Toastmasters OR Therapy?

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Do you know that Toastmaster is a therapy? I recently discovered this when I completed my CBT (Cognitive Behavior Therapy) & REBT (Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy) Practitioner courses. I entered the world of Toastmasters about 3 years back with only one expectation; to win my confidence back. To me, entering the world of Toastmasters was as amazing as entering the [Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hogwarts) from Harry Potter. Wow - It’s all real! Once you enter the world of Toastmasters, you are able to clearly distinguish yourself from the world of muggles as we are no more ordinary people, but WE ARE A Toastmaster! The name itself has a master in it which elevates our spirit and thus, the therapy begins! The transformation happens, so seamlessly and insidiously; by the end of the first term you start noticing the changes in yourself and you start loving the person that you are becoming.

As we enter the arena of Toastmasters; we receive the echoed Mantra, “Toastmasters wear many hats” and believe it or not this is the seed of the transformation that is sowed in our minds.  All our life we buy into many limiting beliefs about ourselves; about who am I?, What can I do?,  Do I have the ability to learn? In addition to this we are labeled by our circle of influence, “You are this, you are that”; “You are not good enough”. In reality our limiting beliefs are just the reinforced ideas and they are very much changeable and more so easily moldable!

First step of therapy starts with breaking down our limiting beliefs about our capabilities. The assessment to choose a path in Pathways shows us a mirror and changes our focus inwards from outwards. Once we choose a path we are asked to break the ice by speaking about ourselves for 4 to 6 mins and our brainstorming starts. Questions start hovering on our mind, “What should I talk about myself?”,  “Why would anyone listen to me and my mundane story for 4 to 6 mins?” This is for the first time we introspect and overview our life. One of my mentees once asked me,  if an ice breaker is a self-introduction; How do I introduce myself? I asked, if you have to make your first impression to a set of your new friends, how would you like them to know you or remember you? As per Toastmasters guidelines every Ice breaker receives a standing ovation. Here we challenge our first self-limiting belief about “Who am I?” As we pass our first challenge, our confidence is boosted and we embark upon our journey to become our better selves.

In the second project of Evaluation and Feedback we learn to pen down our thoughts in a more structured way – and believe me, it happens on its own – at least for me it did! We build our vocabulary and most importantly we learn to give and receive constructive feedback.

Soon followed in the third project is of Research and Presentation. Here comes the inquisitive and the investigative unknown you! In this project, we hone our skills of researching new concepts and present them in such a way that everyone understands them. Thus we complete our level one by challenging our second limiting belief of “What can I do?” As we learn that there is nothing that we can’t do.

As we move to our second level we come across some fundamental concepts which help us build our character.  This is the time we get introduced to the concept of Mentoring. This is quite an empowering level as we discover our hidden talents. This is the time we break free our limiting belief of “Do I have the ability to learn?”.

At level three once we are free from all our self-limiting beliefs we are all set to groom ourselves by increasing our knowledge on our new self-discoveries,  This is as good as rebirth. They say there are two important days in our life—first the day we are born and the second is the day we discover “Why?”. Once we discover our why, we start our meaningful journey of life.

In level four we build our skills based on our style and the acquired knowledge. The projects involved in this level challenges us to come out of our comfort zone and think out of the box.

Finally at level 5 we are ready to blast off. The degree of difficulty of the final project increases multi-fold so does our capability. We are well equipped with all the tools and techniques to think on our own feet. With the blessings of a mentor we are all set to take the leap of faith. Once we come out flying colors completing the life cycle of our path we are no longer the same person anymore. And the journey begins.…..

Oh by the way, if you find anyone around you in discovering his Why? do help them to find their platform number 9 ¾  i. e. Toastmasters Club, to take a leap of faith like Harry Potter did. After all everything we want is on the other side of the word and feel of fear!