
adjusting for emotions and biases, not relying on intuition or making decisions/taking actions when emotionally aroused, self-correcting

Communication
sharing the decision with evidence

Scripts for proposing and conceding (to change your mind in a discussion)

Proposing points

- One possibility is / would be to…
- Another alternative / idea might be….
- We could also explore….
- Thinking about the objective, it might be better if we
- We could consider X as a way forward
- Having heard all the evidence, I believe…
- I recommend that we X and I have 3 reasons for this recommendation

Conceding points

- Having said that, I can see how the opposite might be true….
- Having had this important discussion I now realize that….
- This is what we know so far, but admittedly, we need to explore further to come to a conclusion
- You raise some very good points and it's making me rethink my position
- Well this is new and interesting data that's making me reconsider
- I hadn't thought about it that way before, that's making me reconsider my point of view
- In light of this new evidence I think you might well be right
- Admittedly…..
- Rethinking this now, perhaps…..

Put on your critical thinking cap

Some words to live (and think critically) by:

1) Just because you **think a thought**, doesn't **make it a fact**.

2) Just because you **have a feeling**, doesn't make it an **accurate input**.

At its core, **critical thinking** is about:
* The ability to engage in **reflective** and **independent** thinking and reasoning
* Being aware of and mitigating **influencing factors**
* Being an **active learner** rather than a passive recipient of information

Put on your critical thinking cap

We have to climb all of them, one foot at a time!:

1) **Validate** sources of information

2) **Collect** a variety of sources

3) **Question**, **question**, **question** (also question your thinking and emotions)

4) **Organise** the data

5) **Choose** a way forward and communicate the decision

From there, you: **experiment**, **test**, and/or **continue/pivot**.

Critical system error: Why do we fail?

We don't always think critically, even though we should. We're only human. We examined common reasons for failing to think critically.

Why don't we always think critically?

- It takes energy and effort
- Our intuition, gut and emotions often overpower our reason
- We like to think fast - which often means being less accurate
- Sometimes we are overconfident
- It's easy to default to beliefs and consensus thinking
- We often default to unseen assumptions
- We are more closed minded than we realise (and not always open to being wrong)

Understand your assumptions

What **assumptions go through our heads** when we get a word request?

Often we breeze through those assumptions straight into execution mode, and that's where we go wrong.

If we make any assumption at all, it should be: this brief is **not well thought out**!

And when we get a brief, we should take 10-15 minutes upfront to **ask questions**.

Assumptions

That the request is well thought out

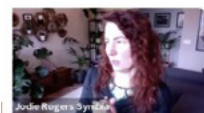**That the requestor understands the implications of what they're asking for**

That what is being asked for is what is needed

That the problem / challenge is the right one to be solving

That YOU (your time/thinking/energy) are the only answer

There's a tool for that
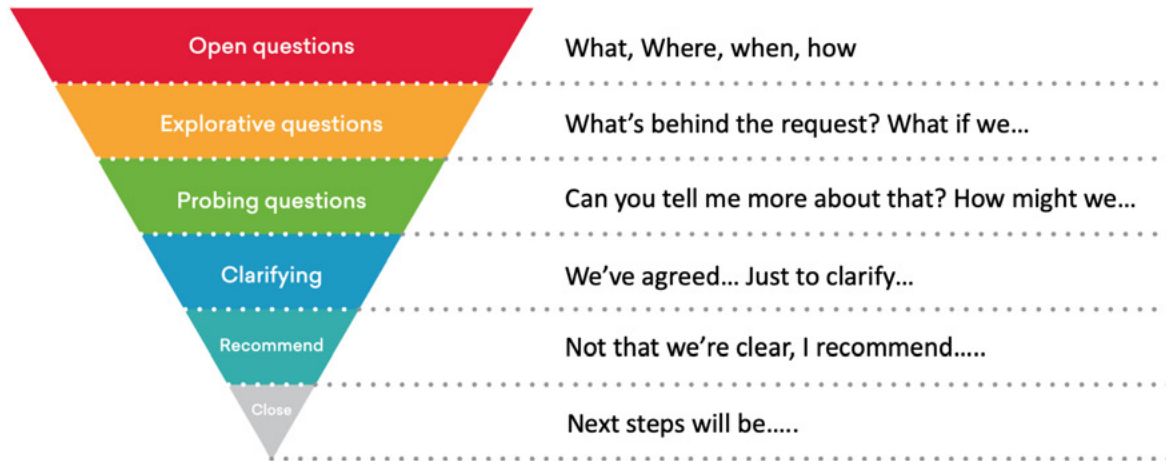
How can we get past those assumptions? We found a tool.

Question Matrix Tool

Context	Constraints
• What's the big picture? • How do you know this to be true? • What problem does this solve? • Is it the right problem? • Is it the right solution? • How does this fit in with the strategy?	• Budget/time • Who/what does this effect? • Who needs to know? • When do you need outputs? • What hard deadlines exist?

Politics	Vision of success
• What else do I need to know? • What are the different agendas? • Who might be against this? Why? • Who is in favor of it? • What resistance might we meet? • What if what we think is wrong?	• What does success look like? • How would you like it to be? • What do you want people to say/think as a result of this? • Who is for it? • How will it make a difference to you/the brand?

Got those questions? Run them through the **question funnel**—the action you need to take will come out at the bottom.

Question Funnel

Open questions	What, Where, when, how
Explorative questions	What's behind the request? What if we...
Probing questions	Can you tell me more about that? How might we...
Clarifying	We've agreed... Just to clarify...
Recommend	Not that we're clear, I recommend.....
Close	Next steps will be.....

This part of the session was a favourite for many!

To ask the right questions (and ask the right questions about the questions), we need tools and techniques. These range from **problem reframing** and **open questions** to **affirmation & reflection, foreshadowing & labelling**, and **summary.**

Affirmations

Praise people and be precise about what it is you are praising.

Thank you for getting that piece of work back to me so quickly it ensured we were able to give the customer a better service.

Important because it helps the other person feel valued and validated.
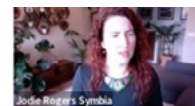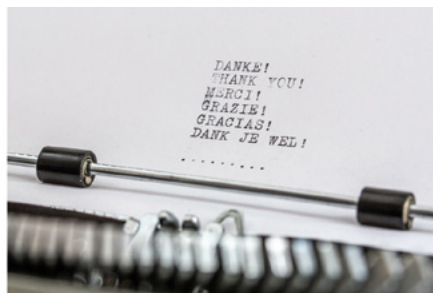
Reflection

Reflection - reflecting back a person emotions or words they have said.

Important because it helps the other person feel validated and it keeps the agenda about them and builds relationships quickly.

Foreshadowing

Say what you're about to do to give people a moment to register and mentally prepare. It sets the stage and means your listeners are less likely to be immediately defensive or resistant

I have a question.....	Do you mind if I challenge you on that.....	I think I'm hearing conflicting things, can I just clarify.....
I have a recommendation.....	Ok, let's brainstorm for a moment.....	Something isn't clicking in my brain, let me just sound this out

Labelling

Say what you see. Instead of registering body language but doing nothing about it (but get nervous) call it out, in an empathetic way. This creates an opportunity for people to come forth and share what's on their mind – illuminating any tension or confusion in the room

It looks like you have a questions	It looks like you don't like that idea	I can tell you've got something to say
I can sense some resistance in the room	I'm picking up conflicting messages	I think we're going on a tangent / off brief
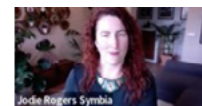
Summarise & Clarify next steps

Summary - reflecting back what you believe someone has told you.

Important because the other person feels listened to and if you haven't understood what they meant they will clarify it for you.
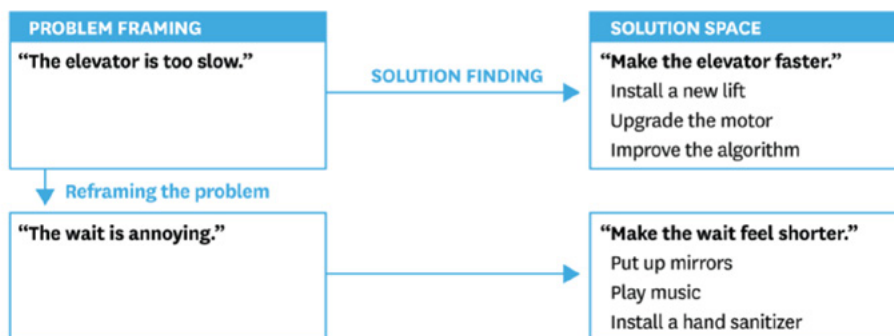
Opportunity to align on next steps and ensure there is no ambiguity moving forward

Reframing problems

Need to reframe? No problem! Jodie shared some concrete examples of **how to make the shift** from problem to solution.

Summary: Critical Thinking & Questioning

Critical thinking is when we move from executing requests to <u>uncovering the why that drives them</u>.

Notes from The EDGE

- A wise (but unknown) person once said: "Knowledge is having the right answer. Intelligence is **asking the right question**.'

- A wise participant in the session reminded us: "We do not have time to do [something] right, but we do have **time to do it many times**'. Why is that?

- Humility is the foundation of wisdom. Ask: '**What am I missing here?**'

Resources

- We can't **think critically** without learning to <u>spot our biases.</u>
- <u>**Thinking, Fast and Slow**</u> | Daniel Kahneman
- <u>**Reframing Problems**</u> | Roy Rosin | TEDxRadnorHighSchool
- Is it time to **check in** with your <u>support group</u>?