

# GUIDE FOR ASSESSING MAG/MIN

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Magnification and Minification is a framework for understanding the basis for making any decision. The best decisions are those made with a rational assessment of the likelihood of success or failure of the action to be taken, based on the consideration of a wide range of relevant factors. There is always the possibility of either outcome. Poorer decisions are scaled on a continuum according to the extent of distortion of the rational assessment by emotional intrusion in the process.

## General characteristics of Magnifiers and Minifiers

### Assumptions

Magnifiers magnify the probability of a favorable outcome (and minify the probability of an unfavorable outcome)

- *One poker player will continue to bet on a hand, downplaying the possibility that others may have a better one.*
- *One cook will measure the ingredients for a soup casually, not worried that it will affect the overall taste that much.*
- *One patient decides to ignore some persistent health symptoms, assuming they will go away eventually.*

Minifiers minify the probability of a favorable outcome (and magnify the probability of an unfavorable outcome)

- *Another poker player will fold on a good hand, concerned that others probably have a better one.*
- *Another cook will measure ingredients for a soup very carefully, wanting to make sure they follow the recipe exactly for fear of making a mistake.*
- *Another patient worries about some recent health symptoms, and calls the doctor to make sure there is nothing seriously wrong.*

## **Perception**

Given that either success or failure is always possible; the balance between them (more success/more failure) differs for Mag and Min.

Success dominates the perception of the Magnifier to the exclusion of failure

- *A golfer facing a long putt, only thinks about making it, despite the odds from being so far away.*
- *An investor gets excited about a stock that has performed very well recently and does not consider some recent downturns.*
- *A husband begins to consider divorce, thinking that he can find a better partner and overcome the limitations in his current marriage, ignoring the emotional costs of divorce, and the possibility of repeating the problems with a new partner.*

Failure dominates the perception of the Minifier to the exclusion of success

- *A golfer facing a long putt focuses on making it with two putts, trying to avoid a 3-putt.*

*- An investor is interested in a stock that has performed very well recently, but focuses instead on some recent downturns.*

*- A husband begins to consider divorce, thinking that he cannot find a better partner, ignoring the possibilities of improving the marriage with therapy.*

## Assessing Oneself – Questions to Ask

### **Magnifier**

When I am making a decision, I generally assume it will work out. I seldom think of how it won't. I seldom think of the risks of my actions. I seldom think of being careful.

Which am I more afraid of, limitation or potential? Any anxiety I have about my decisions is about limitations, about missing an opportunity that will be lost forever.

What is my reaction to this whole Mag/Min framework? – Too limiting; you can't define me in such binary terms; I am more flexible in my decision-making. (Misses the understanding of magnification as a distortion of making poor choices over the long term).

### **Minifier**

When I am making a decision, I generally do not assume it will always work out. I often think of how it won't. I often think of the risks of my actions. I often think of being careful.

Which am I more afraid of, limitation or potential? Any anxiety I have about my decisions is about possibilities, about having to deal with success, and having to maintain it.

What is my reaction to this whole Mag/Min framework? – Very appropriate; I am indeed limited in my decision-making. (Misses the understanding of Minification as a distortion of making poor choices over the long term.

**Another indicator:** Reactions to opposite mode

Magnifiers often react negatively to Minifiers, impatient with their attention to limitations and their focus on risks.

Minifiers often react negatively to Magnifiers, impatient with their attention to possibilities and their lack of concern about risks.

Neither understands the other as dealing with the same anxiety about the success/failure probability, or how their own mode of Mag or Min is a distortion of the assessment of the success/failure ratio.

## Assessing Others – Common Mistakes

### 1.) ASSUMPTIONS

Not asking about assumptions - relying too much on behavior (can have same behavior with different assumptions

a.) Credit/Debit

*Two people, very concerned about their health, work out in the gym and press themselves hard. - Same behavior*

*Different assumptions*

*One is a Magnifier with an assumption that they need to press hard in order to not lose the fitness gained to date. Other is a Minifier with an assumption that they already are not fit, but need to press hard in order to not lose more.*

Remedy: Ask Why? To determine Rationale

Note: It is helpful to think of the difference between Mags and Mins in terms of credit and debit. Mags assume they already have enough (credit) and operate from a position of not wanting to lose what they have. Mins assume they already have less than they need (debit) and operate from a position of needing to prevent losing anymore.

b.) Focus on details

*Two students obsess about memorizing as much as they possibly can about material for an upcoming exam, but after a while give up because it is too much. - Same behavior*

Different assumptions

*One is a Magnifier who tries to memorize every single detail and not miss any details that would limit full comprehension. But then realizes it is not worth the effort, and gives up, assuming they know enough to pass the test.*

*The other is a Minifier who tries to memorize every single detail because this is the only way they can know enough to pass the test. But then realizes it is not possible, and gives up, assuming they couldn't pass the test anyway.*

Remedy: Ask Why? To determine Rationale

Note:

It is helpful to understand that both Mags and Mins can obsess about details, but from very different assumptions. The Mag operates from a positive attitude, assuming they can succeed if they make sure they have eliminated every single, possible limitation. Then if the effort becomes

unsustainable, they decide it is not worth it and it won't be a problem in the long run anyway.

The Min can also obsess about details but from a negative attitude, afraid if they don't, they will miss something that will cause failure. Then if the effort becomes overwhelming, they decide it is not worth it because it was never going to be successful anyway.

### 3.) BASIC/SOCIAL SELF

When different – Not knowing which is which

Mag/min (Basic Magnifier but Social Minifier)

*CEO of a major corporation operates with strong leadership, but puts effort into humbly asking for feedback about a new project. When employees offer critical comments, she quickly and firmly rejects them, with critical remarks about the employee.*

Mistake: Not realizing the minifying of being humble about the request for feedback is overridden by the Basic Mag when threatened by the limitation of criticism.

Min/mag (Basic Minifier but Social Magnifier)

*Very popular teacher, well respected by students and fellow colleagues, delivers powerful lectures that challenge his audience. But then discounts the clear evidence of his superior intellect and major contributions in the field with comments about his work being ordinary and not significant, confusing others who look up to him and value his work.*

Mistake:

Mistake: Not realizing the magnification of the powerful presentations is overridden by the Basic Min when threatened by the potential of his intellect and significant work.

Remedy: Attend to assumptions behind behavior and determine which is primary (basic)

Note: It is helpful to understand the Basic and Social selves operate in tandem as a coordinated unit of self, not as two separate and independent selves.

#### **4.) LEVEL OF FUNCTIONING**

Not factoring in level of functioning (Differentiation), often inaccurately assuming higher level for Mag and lower level for Min.

Mistake: Assuming a Mag's assertive, pro-active, get-it-done approach indicates high functioning or a positive self-concept.

*A very active parent home schools her children, works a part-time job, and volunteers for many neighborhood projects, unable to say no. While it looks like she is able to accomplish all this, the observer may not recognize the intensity of the anxiety driven by the fear of the limitation of saying no, and the effects of the stress long term.*

Mistake #1: Assuming a Min's slow and careful approach to making decisions and getting things done indicates low functioning, or a negative self-concept.

*A person takes a long time to decide on the purchase of a car by researching many reviews, visiting multiple dealerships, talking to friends and family, but ultimately makes a clear irrevocable decision based on a rational assessment of all the data and buys the care. The observer may not recognize the deliberateness and lack of anxiety with all of the multiple efforts to gather information.*

Note #1: This mistake is often related to one's own denial mode of Mag or Min. Mags will often assess other Mags (like them) as higher functioning

and Mins (unlike them) as lower functioning. Mins will often assess Mags as higher functioning (unlike them) and other Mins as lower functioning (like them).

Mistake #2: Not recognizing that the different responses of Mags and Mins does not necessarily reflect the level of functioning.

Note #2: When the self is challenged by a crisis that disrupts the stability of the self, Mags and Mins will respond differently.

When Mags crash, they crash hard. When the over functioning is stretched too far and they are forced to accept limitations, their anxiety spikes. But this does not necessarily reflect lower functioning. That is assessed in how they respond to the crisis.

When the under functioning of Mins reaches the point where they are forced to deal with the awareness of the cost of their minifying, their anxiety also rises, but with a more gradual intensity. Like for the Mag, this does not necessarily reflect lower functioning. That is assessed in how they respond to the crisis.