

Purposeful Practice

An Obvious (but Overlooked) Development Opportunity

Purposeful Practice is an intentional approach to skill development that integrates learning seamlessly into daily work and life, leveraging real-world situations as opportunities to build new capabilities. By setting clear intentions, choosing specific behaviors to focus on, and reflecting on outcomes, you can continuously refine your skills in small, manageable ways. Whether at work, at home, or in volunteer settings, purposeful practice turns routine interactions into moments of growth—accelerating development without disrupting the flow of daily responsibilities.

1. IDENTIFY THE SKILL TO BE DEVELOPED OR HONED.

What's one thing you know at least a little about and would like to get better at?

2. FIND A PURPOSEFUL POSSIBILITY.

Scan your environment and your schedule – both inside and outside the workplace – for opportunities to experiment with and apply your developing skill. What upcoming interactions, activities, or events might present the need for this skill? (Pro Tip: Start by choosing low-stakes opportunities to minimize risk and allow you to focus on the learning.)

3. SET YOUR INTENTION.

With a particular opportunity in mind, clarify what you want to achieve. When confronted with the situation, what will you do, how will you behave, and what approaches or techniques will you experiment with?

4. JUST DO IT... MINDFULLY OBSERVING THE EXPERIENCE.

As you purposefully practice, keep a keen eye on what's happening. What are you doing that seems to be working or not? How confident are you feeling? How are others responding?

5. EXTRACT ONE LESSON OR INSIGHT.

Take a moment (that's really all it takes) to reflect on the experience and crystalize one take-away. What did you learn that you can use in the future.

Learn more!

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