

Perspectives: Past, Present & Possibilities Guide



Introduction

This guide is a tool to help you examine your past perspectives and help you explore what is possible, all to discern how do you want to live right now. You can apply this to our current global pandemic, but you are free to apply the concepts to any situation you may be facing.

Background

There are four blogs which accompany this guide. They can be found at www.jgrayandassociates.com/blog for further reading.

Preparation

The only supplies needed to do this activity are a pen and maybe your smartphone with access to your calendar, photos, emails and texts, etc. You are welcome to jot down your thoughts and feelings on the spaces provided in this guide or to do so separately in a notebook or journal.

There is a YouTube video by [Julie Nolke](#) referenced in Part 1 and a podcast by [Daniel Pink](#) referenced in Part 3 but these optional listening for your participation in the activity.

Approach

The most important piece of this activity is to remember not judge yourself (past, or present) and to approach this with an attitude of curiosity and learning. Instead of a "Oh my gosh I can't believe that I did..." try to reframe this as "Isn't that interesting that I ..."

One note, this activity is designed for you to do on your own or to walk through with some support. If you'd like to have a coaching conversation as you process this, please do reach out.

Goal

Again, the goal of this activity is to help you see where you've been and who you've been in the past and to think about how you want to move forward in the future. This can help you understand any changes or possibilities you want to explore in the present.

Part 1: Pre-Pandemic

1. If you haven't seen it - watch "[Explaining the Pandemic to my Past Self](#)" In this short sketch, Julie Nolke illustrates a conversation between herself in April and January of 2020.

2. Reacquaint yourself with who you were in January/February of 2020:
 - Grab your calendar for those months, pull up your emails from that time, look at anything you posted to social media, scroll through the pictures on your phone taken back then, even look at old texts (if you have them back that far)
 - It's important to let this soak in and to do so without any judgment on who you were or how you spent your time. Just notice and absorb it all, reconnect with that time and notice any thoughts and feelings that surface.

3. Jot down some notes for yourself about what that time was like for you:
 - What was important to you?
 - What made you happy?
 - Where were you struggling?
 - Where were you spending your time? Your money?
 - Who was important to you? Who did you surround yourself with?
 - What were you looking forward to most?

Part 1 Reflections:

The only rule is to do this with an element of grace for yourself, no judgment or negativity, just awareness, and noticing.

Part 2: Past Predicaments

In coaching, I often work with clients who are facing a difficult situation at present and I ask them to look back and see when they may have faced something similar in the past. You may have not lived through a global pandemic before and it seems hard to imagine what the future looks like or even what is possible. This may take some exploration and focus to try to identify what skills you have to draw on from situations you've faced in the past.

Ask yourself:

- What skills do I have to draw upon to help me face the current situation?
- When have I faced similar feelings or emotions in the past? Where was I, who was with me, how did I respond?

Still stuck? Consider:

- Have you ever had a leadership change in your company which completely upended how you felt about your work or your job?
- Have you ever had an impromptu injury and found yourself stuck at home or on the couch?
- Have you ever been planning for a big vacation only to have crazy weather; a flight delay or cancellation foil your plans?
- Jot down the thoughts, feelings, and learnings that you may take from those previous times in your life.

Part 2 Reflections:

Again, allow no judgment or value assessment on these, just notice, and build your awareness of the skills, mindset, and abilities that helped you through situations in the past.

Part 3: Present Pasttimes

In Part 1 we looked back at who you were and what your life looked like back in January of 2020. In Part 2, we looked at who you are and when you have experienced difficult experiences in your past that you may have had to draw upon to help you face your current reality. Here in Part 3, we want to focus on who you've been during the past several months - how have you spent your time and what does that show you about how you want to move forward?

1. You may want to listen to [The Next Big Idea with Daniel Pink](#). In this podcast, he points out that at some point we'll all look back and ask ourselves, "What did I do in the Pandemic of 2020?":
2. Think about when you feel like this crisis started for you. For me it was 3/16/20 when I was driving home from an abruptly cancelled in-person client event, school cancelled, and everything started to sink in.
3. Start a bulleted list of activities and specific experiences that you have had during this time. It may help to think about each of the categories that follow:
 - **Physical** (e.g. slept 8 hours a night, worked out daily, took up yoga, logged 66 miles walking)
 - **Mental** (e.g. journaled, listened to unsolved mystery podcasts, watched Ozark, Tiger King)
 - **Spiritual** (e.g. attended church online, started a Centering Prayer practice, daily meditation)
 - **Social** (e.g. called family weekly, socially distanced happy hour, weekly Facetime with friends)
 - **Household** (e.g. online shopping for groceries, organized the piano bench, shredded papers)
 - **Vocational** (e.g. facilitated webinar, social media posts 2x/week, thank you notes to clients)
 - **Presence** (e.g. family game nights, had nightly dinners together, took weekend bike rides)

Part 3 Reflections

What I've done since _____ [insert the date when you feel like this crisis started for you]:

Two rules: 1) Be as specific as possible 2) Do this without judgment.

Part 4: Possibilities

We've been exploring where you're at, where you've been, and in this part, we look at how you want to move forward. In light of everything you've identified about where you started this year, when you've faced difficult situations in the past and how you've spent this time in quarantine, what do you want to hold onto?

- What do you want to take forward out of this pandemic or this season? This year?
- Why do you want to take this forward? What will this do for you?
- What would support you in this? How do you want to move forward?
- What do you want to create in your life?

Part 4 Reflections

If you'd like to connect further about what you identified in this guide, please reach out – I'd be happy to help!

About the author and creator of this guide:

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