

TRUTH DETECTOR

A GAME OF DISCERNMENT

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INTRODUCTION:

The ultimate goal of this Personal Existential Game is to help the existential player explore the tensions, releases and pleasures involved in concealing truth, both from oneself and others, and in delaying or intentionally forgetting its revelation.

Developing a conscious yet playful relationship to truth and its veils can help the player become an even more skillful truth-teller of human longing, desire, and loss, as well as to courageously take risks and make decisions in their own personal life.

The game is designed to help the existential player become aware of the ways the feeling of truth coheres and contradicts within one's internal experience, and to play with re-shaping partial truths into new, more wholly truthful forms. The PEG employs gameplay motivations preferred by creative-analytic type players, such as problem solving, pattern recognition, and creative expression.

SUPPLIES:

This game requires pen and paper (a journal is great), the list of personal core values (included), a list of ten truth statements generated using the provided prompts, the truth detector template for reference.

HOW TO PLAY:

1. First, go through the personal values exercise to distill 3-5 core values that you want to guide you in this stage of your life.
2. Second, make a list of 10 Truth Statements following the prompts on the left side of the Truth Statement table. The statements should be from your own experience and point of view, and describe your present state or desire. It is fine and in fact useful if the truth statements feel fuzzy to you at this time – if you're not 100% they are true. Make sure not to try to locate the initial truth in anyone but yourself. If you can't know what you feel or want, you can't discern the truths or lies of others.
3. Playing with no more than one truth statement a day, apply the TRUTH DETECTOR process to each one. If, after going through the process, you realize that the truth is not wholly true, see if you can create a new truth that improves your TRUTH DETECTOR balance and write the new one in the column on the right. After you've completed playing with the 10 initial truth statements, you can keep playing the game by applying the same process to other feelings, decisions, desires, and fuzzy truths in your everyday life.

List of Core Values

Abundance	Dedication	Kindness	Resourcefulness
Acceptance	Dependability	Knowledge	Responsibility
Accountability	Diversity	Leadership	Responsiveness
Achievement	Empathy	Learning	Risk Taking
Adventure	Encouragement	Love	Safety
Advocacy	Enthusiasm	Loyalty	Security
Ambition	Ethics	Making a Difference	Self-Control
Appreciation	Excellence	Mindfulness	Selflessness
Attractiveness	Expressiveness	Motivation	Service
Autonomy	Fairness	Optimism	Simplicity
Balance	Family	Open-Mindedness	Spirituality
Being the Best	Flexibility	Originality	Stability
Benevolence	Friendships	Passion	Success
Boldness	Freedom	Performance	Teamwork
Brilliance	Fun	Personal Development	Thankfulness
Calmness	Generosity	Peace	Thoughtfulness
Caring	Grace	Perfection	Traditionalism
Challenge	Growth	Playfulness	Trustworthiness
Charity	Happiness	Popularity	Understanding
Cheerfulness	Health	Power	Uniqueness
Cleverness	Honesty	Preparedness	Usefulness
Collaboration	Humility	Proactivity	Versatility
Community	Humor	Proactive	Vision
Commitment	Inclusiveness	Professionalism	Warmth
Compassion	Independence	Punctuality	Wealth
Consistency	Individuality	Quality	Well-Being
Contribution	Innovation	Recognition	Wisdom
Cooperation	Inspiration	Relationships	Zeal
Creativity	Intelligence	Reliability	
Credibility	Intuition	Resilience	
Curiosity	Joy		
Daring			
Decisiveness			

10 TRUTH STATEMENTS

PROMPT	INITIAL TRUTH STATEMENT	A WHOLIER TRUTH
A truth about something you want to experience in this lifetime		
A truth about something you might have wanted before but no longer want to experience in this lifetime		
A truth about something you want to do in the near future		
A truth about something difficult you went through that you're grateful for		
A truth about something from the past that you may regret		
A truth about your body or appearance		
A truth about how you feel about your body or appearance		
A truth about what you're attracted to or your sexuality		
A truth about an ambition		
A truth about something you think you can't do		

TRUTH DETECTOR TEMPLATE

Truth Statement: _____

BODY			FEARS
VALUES			OTHERS
WISDOM			INERTIA

Wholier Truth Statement: _____

BODY			FEARS
VALUES			OTHERS
WISDOM			INERTIA

PERSONAL VALUES EXERCISE

For the Truth Detector process, it will be helpful to know your 3-5 core driving values. You may have done this exercise before, but it's useful to do it again during a transitional period, since your values may have changed. To articulate your 3-5 core values, I suggest the following process. Look at the core values list above. Without overthinking it, circle/highlight values that resonate with you most right now. You can choose more than 5 at this stage, and may end up with 10 - 15. Next, look at this filtered list and see if you can make any clusters. Do any of the values seem to go together, or echo each other? Do they form complimentary buckets? Next, spend some time answering the following questions. Take 3 minutes to answer each question:

- 1) Think of a time in your life when you felt most alive. What values were being honored?
- 2) Think of a time in your life when you felt most lost, disconnected, broken, drained. What values were being violated?
- 3) List 5 people you know that you deeply admire, personally, professionally, creatively. What do they have in common? What values characterize them?
- 4) What value are you craving investing more attention and energy into at this point in your life, even if you haven't prioritized it before?

Now, reflecting on the values you've selected from the list and your answers to the questions above, write down the 3-5 values that appear across your answers. For each value, write a short definition explaining what this value means to you.

GENERATING TRUTH STATEMENTS

Before you start the truth detector process, you need to generate 10 current truth statements that you will play with. The most important criteria for the truth statements are: 1) that they feel true NOW, in the present, even if you are not 100% certain about them, and 2) that they are truths for YOU, not projections or even statements from anyone else's perspective. Use "I statements" for each one.

For example, for the prompt "A truth about something you want to do in the near future" you may write "I want to move to Portland."

TRUTH DETECTOR PROCESS

Once you have your core values and truth statements, you can start playing! Each day you play, select a truth statement you want to tackle. You don't have to go in the order they are on the table. In fact, you can write your statements on index cards or slips of paper, and select a random one each day to make the process more playful!

After copying the Truth Detector template above to your notebook (or printing it out like a worksheet), write your truth statement on the designated line.

Then, fill out the table below using the following guiding question:

WHAT SHOWS UP IN RESPONSE TO THIS TRUTH STATEMENT?

You'll be filling out 6 cells in the table. **On the left side are 3 things that we want to trust more in our truth verification process: BODY, VALUES, WISDOM.**

For the BODY cell, say the statement to yourself (internally is okay) and perform an internal body scan. Record anything that you notice somatically. Maybe you have a warm feeling in your heart. Maybe you get a kind of clenched gut. Maybe a little bit of a tingly, horny feeling in your genital region. Maybe nothing at all. Focus on pure bodily sensation. Try to be aware of the body's overall state and balance when performing this check. Make sure you're not overly thirsty, hungry, underslept, or in pain when trying to do this process, OR, alternatively, take note of those feelings as your somatic "tare" before you start.

For the VALUES cell, write down if any of the core values you've selected in the values exercise show up in RESPONSE to the statement. The response can be positive or negative. That is, the value may be stroked or triggered. You may also feel that another value you didn't articulate earlier shows up here and wants to be recorded. Or, none of your core values may show up as relevant at all. That is also informative.

For the WISDOM cell, see if anything shows up from your own personal prior experience or history in response to this statement. The wisdom cell may include your observations of other people and patterns in the world, but make sure it's something you've actually seen and observed rather than relying on hearsay or generalizations. For example, if you're making a truth statement about marriage, you may consult your wisdom and note, "I know some people who are happily married. I also know others who have had terrible divorces. I know others who have had happy divorces."

Then, you will move to the right-hand column. **Here are things we want to take into consideration but trust less than indicators on the left.** The things we trust less than BODY, VALUES, and WISDOM are FEAR, OTHERS, and INERTIA.

In the FEAR cell, check what shows up in response to the statement that takes the form of fear, anxiety, urgency, conditional or catastrophic thinking.

In the OTHERS' cell, record what shows up in the form of Others' opinions, values, recommendations with regards to this truth statement – that is, what you know others think about you. What you record here can be positive, negative, or even contradictory. You can write down multiple perspectives or behaviors of others. You can record opinions of people you trust and those who simply trigger you. If it shows up, write it down.

In the INERTIA cell, record your current inertia/momentum in response to the TRUTH STATEMENT. What are you already doing? Is it in line with the TRUTH STATEMENT or does it require a significant pivot? Inertia/habit/momentum is a kind of truth we should seriously consider but not necessarily let guide our lives. However, we also don't want to constantly be going *against* our inertia; this would make our lives much harder.

Here's an example of the first part of the TRUTH DETECTOR process done with the following TRUTH STATEMENT from my own life: "I want to apply to the full-time job my friend sent me."

When I said this statement to myself, something I've been seriously contemplating the last few days, I felt my stomach clench, which I recorded in the BODY cell. The VALUES that came up in response to the idea of applying for this full-time job were AUTONOMY (a feeling of financial responsibility/independence) and MASTERY (being able to do what I'm trained in doing, being a professional in the world). When I consulted my WISDOM, I realized that I don't really know much about this company or what the job might feel like for me. So until I know more about the culture of the organization, I can't be sure the value of MASTERY I imagine the job might allow me to feel will be truly available.

When I check for FEARS, anxieties, urgencies, I get some mixed responses. On the one hand, I'm afraid I'll run out of my consulting gig at some point, so the idea of a Full-Time job seems more secure. There's also a feeling of scarcity/urgency with regard to applying to this particular job, like if I let this opportunity go, I'll suffer negative consequences, become "unhireable". There's also an opposing fear though,

that having a FT job at all will be draining of my life energy, and leave me unable to work on my more creative and experimental projects (like being an Existential Gamemaker!)

Next, considering Others’ opinions, I realize that the fact that my friend sent me the job is a form of support for it, but she only sent it because she’s actively job searching herself. She’s very committed to having some full-time job even if she doesn’t like it. I also realized that ultimately no one really cares whether I get a FT job or not. Finally, I noted that when I described the job to my partner, he said it did not sound that interesting or impressive.

Finally, for the INERTIA cell, it would certainly be easier to not apply for the job, which will take effort and an interruption to my regular life.

Here’s the table version.

TRUTH STATEMENT: “I want to apply to the full-time job my friend sent me”

BODY	<i>Stomach clenched (-)</i>	<i>I'm afraid of not having money next year after my consulting job runs out -- what if it's not renewed? (+) If I don't apply for a FT job, I'll become un-hirable. I fear this job will take all my energy and make me abandon my more creative and daring projects. (-)</i>	FEARS (anxiety, urgency)
VALUES	<i>AUTONOMY - being independent, responsible for my own finances. (+) Potential for MASTERY, FLOW - doing what I'm skilled at. (+)</i>	<i>My friend who sent me the job is job-applying herself and really wants to have a FT job, even if she does not love it. No one really cares what I do. Partner says he's not impressed by the description. (-)</i>	OTHERS
WISDOM	<i>I don't know almost anything about what working for this company might actually feel like. (-) Most of the job seems to be independent research which in the past has sometimes felt very lonely and draining. (-)</i>	<i>I don't already have the job, and it's easier to just not apply to it. (-)</i>	INERTIA

Once the table has been filled out, you can move on to part II of the process. Consider what, out of the responses that have showed up to the truth statement, have showed up in SUPPORT of the statement. I like to put a little PLUS sign (+) next to those items. Consider also what has shown up in OPPOSITION to the truth statement and put a MINUS sign (-) near those items. Some of the items might not be either for or against the statement, or you may decide not to take them as such. For example, I might not want to actually take my FEAR that if I don't apply for this job, I'll be un-hireable as either for or against the Truth Statement, because having surfaced it, I see that it's a scarcity-based mentality and an irrational worry (technically, I'm kind of canceling the fear in my mind by applying a piece of wisdom that negates it – my experience tells me that jobs will keep being available, and I will still be “hireable” for a while). I'm also not going to take my friend's job search or the fact that no one really cares whether I apply as pluses or minuses, though the fact that my partner, whom I trust, said that the job didn't sound that interesting, is worth taking into consideration.

Finally, I calculate the items in the left column (my own body, values, and wisdom) as having double points while those in the right column (other people, fears, inertia) as single points. Here's my final calculation:

Support	Opposition
+ 5	- 9

So I got +5 points in SUPPORT versus -9 points in OPPOSITION of the truth statement. If the OPPOSITION column's number is greater, the truth is less true than I initially thought!

PART III of the Truth Detector process is creating a new truth statement that might seem more wholly true, based on the preceding investigation. I see that my main supporting items are VALUES and FEARS that concern my financial autonomy. A WHOLIER TRUTH STATEMENT then might be something like, “I want to increase my financial security.” I then will go through the whole process of the Truth Detector again to see if more things show up in support of this new statement than the previous one. They do! I realize there are many ways to increase my financial security, not just this one full-time job “opportunity.”

The new statement can go into your TRUTH STATEMENT table. It doesn't have to perfectly match the original prompt.

And that's how you play TRUTH DETECTOR!

Playing this game will help you build intelligence about your personal somatic signals, values, and experiential wisdom while cultivating discernment of fear-based reactions, other people's opinions, and your own inertia. Eventually, you'll be able to play TRUTH DETECTOR in your head, when some new uncertain situation or decision comes up. You might also be able to apply the TRUTH DETECTOR on willing friends or partners, but I recommend you play it with your own truths for a good while first.