The Loop

AFERR, explained by running it

Five moves every person makes to learn, decide and change. Told once for a ten-year-old, and again for anyone who wants to go deeper.



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● FULL LOOP ▮▯▯▯ PROPOSED

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CITE THIS WORK

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ABOUT THE EVIDENCE

AFERR is a conceptual framework. This paper links each idea to published research where that research exists, and labels every claim by how sure we are: Proposed, Observed, Tested or Reviewed. It does not claim that AFERR has been proven as a sequence in the brain, or that any phase lives in a single brain region. Observations from Evivve simulation sessions are reported as practice evidence, not as validated measurement.

LICENCE

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ORIGIN

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THE SERIES

00 The Loop (primer) · 01 Activation · 02 Forecasting · 03 Experimentation · 04 Realization · 05 Reflection



AT A GLANCE

All five moves

01 Every time you learn from experience, five moves run: notice, guess, try, see, keep.

02 We call them Activation, Forecasting, Experimentation, Realization and Reflection. Together: AFERR.

03 The loop runs at every scale, from a two-second conversation to a career change.

04 Most stuck learning is one move skipped or rushed, not a lack of effort.

05 Reflection changes what you notice next time, so a good loop goes deeper, not round.

WORDS TO KNOW

Loop
The five moves that turn an experience into a lesson.

Micro-loop
A tiny loop that runs in seconds, inside a bigger one.

Evidence label
Our tag for how sure we are: Proposed, Observed, Tested or Reviewed.

TRY THIS TODAY

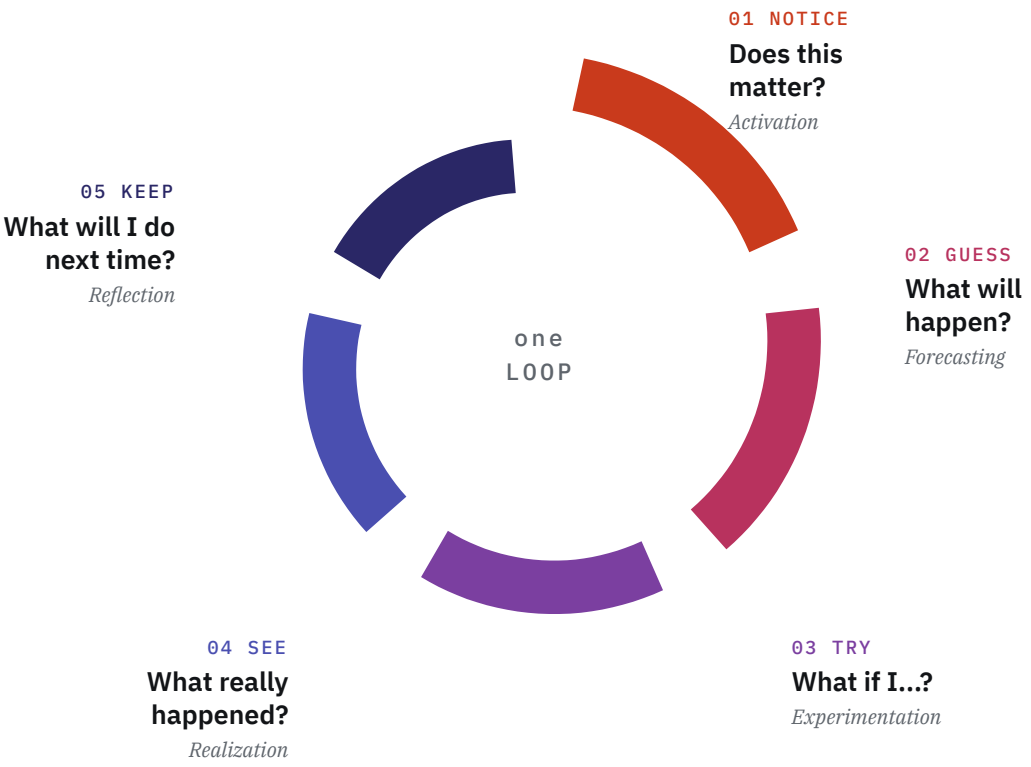
Tonight, pick one moment from today and walk it through the five questions. Which move did you rush?

The idea in one breath

When something matters to you, you **notice** it. You **guess** what will happen. You **try** something. You **see** what really happened. Then you **keep** the lesson, so next time goes better. That is the whole loop. We call them Activation, Forecasting, Experimentation, Realization and Reflection. Together: AFERR.

FIGURE 1

The loop, as five questions



Every experience you learn from runs these five moves. The simple word is on top, the research word underneath. The small gap at the top is deliberate: a good loop does not return you to the same place.

How to read this

This piece runs the loop it describes. It has five short parts: Notice, Guess, Try, See, Keep. Each part opens with a simple version, the kind you could read to a child. Then comes a deeper version for anyone who wants more. Read only the simple versions and you will understand AFERR. Read everything and you will be able to use it.

1. Notice

● SIMPLY PUT

Think about the last time you could not stop thinking about something. A new game. A friend who was upset. A strange noise in the car. Your brain picked that one thing out of thousands. Why that one?

Right now your eyes, ears and skin are taking in far more than you could ever think about. The pressure of the chair. The hum of a fan. The colour of the wall. Almost all of it slides past. A few things get through. Those few things are where every bit of learning starts.

GOING DEEPER

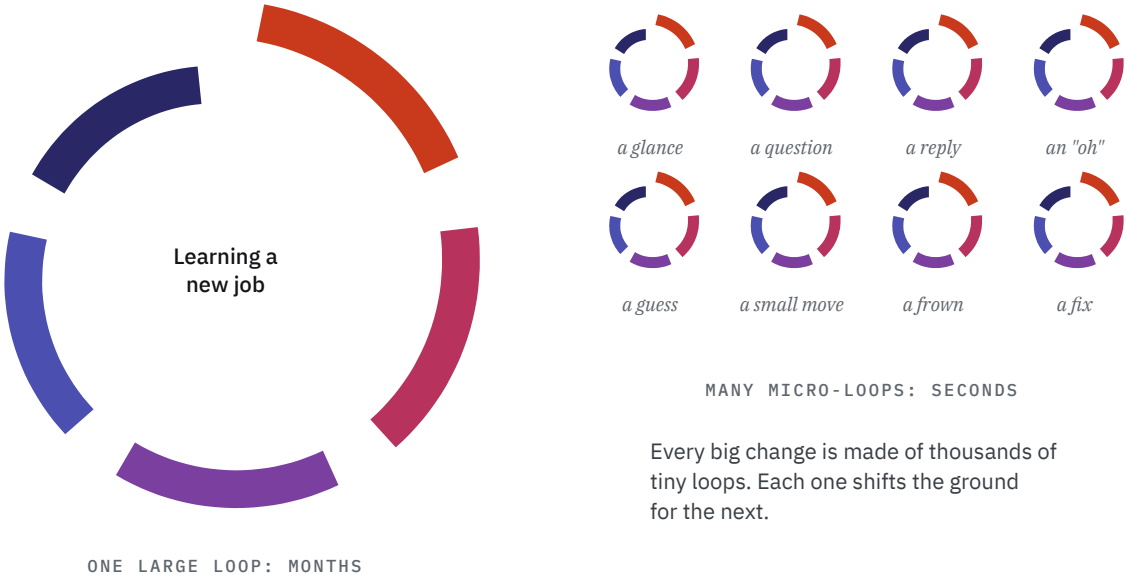
The brain cannot afford to think about everything, so it decides, very quickly, what is worth the cost. In AFERR this first move is called **Activation**. It answers one question: *is this worth my time, energy and self?*

Two quiet gatekeepers make that call. The first is **comprehension**: do I understand this well enough to see why it matters? The second is **agency**: can I actually do anything about it? When both say yes, attention follows. When either says no, we look away, however important the thing might be. That is why people ignore problems they cannot understand, and problems they feel powerless to change.

The deciding signal often starts as a feeling. Curiosity, worry, excitement, irritation. Each one is the brain saying *this matters*.

FIGURE 2

Loops inside loops



AFERR runs at every scale. A career change is one loop; a single conversation inside it holds dozens.

2. Guess

● SIMPLY PUT

Before you read the next part, make a guess. Why do two people in the same room, hearing the same news, react in completely different ways? Hold your guess in your head. We will come back to it.

You just did the second move. The moment something matters, the mind starts imagining what might happen next. Nobody has to tell it to.

GOING DEEPER

This move is **Forecasting**. The brain builds a small story about the future from three ingredients: the feeling that started it, what is happening right now, and everything it has learned before. Then it runs the story forward. *If I say this, she will be angry. If we launch now, we will beat them. If I touch the stove, it will burn.*

Forecasts are not neutral. Some lean cautious, some optimistic. Some look back at what happened last time, some look forward at what could be. Some see only the next hour, some see the next year. Some imagine one path, some imagine many. The shape of your forecast

decides the options you can even see. And a forecast built on an old lesson can keep you circling the same worry at three in the morning, running yesterday's answer on today's problem.

Your guess about the two people in the room was a forecast. Notice how fast you made it.

3. Try

● SIMPLY PUT

Here is a two-minute experiment. Pick one small thing you want to do differently today. Ask one more question in your next meeting. Reply to a message an hour later than you normally would. Take the stairs. Do it once, and pay attention to what happens.

That is the third move. A guess stays a guess until you test it.

GOING DEEPER

This move is **Experimentation**. It is where a forecast meets the world. The brain learns from the gap between what it expected and what it got (Schultz et al., 1997), and you only get that gap by acting. Reading about swimming does not teach you to swim.

How people experiment says a lot about where they are. Some wait until they are certain (passive). Some only act when pushed (reactive). Some try everything to see what happens (explorative). Some try with purpose, with others, and adjust as they go (participative). None of these is a personality type. They are places people stand in a given moment, and they move.

The single biggest condition for good experimentation is safety. People try more, and more honestly, when a mistake costs little. That is why simulations, rehearsals and pilots work: they let people be wrong cheaply, so they can be right later when it counts.

4. See

● SIMPLY PUT

Go back to your guess about the two people in the room. Here is one answer. They reacted differently because they *noticed* different things, *guessed* different futures, and had *tried* different things before. Same news, different loops. Was your guess close?

That moment, when you compare what you expected with what is true, is the fourth move.

GOING DEEPER

This move is **Realization**: connecting what you did to what happened. It sounds automatic. It is not. People win and assume they were skilful. People lose and assume they were unlucky. Both close the loop too early, with a comfortable story instead of an accurate one.

A realization can be a **judgment** or a **vision**. A judgment closes things down: *I'm not good at this. They always let me down.* A vision opens them up: *I rushed because I was afraid of being wrong.* Both feel like insight. Only one leads anywhere. The emotional state you are in at the moment you make sense of something shapes which kind you form.

This is also where most organisations lose their learning. (Observed.) They run the project, ship the product, finish the quarter, and move straight on. The data was there. Nobody stopped long enough to see it.

5. Keep

● SIMPLY PUT

Ask yourself one question: *What will I do differently next time?* If you have an answer, you just learned something. If you don't, you only had an experience.

That is the fifth move. In our sessions, it's the move people skip most often.

GOING DEEPER

This move is **Reflection**. It is where an experience becomes part of how you see the world, so the next loop starts from a better place. Reflection is not the same as thinking about the past. It is choosing what the past will mean for the future. It needs three things the modern day rarely offers: a pause, some distance from the moment, and an honest question.

Here is why the AFERR mark is drawn as a loop that never quite closes. Each time you reflect well, you change what you will notice next time. Your next Activation is sharper. Your next Forecast is wiser. Each time round, the loop goes one step deeper.

FIGURE 3

A loop that goes deeper, not round



A **LOOP 1**
A rushed meeting goes badly. You blame the agenda.

RZ **LOOP 2**
Next time you notice you were tired, not the agenda.

E **LOOP 3**
Now you book hard meetings for the morning, before it happens.

EACH TURN STARTS FROM A BETTER PLACE

Reflection changes what you notice next time, so the loop works more like a spiral. The same kind of event gets handled earlier and better each turn.

Why it matters

The faster the world changes, the more it pays to know how you change. Most people are never taught how they learn. They are taught *what* to learn. AFERR is an attempt to name the moves, so that individuals, teams, teachers and leaders can see which one they rushed, which one they skipped, and which one to practise next.

It is a map, not the territory. The brain loops, branches and doubles back. Thousands of tiny AFERR loops can run inside a single big one: a glance, a guess, a small move, a flicker of *oh*, a slight change in how you will look next time. The five names simply make those loops visible.

FIGURE 4

Which move did you skip?

IF YOU SKIP...	...IT USUALLY FEELS LIKE
Notice *Activation*	Nothing lands. You drift, or tick boxes.
Guess *Forecasting*	You keep being surprised by things you could have seen coming.
Try *Experimentation*	You know a lot, and nothing changes.
See *Realization*	You make the same mistake in new clothes.
Keep *Reflection*	You learn the same lesson twice.

A quick self-check. Most stuck learning is a skipped or rushed move, not a lack of effort. (Proposed, from practice.)

Where to go next

Each move has its own paper. Read them in any order. Each one is written the same way: a story to notice, a question to guess at, something small to try, the model laid out to see, and questions to keep.

- **Phase Paper 01 · Activation:** how the brain decides what is worth its attention.
- **Phase Paper 02 · Forecasting:** how we build the futures we act on.
- **Phase Paper 03 · Experimentation:** why we learn by testing, and how to make testing safe.
- **Phase Paper 04 · Realization:** how we connect what we did to what happened, and how we get it wrong.
- **Phase Paper 05 · Reflection:** how experience becomes the person you are next.

A note on evidence

AFERR is a framework, not a proven law of the brain. Each phase is linked to well-studied processes in cognitive science (attention and salience, prediction, learning from error, feedback, metacognition), and each paper cites that work. The model itself was built from years of watching people in facilitated simulations, chiefly Evivve. We label every claim with how sure we are: **Proposed** (reasoned from theory and the literature), **Observed** (seen repeatedly in practice, not controlled), **Tested** (studied with a stated method) or **Reviewed** (peer reviewed). This primer is Proposed.

References

Schultz, W., Dayan, P., & Montague, P. R. (1997). A neural substrate of prediction and reward. *Science, 275*(5306), 1593-1599. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.275.5306.1593