

“I’m so bad at...”

What if you’re not bad? Maybe it’s just a *skill deficit*.

*Skill deficit* - an area of your life you can’t seem to perform to your desired standard

Something doesn’t feel quite right. Or it feels super off. Either way, what’s actually going on isn’t completely clear. Actually, it’s probably pretty vague. Keeping things vague when you don’t like something is common. That is, if it has to do with *you*.

With others, you can most likely rattle off all the specifics you don’t like and why. With you, whatever is going on is usually uncomfortable and looking into it feels even more uncomfortable. What if it didn’t have to be so uncomfortable and mysterious?

Taking the emotion out of it, *even just for a minute*, helps you see what’s in play.

Let’s think about a concrete example like basketball.

If you want to be a good basketball player and right now you think you’re terrible - that’s not only a bad feeling, it’s also pretty vague. There’s not much to go on here.

Let’s get specific.

What are the prerequisite skills needed in basketball?

- Knowing the objective of the game
- Knowing the rules
- Hand eye coordination
- Dribbling the ball without double dribbling
- Passing the ball to teammates
- Driving the ball to the basket
- Tossing the ball into the basket
- Holding your space without fouling others

You get the idea...

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Getting specific about the skills needed before even attempting the whole big sport is helpful to break down areas of strength and difficulty. When you look at that list what jumps out at you? What did it make you think of in relation to you?

Let's get specific again.

What about basketball are you so terrible at doing?

Dribbling you may answer, or free throws, and on it could go.

Let's take dribbling.

Before we jump straight into the skill of dribbling, we need to check our prerequisite skills - the skills assumed to be present and are needed to accomplish the main skill.

So here's some quick questions to help guide our thinking:

- How much do you know about the rules?
- What are you unclear about?
- How's your hand eye coordination?
- What specifically makes dribbling hard for you?
- What's jumping out at you of where to begin?

Ok, basketball may not be your thing, but hopefully you see the process. Just like we can break down a sport (obviously we only skimmed the surface) we can do the same with more abstract areas as well. There are prerequisite skills for being a student, a leader, a friend, and so on. What are some?

Maybe you came up with skills like:

- Being able to focus
- Listening with curiosity
- Connecting to what you're *actually* feeling

This type of thinking gives you a starting point - how's your focus? Hard to sit still? Hard to listen to others with actual interest and curiosity? Hard to know what you're feeling and how to handle those feelings?

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Let's say focus is difficult for you - let's get more specific.

- What about focusing feels hard? Where do you feel it in your body?
- When is it difficult? Always, as in 24/7? Or only when it's a topic that's boring or maybe challenging to understand? During certain times of day? With certain people?

Get the idea?

You continue to drill down asking yourself to be specific about what is *actually* the problem. When you can see the prerequisite skills as well as the more obvious skill that is bugging you, it gives you information.

*With that information comes sweet relief.*

You can actually get better at this skill with specific information because that helps you create a specific plan. One that's connected to the difficulty.

So your plan could look something like:

In basketball:

- Interview the best basketball player you know for better understanding of...
- Ask your favorite teacher for exercises to develop better hand eye coordination
- Spend 5 minutes before school doing these exercises and 5 minutes after school
- Spend 5 minutes before dinner and 5 minutes after dinner dribbling
- While dribbling, you'll look at a fixed point while remaining in one place

In student leadership:

- Interview the best adult leaders you know
- Interview the best student leaders you know
- Ask yourself what area you want to grow your leadership ability and confidence?
- Journal for 5 minutes first thing in the morning and 5 minutes before you go to bed
- Practice curious listening with a leadership buddy - take turns listening and sharing

How long are you going to run this plan? Hint - 5 to 7 days or up to 2 weeks is usually a good amount of time to get a feel for what's working and what's not. Check back in with yourself and others at the agreed time. Tweak as needed along the way.

You've got this...