

# Lucinda

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## Hooks and Releases

**Big Assumption: If I make time for myself, I will be taking time away from work. That will lead to judgments from others (and myself) that I am selfish, that I'm not 100% committed to the cause.**

<b>Where do you see yourself in the sequence at this time?</b>	<p>Consciously released. I know that for a long time I'll have to be really conscious of my mindset about work and self-care. I'll have to choose this every single day. I'm undoing something that has deep roots. It doesn't make sense to me to think that will happen quickly. And I'm not done. But making this change doesn't seem so heavy or so impossible anymore. I think the big difference is how clear I am that I always have a choice. I am never just defined by circumstances.</p> <p>Since I have made changes to my nutrition, I see results – I am more rested, less stressed. I have much more energy. If I'm going to a meeting where there will be food, or if I'm going out with friends, I can let them know of my restrictions (I'm gluten and dairy intolerant). I see now that it isn't a big deal at all. I am learning to take care of myself. I'm learning that others really want me to take care of myself, too.</p>
<b>Have you reached any conclusions, or have any hunches about conditions under which your Big Assumption is valid? Think about particular situations – who, what, where and when.</b>	<p>I still have more testing to do to understand more about my assumptions. I think my immunities have had lots of layers and different issues intertwined together. It will take a while for things to be completely sorted out. BUT, so far, I've only been seeing evidence of how distorted my assumptions</p>

	have been and the negative impact of them.
<p><b>Have you reached any conclusions, or have any hunches about conditions under which your Big Assumption is invalid? Think about particular situations – who, what, where and when.</b></p>	<p>My Big Assumption can feel valid at work, but more and more I am seeing how it isn't valid. My boss takes vacation and doesn't check his email. He doesn't expect or want me to when I am on vacation, too. He wants me to take care of myself, and I know that others who report to me need to see me doing that as well. It is hard to remember that during a crunch time, but I am getting better at seeing that even then, there are times when I just need to stop working.</p> <p>My BA is definitely not valid in my personal relationships – the more I take care of myself, the more I am reconnecting with important friendships and relationships I haven't paid enough attention to. The more I take care of myself, that more I see how important that is for honoring my relationships.</p>
<p><b>Do you find your Big Assumption asserting itself in situations you know it ought not ("hooks")? If so, do you have any generalizations about the conditions under which you are likely (more or less) to find yourself being sucked into the old patterns associated with the Big Assumption? What still sometimes hooks you?</b></p>	<p>Hooks I still need to watch out for...</p> <p>When I get stressed about work and am on my computer, I can get sucked in. For hours on end....</p> <p>It is hard if I know that my commitment to eating healthily and not eating gluten or dairy will make things hard for someone else, especially if I think I might hurt their feelings, or if they think I am on some sort of fad diet not connected to my health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Eating according to what my body needs (especially because of my thyroid condition) restricts my diet, and that can make things inconvenient. I have to plan and prepare more so that I have the food with me that I need. I can get caught in a trap of feeling like I am a victim, like I don't have control/choice, like it is unfair. But this trap is getting much weaker now. I feel much clearer that I always have choices, that I can choose what is really</p>

	<p>important to me.</p> <p>Getting praise and other rewards for my hard work can also mean that I tend to start working even harder.</p> <p>Finally, I tend to be a person who sets her goals high and then can set myself up for failure. Because I really need to follow strict rules about what not to eat, it is easy to start thinking about my eating as “success” or “failure” in following these guidelines. I have to be able to go easier on myself so that I don’t get too uptight about being perfect or pushing myself too hard – that actually leads to self-punishing thoughts/behaviors instead of self-caring thoughts/behaviors.</p>
<p><b>Are there key “releases” (i.e., self-talk that unhooks you) you have developed and can use to help yourself easily and readily when you are facing your Big Assumption in real-time?</b></p>	<p>Things I can now tell myself to unhook:</p> <p>My life might feel harder because I can’t eat pasta, bread, cheese, but that is a tiny noise compared to the way I feel about myself, my commitment, my health. I used to feel those restrictions were unfair. Now I see it as a choice I make. I call to mind how it feels when I eat something that’s not good for me.</p> <p>I call to my mind what it feels like and what I sound like when I overwork. I don’t like the way it felt, how I sounded (e.g., snapping at my mom or my boyfriend). I don’t like how much I was ruminating. I remind myself that I invite that stress in. I remind myself that it is my choice. If I don’t make the choice to limit work, I don’t like the way I feel. That realization is so powerful.</p> <p>I notice whenever I start to feel like a martyr. When I start to get upset over things I have done at work that aren’t perfect, I have to say to myself, “That is over, done. I will make things better next time.” I can say out loud that I am having a really hard time and talk</p>

	through things and tap into my support system.
<b>To what extent / how often can you use these “releases” to help you from being pulled into old patterns?</b>	The more I do this, the better I get at it – I don’t let things go on for a long time without interrupting my negative thinking. I can even see changes in just the last few weeks.
<b>Have you developed new behaviors or ways of taking to yourself in situations that used to activate your Big Assumption?</b>	See above.
<b>Think about situations in which you think your Big Assumption is no longer accurate. What new beliefs or understandings do you hold about “how things work” or what will happen in these situations?</b>	<p>I used to feel like I should sacrifice myself for something I believe in (my work). I thought that was the ideal way to be. Now I see things differently. I feel like there is a part to that way of thinking that is completely invalid because it is actually so self-serving. Who do I think I am that I can’t take time off? Am I so important that everything will fall apart unless I’m constantly online? I just have to laugh at myself.</p> <p>Now I believe that if I put myself first, it doesn’t mean I’m selfish. In fact, “putting myself first” often means that I’m a better friend, girlfriend, daughter, and colleague because I am calm enough and clear enough that I can truly <b>be</b> with people. I can really be present, listen better. Putting myself first means that the quality of my time with other people has increased. And that nourishes me even more. It is a virtuous cycle.</p>

## Design, running, and interpretation of third test

### Design:

My Big Assumption Says:	So I will (Change my Behavior This Way)...	And collect the following data ...	In Order to Find Out Whether ...
If I make time for myself, I will be taking time away from work. That will lead to judgments from others (and myself) that I am selfish, that I'm not 100% committed to the cause.	<p>I asked for vacation. I am going to the Bahamas on a yoga retreat and raw food workshop for 9 days.</p> <p>I will not use my laptop – will leave it in the hotel safe in case I have to use it.</p> <p>I will pay attention to my body – to see what I need, what feels healthy, what feels good. That will be my guide.</p> <p>.</p>	<p>How it feels to focus fully on me – self-care, healthy behaviors, listening to my body.</p> <p>How it feels to disconnect completely from work for a bit.</p> <p><i>Is there anyone to whom you'd like to give a "heads-up" or ask to serve as an observer who can give you feedback after the fact?</i></p> <p>I'm going with a friend who is also interested in getting healthier. We can support each other and also talk about how we are doing.</p>	<p>I feel bad feelings (like I'm being selfish), good feelings (like rejuvenation, calm).</p> <p>I can disconnect from work and get in touch with other parts of my identity.</p>

Review your test on these criteria:	Yes	Not Sure
Is it safe? (If the worst case were to happen, you could live with the results).	x X	

Is the data relevant to your Big Assumption? (see question 2 above)	X	
Does it have face-validity? (The test actually tests your Big Assumption)	X	
Are the data sources valid? (No one is either out to get you or wants to protect or save you).	X	
Might it “re-true” your Big Assumption? (Is it designed so that it surely will lead to bad consequences, just as your BA tells you? Are you setting yourself up to fail? Is there any data you could collect that could disconfirm your BA?)		X
Is it actionable in the near-term? (e.g., the people or situation you need in order to enact the test are available, you are reasonably certain you know how to do what you plan, and you can run the test within the next week or so).	X	

## Running and interpretation of third test:

Interpreting Your Test Results	
<b>My Big Assumption Says:</b>	<b>If I make time for myself, I will be taking time away from work. That will lead to judgments from others (and myself) that I am selfish, that I'm not 100% committed to the cause.</b>
<b>So in Order to Test it I Changed my Behavior This Way:</b>	<p>I asked for a vacation and went to the Bahamas.</p> <p>Before and after the trip, I have been very consciously limiting my use of my laptop, email, cellphone, etc.</p> <p>During the trip, I checked my email but didn't respond to anything – didn't actually do any work.</p> <p>At the beginning of this test I was having a very hard time staying positive, but vacation definitely helped with that. I have been able to maintain that since I have returned.</p>
<b>This is What I Observed Happening:</b>	<p><b>Before vacation:</b></p> <p>Before I went on vacation, I felt like I kind of regressed. I was working hard to wrap things up because I knew I was going to be away for 9 days, and there were lots of things I wanted to get done before that. I was feeling stressed and overwhelmed and sick and tired. I was watching myself though, and I noticed two things:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When I start to return to bad habits, I also start to judge myself. That doesn't help – it makes things worse.</li> <li>2. I know that there are things that nourish me, that help me be in touch with the more affirming, creative parts of myself. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being around people who know and love me; who don't judge me and who accept me as I am.</li> <li>• Being outside in nature.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p><b>During vacation:</b></p> <p>While I was on vacation, I realized that overworking was leading me to feel resentful. I was losing motivation and questioning everything I and others did. Getting away helped me reconnect to my gratitude, and my sense of purpose. It helped me see I need to work to stay in this space and make sure I make time for the things (relationships, rest, time for myself) that support that.</p>

Here is the danger. When my hard work pays off and I get praise from my colleagues, it also feels really good. But it also reinforces a bad habit. I need to be careful about this and remind myself that that can lead me right back into my cycle of working all the time. I can see that pretty clearly now.

I was gone for 9 days and everything was fine without me. I checked email but didn't respond to any.

I went to the gym every day. It was hard, but I felt so good.

I did a lot of reflecting, and I realized that when I get too busy, I start to feel like a victim with no choice. But that's not true at all. If I feel unsatisfied or undervalued, I need to ask myself, 'what am I doing that is contributing to that? What am I not doing?' Asking myself that helped me find my gratitude again. I can see that I have a great job, a great life. Not 100% perfect. But pretty darn good, and I can make time for taking better care of myself.

I asked myself, "Why am I taking on so many things? What am I trying to prove?" I got really clear that I need to stop taking on so many commitments and responsibilities. I just want to fill my time up differently, not running around eating crappy airport food. **I want to fill myself up with myself.**

#### **After vacation:**

I had anticipated that coming back would be hard. I haven't been able to maintain all the good habits I had on vacation. I missed working out. I didn't immediately join a gym. But my boyfriend and I talked. Decided to walk more. Decided to check out the neighborhood gym. I didn't weigh myself, but I felt better. More energetic.

I am not going online at all on the weekends now. I feel a little less on top of things, but I don't think it makes that much difference in my productivity. I don't feel the need to be back in my work all the time. I'm definitely happier. I'm much more present with my friends, my boyfriend, my family. I'm not feeling like I need to be online or on email all the time.

I told my boss how good it had felt to be away and how resentful I had begun to feel before I left. I wasn't complaining. I wanted him to understand how I was feeling and how I needed to find my way in all of that. He listened empathetically and I was reminded of why I



	came to do this work, at this time, with this awesome team.
<b>And This is What the data Tells me about my Big Assumption:</b>	<p><b>BA:</b> If I make time for myself, I will be taking time away from work. That will lead to judgments from others (and myself) that I am selfish, that I'm not 100% committed to the cause.</p> <p>On some level that might always feel true to me. But now, when I notice what I am thinking and feeling, I can laugh at myself. Let's be real, the world doesn't revolve around me! When I overwork I don't take care of myself. When I don't take care of myself I am tired and I start seeing the glass half-empty. I start to feel undervalued, under-utilized. That doesn't help anybody. I have recognized that I am the one who has to take care of myself, that the only one who can take responsibility for that. The thing I want to be working with is really trying to stay in that space, really feeling that all of these things are choices I can make about how I feel, what I want, what will actually lead me to grow in all areas of my life. I see that I have more of a choice than I felt like I had. For some reason, I wasn't letting myself see that I have that choice.</p>

## Design, running, and interpretation of second test

My Big Assumption Says:	So I will (Change my Behavior This Way)...	And collect the following data ...	In Order to Find Out Whether ...
<p>If I make time for myself, I will be taking time away from work. That will lead to judgments from others (and myself) that I am selfish, that I'm not 100% committed to the cause.</p>	<p>What I will do: I will turn off my phone at 8:00 every night. That will give me at least 2 hours before I go to bed to be present with myself and my boyfriend.</p> <p>Whenever I can, I will leave my phone at home when I go out to meet someone to talk.</p>	<p>What are the consequences of unplugging?</p> <p>Do I miss something important? Does it matter if I don't find out about it right away? How do I feel when unplugged?</p> <p><b>Is there anyone to whom you'd like to give a "heads-up" or ask to serve as an observer who can give you feedback after the fact?</b></p>	<p>Does taking time away from work damage the quality of my work?</p> <p>Are there ways it can make me less selfish because I am actually connecting more with others? Being more present with them and with myself?</p> <p>Are there ways it can make me more effective at what I do because the technology is actually distracting me so that I can't focus?</p>

<b>Review your test on these criteria:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
Is it safe? (If the worst case were to happen, you could live with the results).	X	
Is the data relevant to your Big Assumption? (see question 2 above)	X	
Does it have face-validity? (The test actually tests your Big Assumption)	X	
Are the data sources valid? (No one is either out to get you or wants to protect or save you).	X	
Might it “re-true” your Big Assumption? (Is it designed so that it surely will lead to bad consequences, just as your BA tells you? Are you setting yourself up to fail? Is there any data you could collect that could disconfirm your BA?)		X
Is it actionable in the near-term? (e.g., the people or situation you need in order to enact the test are available, you are reasonably certain you know how to do what you plan, and you can run the test within the next week or so).	X	

<b>Interpreting Your Test Results</b>	
<b>My Big Assumption Says:</b>	<b>If I make time for myself, I will be taking time away from work. That will lead to judgments from others (and myself) that I am selfish, that I'm not 100% committed to the cause.</b>
<b>So in Order to Test it I Changed my Behavior This Way:</b>	I checked out completely over the weekend. I didn't do any work for 48 hours.
<b>This is What I Observed Happening:</b>	<p>Typically, I spend a lot of time on the weekend getting things ready for the week, lining up my schedule and getting prepared. I didn't do any of that.</p> <p>On Monday, I woke up at 6 and felt like I couldn't go to work because I hadn't gotten stuff done at home. I became really stressed out, frazzled. Not working completely threw me off, and I felt like there were big consequences. I became incredibly anxious.</p> <p>But then that afternoon I had my check in with my boss. My boss helped me understand that the world did not, in fact, fall apart. I thought to myself, "How incredibly arrogant of me to even think that it could!" I laughed at myself in that moment.</p>
<b>And This is What the data Tells me about my Big Assumption:</b>	<p>I can be offline from Friday until Sunday afternoon and the world won't end. The work will always be there. Other opportunities to build relationships and be with my family might not. I can check out in pockets. I want to check out even more, specifically on behalf of more self-care, and for maintaining my relationships.</p> <p>My boss showed me that my anxiety was really just an illustration of how my work identity and my "self" identity have been so intertwined. Feeling anxious about that actually proved that I need more balance.</p>

## First test results

<b>My Big Assumption Says:</b>	<b>If I make time for myself, I will be taking time away from work. That will lead to judgments from others (and myself) that I am selfish, that I'm not 100% committed to the cause.</b>
<b>So in Order to Test it I Changed my Behavior This Way:</b>	I told my boss and my team that I'm working on improving my health and taking care of myself. I told them the specific things I plan to do: go to yoga class once per week, as well as make healthy choices.
<b>This is What I Observed Happening:</b>	<p>I did tell others about my goals. My boss was supportive and said, "That's great! How can I be helpful?"</p> <p>I also have a colleague at work who offered to work with me on this. She has been really successful in her own journey to wellness and she has offered support in this area.</p> <p>I haven't been completely faithful to my exercise goals. I didn't do yoga this week, so I decided to start an at-home workout video -- 25 minutes per day.</p>
<b>And This is What the data Tells me about my Big Assumption:</b>	<p>People at work have been so supportive, that I can see that they don't want me to work all the time and burn myself out. That won't help anybody. As long as I keep that in mind, I see that I'm not being selfish.</p> <p>I can also see that others I work with also need time and space for themselves as well. I want the people on my team to have a work life balance, and in order for that to happen, I need to model that and to have a work life balance myself. My boss does that really well with me.</p>

## Design of the First Test of the Big Assumption

My Big Assumption Says:	So I will (Change my Behavior This Way)...	And collect the following data ...	In Order to Find Out Whether ...
<b>If I make time for myself, I will be taking time away from work. That will lead to judgments from others (and myself) that I am selfish, that I'm not 100% committed to the cause.</b>	I will tell others (my boss, my team) at work that I'm working on improving my health and taking care of myself. I will tell them the specific things I plan to do: go to yoga class once per week, as well as make healthy choices.	<p>What do they say and do? (E.g., Do they offer to help? Do they express concern about how I will manage that with my work schedule?)</p> <p>How do I feel?</p> <p>Is there anyone to whom you'd like to give a "heads-up" or ask to serve as an observer who can give you feedback after the fact?</p>	<p>To find out whether others can support me and see that this is an important goal for me.</p> <p>To find out whether there is an impact on my work (missed deadline, staying up too late to get something done), positive and/or negative.</p> <p>To find out how I feel... does taking care of myself lead me to feel I'm less committed?</p>

Review your test on these criteria:	Yes	Not Sure
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Is it safe? (If the worst case were to happen, you could live with the results).	X	
Is the data relevant to your Big Assumption? (see question 2 above)	X	
Does it have face-validity? (The test actually tests your Big Assumption)	X	
Are the data sources valid? (No one is either out to get you or wants to protect or save you).	X	
Might it “re-true” your Big Assumption? (Is it designed so that it surely will lead to bad consequences, just as your BA tells you? Are you setting yourself up to fail? Is there any data you could collect that could disconfirm your BA?)		X
Is it actionable in the near-term? (e.g., the people or situation you need in order to enact the test are available, you are reasonably certain you know how to do what you plan, and you can run the test within the next week or so).	X	

## Biography

### Writing the Biography of the Big Assumption: The Deductive Approach

*Lucinda did a narrative approach to the Biography (rather than the headline approach featured in the Change Diary).*

I decided to narrow my focus even more and have chosen the following Big Assumption as the one I really want to explore further:

**If I make time for myself, I will be taking time away from work. That will lead to judgments from others (and myself) that I am selfish, that I'm not 100% committed to the cause.**

The more I have been paying attention and reflecting on what others have noticed about me, the more I realize that my tendency is to be constantly working. I just don't seem to be able to allow myself to take any time away from my work, which means I can't take good care of myself.

**My BA says -- If I make time for myself, I will be taking time away from work. That will lead to judgments from others (and myself) that I am selfish, that I'm not 100% committed to the cause.**

My parents have always talked about the nature of hard work. For as long as I can remember my dad has always talked about being prepared for everything. Both my parents immigrated to the US in the 70s. They always had a plan to come to this country, to work hard, make money, go back home and start a business. They stayed because my mom wanted to stay. Their story is a typical immigrant story of "work hard and you will attain anything." That was a strong narrative in my life. My dad was always saying, "you have to be prepared for everything." His parents died when he was young and he became the dad for his siblings when he was 20. My parents separated when I was 3. My dad would say, "One day you are going to be alone—your mom and I won't be here anymore, so you need to be prepared." He told me to learn how to cook, clean, drive, change a tire. It felt very empowering to learn to do things on my own and to live independently. I always found myself working hard, working toward something.

When my mom came to this country, she was a cook and nanny for wealthy families. She learned how wealthy people in the US live and raise their kids. As a result, she made very specific choices in raising me. She always took me to museums, to cultural events, to take music classes, to appreciate art, to love to travel....to really relish in every possible learning experience NYC had to offer. She knew how to prepare me for that world. I learned how to love learning. I was very curious as a kid. I had lots of questions about the world, and whenever I asked a question, my mom would tell me to look it up. I would go to the library every day after school. I loved collecting information and learning about why the world



worked the way it did. In Elementary School, I felt like I had an identity as a really smart kid. I learned how to read when I was 3. I was too small to go to 1st grade when I was 4, so I went to K twice. By my second time in K, I knew how to read really well. Even though I was small, I was ahead of the other kids and that drew attention to me. My teachers treated me differently. I went to a small neighborhood school, and we all knew each other, so I carried that identity with me. I felt like I had to work hard to keep that up.

In college I was constantly looking for ways to show that I was working as hard as I could. Everyone said that after our HS experience, college would be “easy.” I actually got really good grades in college. That was where I started cultivating the persona of “I do everything.” I felt very empowered. I was healthy, smart, and fiercely independent at a women’s college. I thrived. I worked, took classes on other campuses, got an important academic based fellowship, applied for an independent major, got it approved and studies approved in the program I wanted. That’s where I developed the persona that I could do it all.

Almost unexpectedly, I decided to go into teaching. I was placed in a kindergarten classroom in a school in an under-resourced community. When I stepped into the classroom, no amount of hard work or planning could prepare me for teaching. I remember the weight of that responsibility. I remember a parent coming to me early on and looking for an answer about what to do about her daughter. I felt such a deep sense of responsibility. It was wonderful in many ways. But I had some very challenging kids who had experienced real trauma, and I didn’t know how to handle that. And there was barely anyone to lean on for support. I was working as hard as I could possibly work, but it simply wasn’t enough. There were some people who gave me advice, but that didn’t seem to make the difference I knew I was looking for, or the one my student deserved.

I learned how to close my door and work as hard as I could. No one bothered me and I kept mostly to myself my first two years. Then, I took on a teacher leadership position and switched grades. Things changed significantly, but what was most important to me was that I got the chance to have some of my original students again as 2nd graders. It was somewhat disheartening, though, because so many of my students were at exactly the same levels of academic achievement as when I had left them in K. I began to ask big questions about the effectiveness of my teaching and of the system as a whole. I questioned more and tried to get involved in as many ways as possible. I was pushing a system that wasn’t necessarily willing or ready to be pushed and I felt the push back. After 4 years at the school, I didn’t know if I was going to survive. I was so fragile. Ultimately, I decided to leave. It was hard because I felt like I was giving up on my kids and my community. I felt very connected to that community. I felt, “These are my people. How can I leave this? How can I depart?” I felt a lot of guilt. I also felt so, so tired, deflated, and depressed.

My next job was at a charter management organization, and again, I overworked. Two of our mottos were, ‘Find a way’ and ‘No Excuses.’ My perfectionist tendencies already meant that I would bring 10,000 percent effort to whatever I did. Nearly a month into it I had this

moment where I remember sitting in my car, paralyzed. I could not get out of the car. I remember my colleague asking, "What's the matter?" And I said, "Why am I doing this to myself? I get here when it's dark. I leave when it's dark. There are no windows in our school building, no natural light sources. Winter is coming and I'm not going to see daylight for the new couple of months. Is that what I'm going to do for the rest of my life? I live and breathe this stuff from 5 am until 11 pm. I work all day and night. I wake up in the middle of the night wrestling with a work related challenge. I dream about work. And then I get up and do it again." The thought of me doing that for the rest of my life frightened me, and I didn't want to get out of that car. I was afraid that I had lost my zest for life. I defined myself solely by my work. Period. But I couldn't leave. It wasn't an option. So I wept quietly and wiped away my tears. I couldn't leave. I put my work ahead of everything else in my life.

Somewhere between teaching and school leadership, I herniated a disk. I stopped going to the gym. I was working ridiculous hours. I became so afraid that I would hurt myself more that I didn't want to exercise at all. I gave up my healthy habits cold turkey, out of fear of pain.

Then I became a school principal. It brought me great joy to do extraordinary work alongside the most amazing people on the planet. Every day I felt the impact of our work and I was so proud of what we did. We were always striving to do right and better by our kids and families. I didn't feel alone; I felt supported by my peers and my school community. That was such a magical time. Sometimes I can't even believe that I lived all of that alongside such extraordinary human beings. We built a school from the ground up. But some really tough things happened towards the end of my 3rd year of school leadership and my spirit took a pretty big hit. As I started my 4th year as a School Leader, I started to retreat. I told myself I was the problem and the sole cause of things that weren't working amongst my team. I felt very much alone. I became like a turtle and retreated into my own shell. I had no idea how to solve the challenges I was facing, and the advice I was getting couldn't really give me what I needed, but I also couldn't articulate what I needed so I felt worse about myself. I remembered how alone I felt during my 4th year of teaching, and I how I promised myself that I would never let myself be that burned out again. I drew upon that learning and made the difficult decision to leave my school. I felt like I failed my kids, my community, my team.... everyone. It was a dark time.

I left my school and I went back to graduate school. Eventually, that allowed me to slow down, to focus on myself and on what I wanted and needed to learn to be able to lead more effectively. I also started taking better care of myself. In my job now, I am better about drawing boundaries. I don't ever want to feel that burnt out again. But I still have work to do. I think I always will.

Reflection Question	Your Response
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<p>In what ways does the biography (or biographic moment) explain your Big Assumption?</p>	<p>What I see from my biography is that I have spent so much time trying to take on harder and harder challenges while not taking care of myself.</p> <p>Hard work has paid off in my life. I got an excellent education and some amazing opportunities. I was a school principal at age 26. It is hard for me to imagine a world in which I wouldn't work as hard and still accomplish great things.</p> <p>There are so many ways I think my hard work can help dramatically impact some of the problems I see in the world. I don't want to die feeling like I didn't do everything I could to maximize every single one of my days. I don't want to live with regret that I didn't do all I could to make this world better in every possible way.</p> <p>I see how I learned that I must always work hard, and that if there is a problem that still isn't solved, I have to keep working harder. So there was no way to take care of myself because that would mean I wasn't working as hard as possible. I felt like I was rewarded by others for my hard work, and so if I slowed down at all, I would no longer get those rewards. I'd be judged and seen as selfish for not doing all that I could.</p>
<p>Does your biography (or biographic moment) illuminate any additional Big Assumptions you might be making? Do you notice any definitive, i.e., this-always-happens, quality?</p>	
<p>To what extent do you believe and feel the situation or events from your biography (or biographic moment) apply to your current life? If you think they do, how so?</p>	<p>I still want to do it all. I love it when say I can do everything. The hardest thing for me to do is put the computer down, put the phone away. I don't want to miss things, feel like I'm not on top of things. But nowhere in that equation do I factor in having meaningful time, to be present with a family member, to be present in my yoga class, to go dancing and to sing out loud. I love to do these things. But there is work to be done. I want so much to effect change in the world. And sometimes the only way I know how</p>

	<p>to change is to work harder, faster, stronger. More, more, more....</p> <p>But more and more I'm starting to realize that this type of thinking doesn't make sense, and the thing that makes me see that is I don't believe others should be working the way I do. I know it is wrong for others. I just see so many young adults who are running themselves into the ground. None of that is good for kids or long term reform. I think that is why this work fascinates me so much. I see my own challenges in that. If I can just bring others along with me and show them they should not feel guilty... it has become easy for me to be that person to other people. People are coming to me with their stuff and want to tell me their own stories. They know that I listen, ask questions. I am so genuinely curious and I realize how hard this work is. Yet I struggle so much with taking my own advice!</p>
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## Continuum of Progress

Column 1 Goal and Big Assumption(s)	1 <sup>st</sup> Steps Forward	Significant Progress	Full Success
<p>I am committed to getting better at leading a healthy life and putting my own health and well-being first.</p> <p>I assume if I did put my health first, then my work would suffer, and an important part of my identity would be impacted in a negative way. Furthermore, I assume that I would be perceived as selfish or not in service of others—that I would be judged by that.</p> <p>I assume that drawing attention to oneself is self-centered.</p> <p>I assume that being healthier will feel constricting -- like if I have to follow rules, I don't get to make my own</p>	<p>I read a lot about ways to eat for my thyroid condition. I enjoy learning about this issue, and I like the idea of figuring out what I need to change in my diet.</p> <p>I incorporate one healthy choice (e.g., a healthy juice or fruit) every single day instead of eating something unhealthy.</p> <p>I feel accomplished, like I am heading in the right direction.</p> <p>I feel like I could go full steam ahead, but I also know that is a problem because I can't sustain it. If I did, I could easily fall back into old habits- All-or-nothing thinking.</p> <p>I look for an "accountability buddy" who I could either go to the gym with, trade recipes with, or otherwise maintain accountability with as I move through</p>	<p>I do an elimination diet to clear my system of toxins and then add foods back until I can identify the ones that are causing me problems.</p> <p>I feel alive, open, cheerful, light, accomplished.</p> <p>I have developed some strategies that help me see mistakes, accidents, or failures as temporary so that I can get back on track. I'm starting to identify what helps me see them as temporary (rather than as reasons to give up).</p> <p>I have prepared for not being able to eat out. I have removed everything from my pantry that I can't eat. I have purchased items that I want to add to my diet. I feel good about taking care of myself.</p> <p>I am committed to</p>	<p>When faced with choices around food and health, I stop to connect back to my goal and make the healthy choice. I enjoy my choice and do not feel bad about it or feel like I <b>had</b> to make it.</p> <p>As opposed to feeling restricted or that this is unfair that I have to follow healthy guidelines, I feel like I actually do have a choice. I feel like it is an opportunity to make the right and healthy choice. I now think about unhealthy choices as restrictive because of their outcome (e.g., a headache, stomach ache). When I am making a healthy choice I am choosing NOT to experience those outcomes.</p> <p>I am ok with making a mistake or having a setback. I know it is temporary, and I can forgive myself. I can get myself back on track.</p>

choices.	<p>this change process.</p> <p>I tell a few people what I am working on and planning to do. I find someone at work who will help hold me accountable when I am there.</p> <p>I have conversations with my boyfriend about how we can support each other in reaching our goals.</p> <p>I have identified a few different restaurants that I know have healthy choices I like and others like too. I can suggest those when I go out with others, and everyone can be happy.</p>	<p>my “accountability buddy.”</p> <p>I catch myself when I am starting to overwork and get so busy it interferes with my ability to eat healthily and mindfully.</p> <p>My boyfriend and I have figured out how both of us can share responsibility for supporting each other. We have found recipes that we can both eat and enjoy. We know recipes that are easy to adapt to our own taste.</p> <p>Instead of connecting with people over meals, I have alternatives (going to movies together, going for a walk, etc.)</p>	<p>I have had some successes – weight loss, feeling better, looking better.</p> <p>I don’t see my decisions about my health as selfish or self-centered. I know that I am helping others at work by modeling what I believe and showing them that I believe it is important for them to take care of themselves too.</p> <p>I can say “no” when people ask me to go out with them to an unhealthy restaurant. I can let them know my preferences.</p> <p>I feel at peace and proud of myself for making a change.</p>
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## Self Observations

### Observing the Big Assumption in Action

Describe situation where Big Assumption got in your way	Describe costs to you ("what did it block, prevent or impair?")
<p>Situation #1:</p> <p><b>BA: I assume that being healthier will feel constricting – like if I have to follow rules, I don't get to make my own choices.</b></p> <p>In the last two weeks, I was way more conscious of what I was ordering and what I was putting in my mouth. But sometimes, even when I knew I shouldn't eat something, I said "oh well," and ate it. For example, I ate some beignets in New Orleans.</p>	<p>Situation #1:</p> <p>Eating the beignets was a BIG mistake for someone with gluten intolerance. I got so sick. I felt like a blown up beach ball. My stomach really hurt. I asked myself, "Is it worth it? Is it worth this craving to feel this sick? I don't think so...!" I'm not 100% there, but consciously asking myself that question is helping me get clearer about the costs and helping me decide if I want to keep paying them.</p>
<p>Situation #2:</p> <p><b>BA: I assume if I did put my health first, then my work would suffer, that an important part of my identity would be impacted in a negative way, that I would be perceived as selfish or not in service of others – that I would be judged by that.</b></p> <p>We had an Italian-themed lunch at work. I made vegetarian lasagna rolls with gluten. As soon as they were done, I tried them because I wanted to make sure it was delicious enough to take to work. I didn't pause and make a conscious decision. It was almost habit just to sample what I was cooking. Also I was really hungry. I was sick for a day and a half.</p>	<p>Situation #2:</p> <p>My stomach was so uncomfortable. I felt so bloated. Once again, I asked myself, "Why am I doing this to myself?" I was hungry, and I also wanted to see if they were good enough to take to work. I didn't stop to think about the consequences. I put the opinion of others before my own needs. This connects to my assumption that putting my own health first means in some way that I am being selfish and not really serving others.</p>
<p>Situation #3:</p> <p><b>BA: I assume if I did put my health first,</b></p>	<p>Situation #3:</p> <p>My initial feeling was disappointment, then</p>

<p><b>then my work would suffer, that an important part of my identity would be impacted in a negative way, that I would be perceived as selfish or not in service of others – that I would be judged by that.</b></p> <p>Today I was telling my boss about a project I have wanted to get underway. My boss said, “So how are you going to go about this?” I started to tell him about it, and he said, “You’ve been talking about it for a long time, since last year.” It felt like he meant: “...and not doing anything about it.” I felt really bad, like I had let him and my team down. I was disappointed with myself, but then I got a little defensive (in my head, of course).</p>	<p>embarrassment, then defensiveness. For a second I thought, “You don’t think I’m working hard enough. You don’t think I’m giving 100%.” I immediately felt guilty and embarrassed and vowed to work harder on that project. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized I was jumping to conclusions and assuming he was thinking the worst about me. I thought about how much he says that he is quick to judge, but I rarely experience him as such, if at all. It was as if this was the first time I directly felt judged by him. I quickly reframed though because if I automatically interpret everything that way, I feel like I can never work hard enough and that is crushing in every way. This situation shows me how important I feel my work performance (and how others see my dedication) is to my sense of identity. My fears about being perceived as less dedicated can get triggered very easily. This illustrates how I can get pulled into the belief that I must always work harder and make more sacrifices.</p>
<p>Situation #4:</p> <p><b>BA: I assume if I did put my health first, then my work would suffer, that an important part of my identity would be impacted in a negative way, that I would be perceived as selfish or not in service of others – that I would be judged by that.</b></p> <p>For work, I traveled to another region and met teammates that I had previously only known via conference call. As part of our get together the organizer asked if there was anyone with dietary restrictions. I replied that I was gluten/lactose intolerant and a vegetarian. I ended up arriving a little early to the meet-up, and I overheard the organizer ask one of the other</p>	<p>Situation #4:</p> <p>When I overheard the meet-up convener ask the other person offhandedly about the dietary accommodation, I felt hurt. I love bread and pasta just as much as the next person, I just can’t eat it without my body reacting and feeling sick. This isn’t a fad diet, it’s my health. I felt like she was judging me as being selfish or petty, just following a fad, and was left wondering if I could do the important work with someone whose response I registered as unkind and judgmental. I thought maybe I shouldn’t ask for special accommodations, even when they are offered to me, because others will misunderstand.</p>



<p>members of the group is she was the one with the special food requests, “because, you know, everyone is all into those fad diets right now!” I felt compelled to interject to say that I was the one who asked for the special accommodations but not because of a fad diet, because of my health. I felt judged by people I was just about to meet in person for the first time.</p>	
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Reflection Question	Your Response
What stands out to you? What do you notice most of all?	There are restrictions on what I need to eat. Those are costs – I can’t just do whatever I want. But there are also big costs when I just eat whatever is in front of me.
What does your B.A. do to you? What thoughts, feelings, perspectives, actions, & choices do you experience as a consequence of your B.A.?	Getting physically sick, wondering why I am willing to go through that.
Do you see patterns i.e., are there particular types of people, content areas, circumstances (inside yourself or in the environment) that activate your Big Assumption?	Not having time to pause. Not being mindful. Being alone. Being hungry.
Any “ah ha”?	I read an article in The Atlantic about the myth that women can’t get pregnant beyond 35. It made me start thinking about my own health. Women with my thyroid condition often have infertility issues. I already feel some biological clock pressure. I was thinking, “I can do something about that.” And that started feeling important enough for me to make a change. And if I had children and a family, I would want to be around them and in good health. One of my biggest fears is a fear of death, a fear of suffering (my own and others’). I remember thinking, “I have more choice in this than I am allowing myself to have. I can do something -- be more conscious of what I am eating and how I eat.”

	<p>There is a rational part of my brain that knows our goals only happen if the actions we engage in every day match what we want to have happen. I can talk about this in my work with schools and school leaders. But I thought, “Wait a minute! I am not aligning my time or my choices to my priorities at all!” Maybe these are the kinds of thinking strategies that will help remind me to stay focused. How can I be so thoughtful in talking about this with schools and school systems, and I can’t do that for myself? If I can do it with that issue, I can do it with this one.</p> <p>All this made me realize I always have a choice. I am always making choices. I can choose to live as I have been and pay those costs. Or, I can choose to live differently and get different results. I don’t have to follow anyone’s rules – I just have to be clear about what I want and what I need to do if I want that.</p>
Do you notice any additional Big Assumptions you are making? If so, add these to your 4-col map.	
What are your key take-aways?	<p>This all reminds me that in order for me to even attempt to do the work I want to do and make a deep, lasting impact, I need to be good to myself. I need to take care of myself. I need to do things that are good for me. I need to learn to forgive myself.</p>

## Observing Naturally Occurring Counters to the Big Assumption

Describe situation that casts doubt on your Big Assumption (including your thoughts & feelings)	How does what happened cast doubt on the absolute truth of your Big Assumption?
<p>Counter Observation #1:</p> <p><b>BA: I assume that drawing attention to oneself is self-centered.</b></p> <p>I went away for the weekend. We all cooked together. I was able to tell people about my food restrictions and cook new things that I could eat. I was surrounded by healthy eaters. Many had their own food restrictions and preferences.</p>	<p>Counter Observation #1:</p> <p>I felt like I wasn't the outsider asking for special accommodations. It felt easier to speak up and say "no thank you." I didn't feel self-centered or judged. I felt accepted even with my restrictions and preferences.</p>
<p>Counter Observation #2:</p> <p><b>BA: I assume that drawing attention to oneself is self-centered.</b></p> <p>I travelled for work and was asked if I had any dietary issues. I said I was gluten intolerant. They sent me the menu to ask if it would work for me. If not, they would figure out something else. When I got there, there were some gluten free snacks and some fruit.</p>	<p>Counter Observation #2:</p> <p>At first I felt bad, like I was asking for a lot. But then when I got there, I saw that they could easily provide good food for me without it being a big deal. I was happy, and I think they were happy to accommodate me.</p>
<p>Counter Observation #3:</p> <p><b>BA: I assume that being healthier will feel constricting—like I have to follow rules. I don't get to make my own choices.</b></p> <p>Today I had a craving for coffee. I think it's that it feels like fall, and there is a great coffee shop nearby. I wanted a latte. I asked my boyfriend if he wanted to go get one with me. He said, "Really?" That</p>	<p>Counter Observation #3:</p> <p>I thought about how it would make me sick. If I have a choice, why would I choose something that will make me sick? I'm craving coffee now, but I also know that I have delicious teas that I can drink. And that will satiate me. I hear my voice of "It's not fair I can't eat things." and I think I sound ridiculous. In fact, I can even laugh at myself! There are so many unfair things about life. This one is too small to get worked up about.</p>

<p>helped me pause and think. I said I would meet him there, and then when I got there, I realized I didn't want to do it. I didn't want to give into something that I knew would make me sick.</p>	<p>When my boyfriend asked, "Really?" I did take a moment to pause and be mindful. Then, I thanked him for being supportive without being judgmental. That's the sort of support I need.</p>
<p>Counter Observation #4:</p> <p><b>BA: I assume that being healthier will feel constricting—like I have to follow rules. I don't get to make my own choices.</b></p> <p>Today I didn't pick the right things to bring for lunch. So I wasn't satiated. So I went to go get something else. There is a fast food place across the street from my home and I thought about getting French Fries. But I thought, "this will taste good for 5 minutes, and then I will still be hungry again." So I went to the grocery store and got a coconut yogurt.</p>	<p>Counter Observation #4:</p> <p>I am not a victim. I am not constricted by someone else's rules. I am always choosing. I just need to be clear about what I really want.</p>

Reflection Question	Your Response
What stands out to you? What do you notice most of all?	I need to make sure that I pause and get clear about what I want. It helped to have my boyfriend ask, "Really?" That helped me take a moment to pause. So, that makes me think about what will help me be more mindful. I want to invite others to help me too, to use practices that help me be more mindful such as yoga, journaling.
What thoughts, feelings, perspectives, actions, and choices did you experience in these instances?	Feeling like I had a choice.
Do you see any patterns? Is the same doubt about your Big Assumption raised across	I had more time between having the urge to eat something and actually eating it, which

the different instances? Is there anything in common across the examples that might account for the counter-data? (e.g., particular types of people, content areas, circumstances, inside yourself or in the environment).	let me stop and think. Having someone else notice and help me think -- without being judgmental.
Did you act differently than your Big Assumption would have you act? If so, what did you do? What are your hunches about why you acted differently? Was it because of something "out there," or something you said to yourself, or some combination of the two, or anything else?	Yes. A combination of the two (see above)
What does the counter-data suggest to you about your Big Assumption?	I am already seeing how my assumption about not being able to do what I want is not true. I can also do what I want. I always have a choice. But I really need to be clear about what I do want. It is easy for me to slip into habits of feeling like things are being done to me, rather than taking the empowered stance.
What are your key take-aways?	Yes, I need to tell others at work what I'm up to so that they can understand what I'm working on and help support me.

## Immunity Map

1. Commitment (Improvement Goal)	2. Doing/Not Doing (Instead of #1)	3. Hidden Competing Commitment	4. Big Assumption(s)
<p>I am committed to getting better at leading a healthy life and putting my own health and well-being first.</p> <p>(I have a thyroid condition that makes it even more important that I eat healthily and that I avoid foods like gluten that aggravate my condition.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I don't prepare for stressful times so I end up eating whatever is quick and available (or not eating) which is usually not healthy</li> <li>• I only eat a very limited range of foods. I don't try new foods.</li> <li>• I put work demands ahead of exercising and cooking</li> <li>• I put offers to eat and drink socially ahead of my own needs for proper nutrition and diet. I don't make the right food choices in those situations.</li> <li>• I set unattainable goals.</li> <li>• I tell myself I'm just not good at being healthy and subsequently looking the part. I try to convince</li> </ul>	<p><b>Worries:</b> preparation will take time away from other things (work, relationships), won't have being unprepared as an excuse, will have to eat what I prepared. Won't enjoy myself, will feel bored, restricted. Will not do as well in my work, be perceived as incompetent, as unable to handle multiple demands in my life. Will attract unwanted attention. Will be perceived as self-centered, vain, which will make me feel ugly in a different way.</p> <p>I am committed to not risking other things (work and other people) for my own health and wellness.</p> <p>I am committed to not giving up on a way out of taking full responsibility for taking care of myself</p> <p>I am committed to not sacrificing choice (want to live by my own rules, to rewarding myself with unhealthy nutrition choices).</p> <p>I am committed to not being seen as incompetent or unable to manage multiple</p>	<p>I assume if I did put my health first, then my work would suffer, that an important part of my identity would be impacted in a negative way, that I would be perceived as selfish or not in service of others – that I would be judged by that.</p> <p>I assume if I didn't allow myself a way out then I would have to face my failure, that I just can't do it- that would be crushing.</p> <p>I assume that others will see me as incompetent or slacking off if they perceive me as putting other things before my work. They will believe I am not 100% committed to the cause.</p> <p>I assume if I can't rely on being successful in work, then I'll feel like there is nothing to lean on. <i>Who would I</i></p>

	<p>myself that these issues are not as important to who I am.</p>	<p>commitments.</p> <p>I am committed to not having the stable, reliable part of my identity (work) put at risk.</p> <p>I am committed to not drawing attention to myself.</p> <p>I am committed to not admiring the way I look and feel</p>	<p><i>be?</i></p> <p>I assume that drawing attention to yourself is self-centered.</p> <p>I assume that being healthier will feel constricting -- like I am having to follow rules, like I don't get to do whatever I want.</p>
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## Feedback

Even though my improvement goal is one that I selected because of its importance to me, I was curious to get feedback from others about it because:

- Letting others know what I am working on will let them know about my goals so that they can support me to improve
- I want to improve this part of my life, in part, because I want to be a better model to others – to walk my talk. That means it is valuable to know how others perceive me
- Some of my close friends and colleagues know me well enough to have important insights about the things I do that might be undermining my goal

Basically, what I learned is that people think I am often doing things that are inconsistent with my goal. My friends and colleagues say that I:

- Overflow my schedule, crowding out time to focus on my own needs and creating stress and other unhealthy conditions
- Am too all-or-nothing in my approach. I will either be extremely healthy and strict with myself but then when I get busy, I'll revert to opposite, unhealthy ways of eating and living (not sleeping, working long hours, eating on the run)
- Eat socially – going out to restaurants, eating too much when I go out, eating/drinking to be social

Their responses showed me that my friends and colleagues are aware that I struggle with this goal and see ways that I don't work towards it. In particular, I think the comments about scheduling and timing are helpful. I was aware of those issues, but I have been thinking even more about them now and noticing my behavior. I leave no time for planning, cooking, going food shopping, and that impacts my health. I don't leave time for that because I feel like I can't take any time away from work for my own needs or that will

be selfish. Last Tuesday, I went to work without eating breakfast and so one of my co-workers gave me her snack. I travel a lot for two of my jobs and I end up grabbing unhealthy airport food or eating whatever is available.

What was also clear to me is that they don't really see how big of a struggle this is for me. I think they assume that because I am so hard-working and successful in other areas of my life, I will be able to apply those habits to self-care too and that once I set my mind to it, I'll easily make progress. Actually, I think it is overwhelming and unsustainable to try and be perfect and successful at everything. In essence, putting so much focus on success at work that has been a part of this problem.

A few years ago, it would have been really scary for me to think about putting my own needs first. I would have felt like my whole identity – which has been wrapped up in work and my impact/results – was being threatened. I was so hard on myself. I would have judged myself. But I am not quite the same person anymore, and now I feel mostly curious about what is going on and why I can't seem to make healthier choices more consistently. I am definitely much more conscious of how I get in my own way.