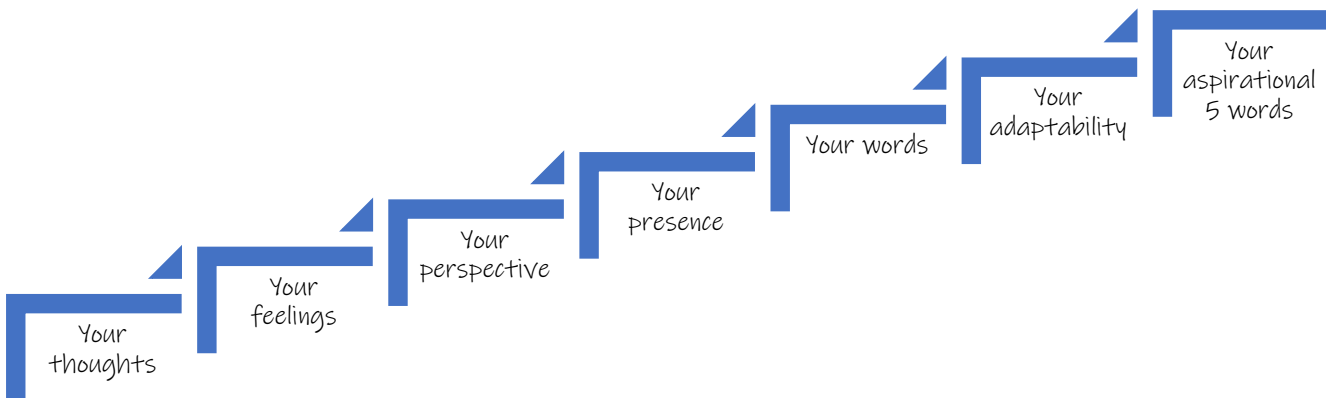


Creating a new narrative for yourself



These questions can assist you in creating a new narrative for yourself.

- What lessons has this decade taught you so far?
- How have you grown or developed?
- Where have you remained stuck?
- Describe your current mindset in 5 words.
- Find 5 words to describe the mindset shift you want.
- Take one step at a time from your plan to gradually bridge the gap between your 10 words.

The rational - Your thoughts

Understanding why the situation is the way it is brings some order to the complexity of what's happening and helps you to acknowledge the very real limitations. Note down the facts of the unsolvable problem - the reality for you, the time, energy and resource involved, the impact on you and others, the changing goals, the outcomes, the future.

Thoughts can be really tormenting so it's important to create choices about where you focus your attention. What tasks and activities really focus your mind and facilitate concentration? Do them! Being absorbed in this way brings you relief from the inner mental distraction you experience.

There are other practices to choose from here - [Can't get things out of your mind?](#)

The emotional - Your feelings

Identify the mixture of emotions you are feeling and acknowledge them without judging them. You might, for example resent a headteacher at another school because their situation is easier than yours or you might feel incredibly frustrated with a teacher who's on long term sick leave. Then you end up feeling bad about your feelings! Notice feelings as signposts to action rather than judge them as bad. And definitely don't add shame to the mix by believing you're a 'bad' person for feeling this way. See your feelings as a starting point from which you can create a new narrative and process them. In other words, find healthy ways to express them and in doing so, you'll release them.

You will have a preferred way of processing your emotions - it might be talking to someone who gets what you're talking about - a trusted colleague, friend, coach or therapist. You may prefer to articulate your feelings in writing and privately in a reflective journal. You might express your feelings without words through a musical instrument or through expressing yourself visually. A long walk or run might be the thing that works for you. The main purpose here is to get your feelings well and truly out of your system.

Objectivity - Your perspective

If the situation you're facing looms large on your day to day existence, shrink that perspective. Look in on yourself. Take a more detached perspective of the thoughts, fears, worries and frustrations that are filling your head. Step back, with kindness and without judgement, see yourself at your desk. From this distance, notice the frown on your forehead, the tightness of your shoulders at your computer, your actions and behaviours that reveal how much attention you give to those worrying thoughts.

[Expand the way you look at these problems and get more of a perspective on what really matters in your life and work.](#)

Being present - Being mindful

The consequence of occupying your mind with those worrying thoughts is that you are not really present.

Mindfulness practices enable you to experience the benefits of being present, of being attentive in the moment and that will make a significant difference to those around you, at work and [at home](#).

The more you can practise [mindfulness](#) or meditation practices, the more you'll be able to understand your thought processes and how they distort your perspective. The more you can direct your attention to the present, the less your thoughts will be ruminating on the the past or fearful of the future. Frequent mindfulness practices can shift old patterns of thinking and free up headspace for new and different thinking.

Yes, mindfulness takes a lot of practice but it is wonderfully suited to a little and often approach. So you can do it without having to schedule time in your diary - just reminders.

The [space that mindfulness brings](#), however fleetingly, enables you to be more the person you would like to be with others.

Vocabulary - Your words

How do you want to come across to others? How would you like them to describe you?

What can you do a little differently to ensure those descriptions match how you are perceived by those around you?

Aim to speak to yourself the way you speak to the people you most respect. Aim for kind words and [encouragement on the inside](#) and notice how that makes a difference to you and others over time.

Release - Your adaptability

One of the reasons you feel stuck in an unsolvable problem is that you're attached to how things were and those attachments to expectations, power and influence keep you stuck. 'Dead end', 'between a rock and a hard place' may be frequent phrases in your vocabulary.

To become more accepting, you'll need to release your attachment to how things were because the reality is things aren't going to be that way again. How do you work with children on this? You can use an adult version of that same approach for yourself. You know how to do this. There's a reason the lyrics to 'Let it go' are sung by so many with such feeling.

To become more accepting may also mean becoming more receptive to others, especially those who do things differently. Headteachers and leaders in education nationally are all facing these unsolvable problems. Meeting with others, connecting across different school communities can bring renewal and surprising opportunities to cross-pollinate ideas.

Letting go of how things used to be will mean you can free yourself of feeling stuck and start to move forward, becoming a little more at ease with uncertainty, a little more optimistic for the future and a little more willing to adapt.

Your aspirational 5 words

The above steps and questions can be tough going so it matters that you have some inspirational energy and hope to move you forward. Your 5 words describing the mindset shift you want can give you exactly that. The steps are the processes that will give you steady, incremental progress.

Your aspirations will reignite your sense of purpose and shift you from feeling passive or defeated by the unsolvable problems to being more alert to new opportunities and to make peace with your situation.