

WHY DO HUMANS DO THINGS THEY KNOW ARE BAD FOR THEM?

(TATA, Your Adaptation Voice)

The Deep Dive Worksheet: Cross-Examining the Closing Argument

This worksheet goes with the blog. It has 7 short activities. Each one tells you exactly what to do, and shows you a filled-in example first, so you always know what your answer should look like.

Take your time. There are no wrong answers here.

1. THE CLOSING ARGUMENT LOG

Instructions: This week, catch the moment TATA starts building her case for a pattern you already know isn't good for you. As soon as you notice it, come back and log it: the pull, the story she told, and the feeling the story was actually covering for.

What does TATA's closing argument usually sound like for you? (check all that apply)

- ☐ "This time is different."
- ☐ "I deserve this, it's been a hard week."
- ☐ "It's just this once."
- ☐ "I've changed, or they have."
- ☐ Other: _____

EXAMPLE ENTRY

The pull: The urge to text someone I know isn't good for me.

TATA's closing argument: "It's been months, I've grown, this time would be different."

The feeling underneath the pull: Lonely. Bored on a Friday night with nothing to distract me.

What actually happened: I didn't text them, and the loneliness passed on its own within an hour.

ENTRY 1 — The pull:

TATA's closing argument:

The feeling underneath the pull:

What actually happened:

ENTRY 2 — The pull:

TATA's closing argument:

The feeling underneath the pull:

What actually happened:

ENTRY 3 — The pull:

TATA's closing argument:

The feeling underneath the pull:

What actually happened:

2. CROSS-EXAMINE THE STORY

Instructions: Pick one "this time is different" story you're currently believing. Rate how sure you actually are, then check it against what would genuinely need to be true for that to hold up.

VERY SURE — SOMEWHAT SURE — NOT REALLY SURE — NO IDEA, HONESTLY

EXAMPLE

The story: "Going back to this job would be fine, the new manager is different from the one who burned me out."

Circled: Somewhat sure.

What would need to be true for this to genuinely be different: The workload would need to actually be different, not just the person assigning it.

Is that actually present?: No. The job posting lists the exact same hours and responsibilities that burned me out the first time.

New information, or the same story with new packaging?: Same story. Only the face at the top changed.

The story:

Circle one above, then write it here:

What would need to be true for this to genuinely be different:

Is that actually present?:

New information, or the same story with new packaging?:

3. WHERE THE CASE FIRST GOT BUILT

Instructions: Nobody's born needing a justification to return to something familiar and harmful. This activity traces back where that skill first got built, so you can see it as a coping mechanism that made sense once, not a personal flaw.

EXAMPLE

Where the case first got built: The same parent who made me feel most loved was also the one whose moods I had to constantly manage and explain away.

What I concluded from it: "Closeness and hurt come from the same place. Explaining it away is just what love requires."

About how old I was: Somewhere around 9.

Where I'm still applying that lesson today: I build elaborate explanations for people who hurt me instead of just registering that it happened.

Where the case first got built:

What you concluded from it:

About how old you were:

Where you're still applying that lesson today:

4. NAME YOUR MOVE

Instructions: When you catch yourself repeating a pattern you know isn't good for you, you default to one of two moves: accepting TATA's story completely, or spiraling into self-blame instead of examining the pattern. Circle the one you reach for most.

I ACCEPT THE STORY COMPLETELY — I SPIRAL INTO SELF-BLAME

EXAMPLE

Circled: I accept the story completely.

What this move protects me from: The discomfort of admitting I'm about to do something I already know doesn't work out.

What it's actually cost me: Repeating the exact same three-month cycle with the exact same type of situation, four times now.

One thing I might do differently if I dropped it for a day: Write down what happened the last time I believed this exact story, before deciding anything.

Circle one above, then write it here:

What this move protects you from:

What it's actually cost you:

One thing you might do differently if you dropped it for a day:

5. THE VERDICT FILE

Instructions: TATA is convinced each "this time is different" is a fresh case. This activity builds an actual precedent file: look back at times you've believed that exact story, and log what the verdict actually turned out to be.

EXAMPLE

The story TATA argued: "One drink after a stressful day won't turn into the whole bottle."

What actually happened: It turned into the whole bottle, like the last four times.

Was TATA's story accurate this time? No.

1. The story TATA argued:

What actually happened:

Was TATA's story accurate this time? (circle) YES — NO

2. The story TATA argued:

What actually happened:

Was TATA's story accurate this time? (circle) YES — NO

3. The story TATA argued:

What actually happened:

Was TATA's story accurate this time? (circle) YES — NO

Tip: keep this file somewhere you'll see it again. A real precedent file is a lot more convincing than a memory you can talk yourself out of.

6. A LETTER FROM AKO TO TATA

Instructions: AKO is your Higher Self, the part of you that can spot a closing argument before it convinces the jury. Let AKO write TATA, your Adaptation Voice, a short letter, thanking her for trying to make sense of things that were hard to sit with, and telling her what's changed since she first learned to build this particular case.

EXAMPLE

"Dear TATA, thank you for trying to make the confusing things make sense. I know that explaining it away used to be the only option you had. But I can sit with discomfort a little longer now without needing a verdict right away. Let's actually check the evidence this time, before you write the closing argument."

Dear TATA,

7. THIS WEEK'S TEN-MINUTE PAUSE

Instructions: The next time the pull shows up and TATA starts building her case, build in a mandatory ten-minute pause before acting. Predict what you think will happen in those ten minutes. Then do it, and come back and write what actually happened.

EXAMPLE

The pull I'll practice this on: The urge to check an ex's social media at night.

I predict: TATA will have three different justifications ready before the ten minutes are even up.

What actually happened: The urge was strongest in the first two minutes, then it got noticeably quieter, and by minute ten I was already doing something else.

The pull you'll practice this on:

I predict:

What actually happened:

Nothing here proves you're weak-willed, or that TATA was wrong to look for a way to make things make sense. It proves her script is overdue for a rewrite, and every caught story gives you a chance to edit a line of it.

You got this! Nobody is coming to save you... you have to save yourself!

HAPPYISH HUMANS

