

Antagonism and Action

One of the most useful methods I've found to get closer to actionable truth is by creating (non-hostile) antagonism.

If I'm unsure about options, I will pick one and act *as if it's true*. I'll argue in favor of it as if it's the only way. I'll make the best, strongest arguments for it I can, and won't hedge. This requires someone else to take up the opposite position, if nothing else just to get it a fair hearing. But I'm gonna come on strong, so they are going to have to bring the strongest arguments to match.

With two people fully going to bat for the two positions, the truth is more likely to reveal itself far faster than if we just dance around the weaker "on the one hand but on the other hand" stuff.

Not only does going all in on one position draw out useful arguments from others for the alternate position, but it lets me test drive being a devotee of my position and see if it resonates with my gut. The most important truths are those you just know with your knower, even if you can't consciously articulate or understand why. Indecision is when that gut feeling isn't strong enough either way to cut through the intellectual pros and cons. Examining positions objectively at a distance is an intellectual exercise that doesn't always help discover the gut feeling.

But putting on a position like it's true and going all in gives a taste of what it feels like to live in that reality. The gut gets a chance to scream "this feels off" or "Yes, this is right!"

The hard part about this approach is that it can feel shocking or disheartening or overwhelming to people if they aren't used to it. I grew up in a loud, talkative, interrupting, arguing household. To me, disagreeing is not offensive. There's nothing personal about attacking each others arguments within a trusted context. But I've learned over the years this is not normal and I often end up bowling over people and they just yield to my pigheaded arguments...even if I'm just test driving them myself.

I've tried to ease back some, but mostly to collaborate with people who can get down with strong argument as a form of truth discovery.

PS - I find this works really well for action items. I do not like this approach for discovering philosophical, moral, or abstract truth.