



## Four Levels of Awareness and Engagement

This is an extremely helpful model that reveals how we engage with our life situations and issues. It is also an excellent guide for coaches to distinguish the transactional coaching realm from the transformational. As you read this you will notice that transactional coaching remains in the Situation level, whereas transformational coaching always begins with the question, Who do I choose to BE here?

“We begin this journey with a simple model of how we engage with life. In a very general way, you could say that there are four levels of awareness from which we engage with our daily experiences: drama, situation, choice, and opportunity. I know that this suggestion dates me, but you can remember the four levels by the acronym, DSCO (pronounced “disco”).

*[Excerpt from Alan Seale's [Create a World That Works: Tools for Personal and Global Transformation, 2010](#)]*

Level	Typical Questions
Drama	Whose fault is this? Who do I blame? Can you believe this happened?
Situation	How can we fix it, and how quickly?
Choice	Who do I choose to be here? What do I choose as my relationship to this situation?
Opportunity	What's the opportunity here? What wants to happen?

“In leadership and service, the Four Levels of Engagement give us a structure for getting to the true essence of what is going on as quickly as possible. In the same way, when we introduce this simple structure to those we serve, we give them an awareness tool that helps them begin to make significant shifts in how they approach challenges and situations. The simplicity of the model quickly expands awareness. Understanding these four levels is also a first step towards Transformational Presence and creating a world that works.

“Drama lives at the surface. **The Drama level** of engagement is the “he said, she said, then this happened, and then she said, and then he said...” level. It is so easy to get caught up in that level and start *reacting* to the emotions of a situation or story before pausing to consider how we want to respond. Reacting can be a significant trap when we want to be sensitive to others’

For more resources, visit:

[www.centerfortransformationalcoaching.com/transformational-coaching-resources](http://www.centerfortransformationalcoaching.com/transformational-coaching-resources)

\*feel free to share this resource with attribution\*

needs, feelings, and circumstances. Even for those who are more experienced in leadership and service, some people and situations can easily pull you in, especially if you have an emotional stake in what is going on.

“At the Drama level, the focus is usually on finding someone to blame. Typical questions are, “Whose fault is this? How did this happen? Can you believe he did that? What were they thinking?” Bring to mind a time when you have gotten caught in the Drama level in your personal or professional life. How did that feel? What happened to your focus and energy? Going to the Drama level can happen to any of us; you are not alone! Yet with heightened awareness and practice, you can learn to quickly drop beneath the drama and begin to perceive and understand more clearly. As you keep practicing, you get caught in the Drama level much less frequently.

As we drop below Drama, we come to **the Situation level**. Because we’ve looked beyond the drama, we are able to see what is going on much more clearly—what really happened or is happening. The typical question here is, “How do we fix it?” The main focus at the Situation level is usually damage control. How quickly can we fix the problem and get things back to “normal”? We move on and put the situation behind us, usually without learning from what has happened. As a result, a similar situation or challenge is likely to come up again because the real underlying issues were never addressed. Unfortunately, too often this level is as far as we go. We are well trained to look for who or what to blame or to be “problem solvers” and remain in these first two levels.

“**The third level, Choice**, invites us into a shift in consciousness. Here we are not speaking of choices about how to fix a situation, but choice about who we will be within the situation—our relationship to what is happening. At this level, the questions are, “Who am I within this situation? What is my role in how the situation came to be? What is my role in what is happening now? How do I choose to engage going forward?” This third level invites us to recognize that although we may not be able to change the circumstances or situation right away, we can at least choose who we will be within them. And that’s a huge step beyond where most people go. Now we, and those we serve, are claiming responsibility and choice in the matter, and together we can start to create something new. The door is now open for transformation and sustainable change.

“Finally, there is **the fourth level**, the deepest level, the one that we rarely get to in our culture, and the one where the most profound leadership and service occurs: Opportunity. When we move to **Opportunity**, our first question becomes “What’s the opportunity here?” or “What wants to happen?” This level is where the true power lies. Here we get to the gold. This situation has happened for a reason. It wants to tell us something—to help us clearly recognize what is not working or what wants to change or heal. In fact, there is usually a direct correlation between the Drama and the Opportunity levels: the bigger the drama,

For more resources, visit:

[www.centerfortransformationalcoaching.com/transformational-coaching-resources](http://www.centerfortransformationalcoaching.com/transformational-coaching-resources)

\*feel free to share this resource with attribution\*

the greater the opportunity. The drama is a wake-up call alerting that something wants to shift or transform.

“Once we have identified the opportunity, we then choose how we want to engage with it and what role we will play. As we engage with the opportunity, we continue to move back and forth between the Choice and Opportunity levels. Each choice reveals more about the opportunity, and the deeper we go into the opportunity, the clearer our choices become. As a result, our perception of the situation starts to change and we are able to move forward with new levels of insight and clarity.

“When we live in Drama and Situation, life tends to be about struggle and problem solving. We give the power to something outside of us, and we continue to reinforce presence and action that keeps us stuck. However, when we move to Choice and Opportunity, we take the power back. Consciously choosing who we will be in relationship to the situation empowers us to break free from struggle and create new circumstances and realities. Leading and serving from the Opportunity level cuts to the chase.

“Asking, “What wants to happen?” invites everyone involved to a higher level of awareness. At this deeper level, there can be great learning and powerful forward movement for everyone involved. It opens the door to much greater insight and information than if we were to just fix the problem as fast as we can. And it certainly brings much greater awareness than is available while reacting at the Drama level!

“Learning to live and work from the Choice and Opportunity levels starts with being focused and disciplined enough to step beyond the drama, and then means being courageous enough to name the opportunity rather than just solve a problem. It starts with being bold enough to *choose who you will be*, what relationship you will have to circumstances you meet, and to make a habit of asking, ‘What’s the opportunity here?’”

For more resources, visit:

[www.centerfortransformationalcoaching.com/transformational-coaching-resources](http://www.centerfortransformationalcoaching.com/transformational-coaching-resources)

\*feel free to share this resource with attribution\*