

## SWIMMING WITH THE FISHES

For Curious Exploration:  
Unpacking the challenges on our plate to build confidence and trust in our next steps.

### INTRODUCTION

As humans, we love making choices, having agency, feeling in control. Yet we don't always seize the control we have and take action. Why?

In reality there could be lots of reasons to not make an intentional choice. Often the choices we resist the most are the ones that feel most nebulous, difficult or overwhelming. Sometimes it feels easier to pretend the choice isn't right there in front of us, to get under the metaphorical covers and hide in bed rather than face the daylight. The funny thing I've learned about choices, though, is that not making a choice is also a choice. Not taking action is also a choice. Letting the river flow and seeing where the current takes us is also a choice.

With Curious Exploration on the brain, this activity is all about getting curious and exploring what not's working in our lives: the stuff/people/decisions we avoid, the obstacles that drive us nuts and slow us down, even the mental/emotional drains that we'd rather pretend are not there. After all, how can we take steps to make confident choices if we don't first acknowledge what's not working?

This may not sound fun - but the amazing thing about naming what's not working is that it very quickly loses its intensity. Put into coaching terms, "what we resist, persists... but what we name won't remain." Which means that by finally acknowledging that elephant in the room (or, in the case of our activity, the fish that stinks), we can begin to take action to get it off our plate.

By the end of this activity, you'll not only have a better understanding of a crucial challenge you're facing, but you'll have the beginnings of a to-do list to help you resolve that pain point and move forward confidently.

Instead of shying away from "the tough stuff," I hope you'll join me in getting curious and exploring these hard things head on. Yes, hard stuff is hard, but hard stuff is so worth it – especially when we're talking about the future of our lives!

Onward,

*Ashley*



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### MATERIALS AND TIPS

1. Print out this worksheet and grab a pencil. Or, take some white easel paper, a thick marker and post-its to create your own "wall-size" version.
2. We're using a "stinky fish" to represent all the things that aren't working in your life: they could be anxieties, challenges, fears or anything else that you'd like to change or improve. Think of it this way: the more you carry around this stinky fish, the more it weighs you down (and the worse it smells!).
3. Using the fish outline in Step 1, write down as many relevant problems, challenges or energy drains that currently get in the way of you confidently moving forward with the change you wish to see. Then, choose one specific problem to focus on in Steps 2 and 3. To help you choose, consider: which problem do you see as the biggest obstacle to designing the life/work/relationship you dream of?
4. In Step 2, we unpack the problem you chose by first broadening its scope. Why is this problem important? What will resolving it achieve? Be sure to write your answers down on the worksheet - writing and seeing the words visually is an important step toward carving up that stinky fish!
5. Next in Step 3 we look at your problem statement from a different angle: what are some of the ways you might begin to tackle this problem? How might you get started? Again, write down these "how to's" so that you keep a visible record of the ideas in your head.
6. As you wrap up this activity, take a moment to notice and reflect:

What do you know now about this problem that you didn't know before? What's the impact of this new awareness?

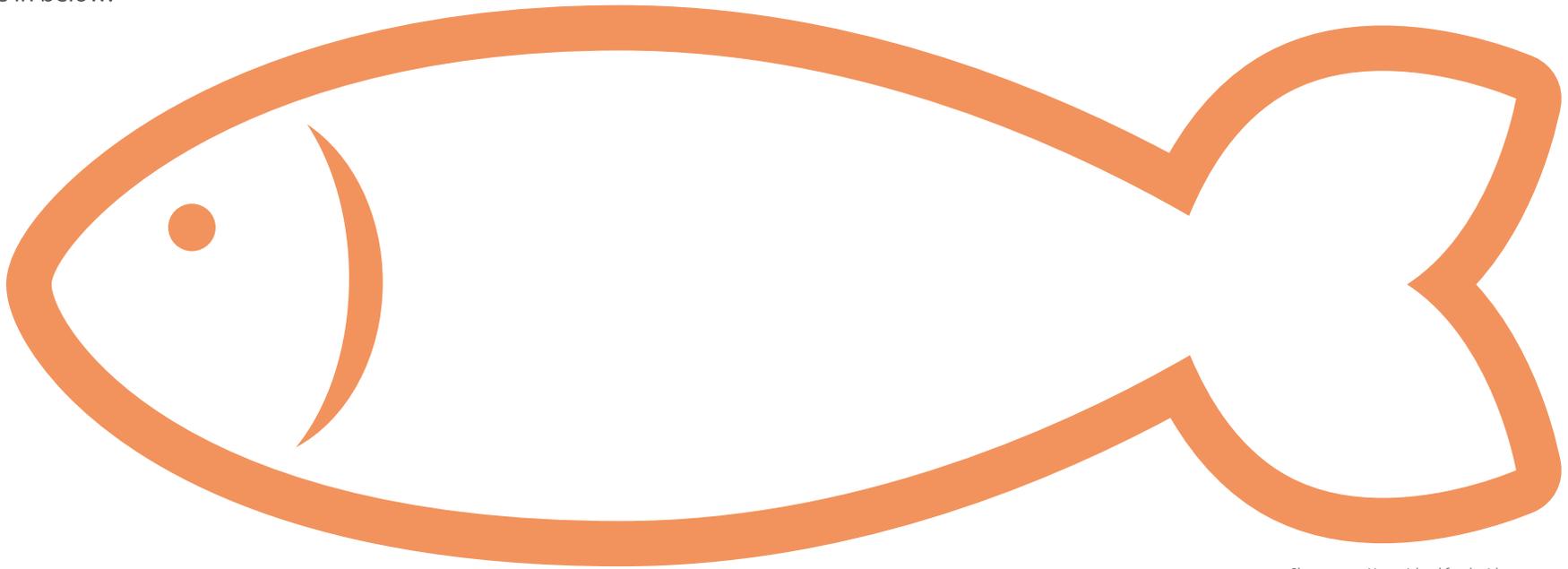
What is the shift that has occurred in your mental or emotional state since starting this activity? What's important about that?

What's one thing you can do today to make progress on this problem?

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### STEP 1: NAME THE STUFF THAT STINKS

Write in below:



Shout out to Hyper Island for the idea to create a Stinky Fish!

### BEFORE MOVING TO STEP 2: WHICH CHALLENGE, FEAR, ANXIETY OR PROBLEM AREA WILL YOU TACKLE FIRST?

Take a look at all the problems you've listed. Is there a common theme or pattern that you see? Choose one or more related problems and summarize them in a draft problem statement.

The Problem Statement I am going to explore is: \_\_\_\_\_

I believe that when this problem is resolved, I will be able to: \_\_\_\_\_

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### STEP 2: UNDERSTAND YOUR CURRENT PROBLEM BY BROADENING ITS FOCUS

What might you learn about this problem by reframing it?

WRITE ORIGINAL PROBLEM STATEMENT HERE:

↓  
WHY?

↓  
WHY ELSE?

↓  
WHY ELSE?

↓  
WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

↓  
WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

↓  
WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Look at the broader problems you've identified - do any feel more resonant, urgent or interesting to tackle than your original statement? Write 1 new learning or a-ha about this problem here:

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### STEP 3: UNDERSTAND YOUR CURRENT PROBLEM BY NARROWING ITS FOCUS

What might you learn about this problem by reframing it?

WRITE ORIGINAL PROBLEM STATEMENT HERE:



WHAT COULD YOU DO ABOUT IT?



WHAT ELSE COULD YOU DO?



WHAT ELSE COULD YOU DO?



AND WHAT'S ONE WAY YOU COULD DO THAT?



AND WHAT'S ONE WAY YOU COULD DO THAT?



AND WHAT'S ONE WAY YOU COULD DO THAT?

Look at the steps you've identified - do any feel more doable, realistic, or high-impact than you had originally expected? What's 1 thing you now know is true about your next steps?

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### SCRATCHPAD

Use this space below to capture additional questions, ideas or planning: