

The Four Gates

This exercise was developed as a way to constructively take in criticism, but it can be used generally as a response to anyone else's behavior or influence on your life.

Imagine someone has a piece of criticism for you.

At Gate Number One you ask "Am I willing to hear this criticism?" Here you decide whether you are willing to engage with this person, this piece of information, to let it in on any level; you are not agreeing with the information at this point, only hearing it.

Just a bit closer to you, you find Gate Number Two, at this gate the question is "Am I willing to consider the truth of this criticism?" Here you consider the validity of the information, here you are willing to consider if it is true, or if some parts of it are true. If you find that it is true, or part of it are true, what you choose to do with it is at the next gate.

Here, even closer to you, you find Gate Number Three; here the question is "Am I willing to change my behavior in any way upon receiving this information?"

The gate very closest to you is Gate Number Four: this gate asks "Does this information have any bearing on my worth as a person; on my essential lovability?" At each point, you get to decide what gates you open, what gates you keep closed, but the fourth gate always stays closed. No matter the what the feedback is, no matter the environment, no matter what your own distress or the distress of the people around you; your worth as a person is not up for debate or question. If it works for you, you might conceptualize the seat of your soul behind the fourth gate, perhaps housed in a temple or sacred grove.

Adapted from a Heart of Now exercise: www.heartofnow.org

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