

The Five Whys Worksheet



The main objective of the “Five Whys” technique is to identify the root cause behind a problem by asking “Why?” five times.

This simple yet powerful tool was originally developed by Sakichi Toyoda, the founder of Toyota, as part of the company’s problem-solving methodology. While it was first used in manufacturing to uncover the root causes of mechanical issues, it soon became clear that this approach could be applied to any problem—whether personal, professional, or interpersonal.

At its core, the Five Whys exercise is about digging deeper. When we face challenges in life, the first reason we come up with is often a surface-level explanation. By repeatedly asking “Why?”, we peel back layers of the issue, eventually revealing the root cause.

This technique is especially useful in situations where we feel stuck or uncertain about what’s really holding us back. Whether you’re struggling with a habit, feeling blocked in your career, or experiencing relationship difficulties, this process can help you identify the underlying beliefs, fears, or patterns that keep you from moving forward.

By the time you finish asking “Why?” five times, you’ll have a clearer understanding of what’s really driving your challenge—and with that insight, you can create a more targeted plan for improvement.

Let’s get started!

The Five Whys Technique: Step-by-Step

1. Define Your Problem

What specific issue, challenge, or obstacle are you currently facing?

Example: *"I often feel stressed at work."*

2. Ask Why

Why do you think this problem is happening?

Example: *"I feel overwhelmed by my workload."*

3. Ask Why Again

Why is the answer from the first "why" happening?

Example: *"I take on too many tasks at once."*

4. The Third Why

Why is the answer from the second “why” happening?

Example: *“I have trouble saying no to additional work.”*

5. But Why?

Keep digging. Why is the answer from the third “why” happening?

Example: *“I worry that saying no will disappoint others or make me look incompetent.”*

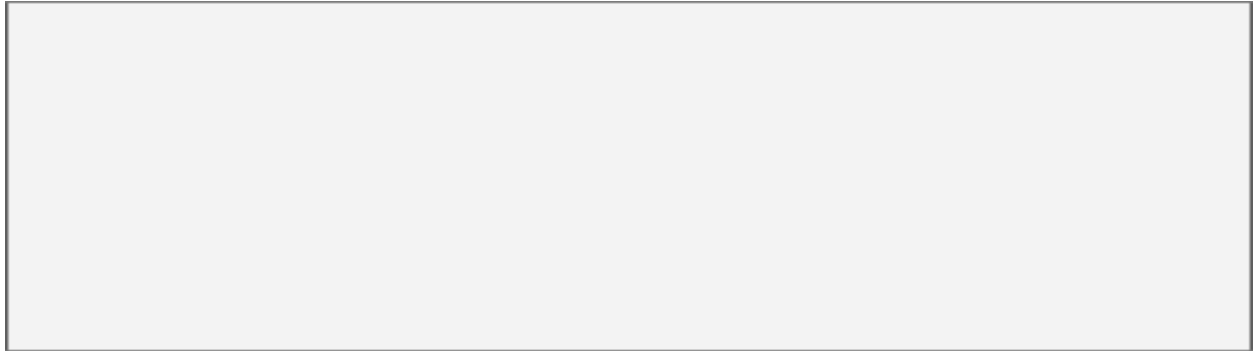
6. The Final Why

One more layer. Why is the answer from the fourth “why” happening?

Example: *“I tie my self-worth to others' approval and fear rejection.”*

7. Reflection

What is the core issue you discovered? How can you address it? Use the space below to reflect on what you've learned:



Example: *"I need to build confidence in setting boundaries and managing others' expectations."*

The "Five Whys" technique isn't a magical pill, but it can help you uncover the root causes behind a specific problem. The key idea is to dig deeper, beyond your surface level interpretation, and explore what truly drives your current situation.

Congratulations! You've completed the worksheet and taken an important step toward better understanding your challenges. Keep this technique in mind when navigating future problems and obstacles.