

# Edge Case practice guide

A 45-60 minute developmental practice for a group of 3-5 people. Use multiple sessions to give everyone a turn as the subject of the group's focus.

## Etymology

**edge** – developmental edge, growth edge, the learning at the edge of our capacity to handle and hold situations we face in our lives, where we experience tension and uncertainty and the pull to grow to meet our challenge

**case** – the structural shell of this practice (one person bringing a case-like scenario) is derived from Presencing Institute's (a.k.a. Theory U) [Case Clinic](#) practice

**edge case** – boundary conditions that stress-test a system, which seemed quite apropos

## Roles

Everyone has one of two primary roles:

**Subject** (1) – the person presenting their case. This person stays in and around their edge, their developmental tension, not worrying about others

**Supporters** (2-4) – their whole intention is to serve the giver, and their attention is on and in service of this person

Additionally, a Supporter should fill each of these secondary roles:

**Reflector** – invited/selected by the Subject, this Supporter serves the Subject in the Sharing phase by frequently reflecting back to the sharer what they are hearing

**Timekeeper** – if you intend to finish at a specific time, appoint a timekeeper to keep the group on track

## Structure & Recommended Timings

| Phase #     | Activity     | Minutes (minimal) | Minutes (normal) |
|-------------|--------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1           | Sharing      | 12                | 14               |
|             | Silence      | 2                 | 2                |
| 2           | Translating  | 8-10              | 12               |
| 3           | Storytelling | 8                 | 8                |
| 4           | Discussing   | 10-12             | 20               |
|             | Closing      | 3                 | 4                |
| Total time: |              | 45                | 60               |

# Process Description

The Edge Case practice has four major phases:

## 1 - Sharing

The Subject brings forth their case, describing their developmental edge: where does it show up, what feelings does it bring, and what can you see, or not see, about your response? If in doubt, start with a recent strong emotion and just start asking “why?”

They are supported in this by the Reflector in [Empathy Circle](#) style, who every 40-60s or so reflects back a summary of what they are hearing as straightforwardly as they can – summarizing/condensing somewhat but without additional interpretation/analysis. This allows the Subject to hear how they are being heard, what might be missing, and the opportunity to re-steer their explanation towards the most salient bits. The Subject may wish to leave some time for clarifying questions within this phase.

After the sharing phase, take two minutes in silence as a group. The rest of the group has listened silently and deeply, and in the silence senses what is arising in resonance within themselves.

## 2 - Translating

All Supporters (tip: the Reflector can go last) take turns translating back what feels resonant to them. This could be a picture, a metaphor, an analogous experience in their own life, even interpretive dance - not giving advice, just sharing any connections that arise. (This part aligns closely with the Case Clinic step named “mirroring”.) Listening to these translations, the Subject can see an expanded set of ways to look at their situation.

Aim for about 2-3 minutes per person. After each Supporter has shared once, second shares are allowed, time-permitting. Then in the last two minutes of this phase, the Subject reflects back what they’ve heard that resonated with them.

## 3 - Storytelling

At this point, the Subject turns their camera and microphone off (to virtually “leave” but overhear a la [Troika Consulting](#)) while the Supporters collaboratively tell the story of the Subject, the Subject’s case, and the Subject’s relationship to their case. In telling and combining their interpretations, this is a partly fictional story - a projection, as all interpretations are, which does not claim to be the truth. The Subject, listening invisibly during this time, can themselves identify any truths they see in the storytelling, or ponder what might have led to interpretations they see as inaccurate. By hearing about themselves as a character in a story, the Subject also gains more of an outside perspective on their behavior, supporting a possible perspective expansion.

## 4 - Discussing

The fourth and final part of the practice is open discussion, led by the Subject and whatever insights they've gained so far. They can talk as much as they want – Supporters remain in a supportive stance. The Subject can start by sharing their experience of hearing the storytelling. This is a time to integrate and solidify new perspective, and perhaps mark down more questions for future consideration.

After the discussion time, a satisfying closing consists of one final round of short (30 seconds or less) statements from each Supporter towards the Subject, and a final “what I see now” and/or appreciation from the Subject.

Note: This practice, with four distinct phases, probably falls in “advanced” territory within the domain of relational practices. Learning and experiencing these pieces individually has allowed our community to then easily combine and synthesize them. Yet we've also found that someone new to all of these practices can still participate fairly easily within a facilitated group, learning by doing alongside the others. When teaching a new group, allocate up to 15 minutes for explaining the phases beforehand.

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Originally published 2021-09-28. Version 1.0.1 published 2022-09-10.

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