

Above and below the line

Above
the line
thinking + behaviours



Hope

See it

Make choices

See possibilities

Own it

Solve

seek solutions

Take responsibility

Accountable

Find better ways

seek + provide
Feedback

Take action

Make a Choice!

Things happen but it is your response that determines if the outcome is ultimately positive or negative

Below
the line
thinking + behaviours

Ignore

Fear

Stay stuck

Blame

Deny

Excuses

Do nothing

Victim

See problems
obstacles

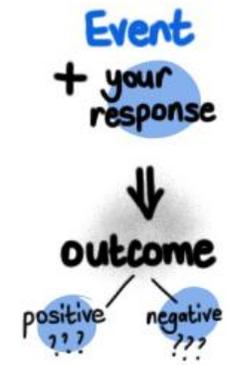
Wait for others

Find fault

Block

No control

see failure



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Above and below the line

The concept

The 'Above and Below' the line concept is a 'mindset of personal responsibility or ownership' that we came across in a book by Carolyn Taylor, *Walking the Talk*. It reflects two ways of thinking and behaving.

Are you above the line - being accountable and taking personal responsibility?

Or are you below the line - finding it easier to deny, blame or excuse?



Why it's useful

This concept helps you to pay more attention to your own actions and behaviours. It also offers the concept that it is the combination of an 'event' and your 'response' to that event that influences the outcome, ie if the outcome is ultimately positive or negative.

The concept may also help you to better understand the actions and behaviours you observe in others, and potentially help you to help them to better understand what might be influencing them.

How/when to apply it

This concept is used often in organisations when exploring values – both aspirational values and values-in-use. It is often also used in a coaching sense when one person helps another person to unpack their thinking.

If you notice below the line behaviours in others, you may decide it is important to respectfully share those observations with others. Or you may choose to use exploratory coaching questions to help them to become aware of their own thinking or their actions + behaviours. This might sound like:

- Let's unpack that a little. What is behind that thinking?
- On what do you base that view?
- Are there other alternative perspectives or interpretations?
- If we had to move past seeing the problem, and imagining the possibility – how does this change things?
- If we are to find a way forward, what could we do?

The concept of above / below the line is a useful one to explore with your team. You could make them aware of the concept as part of their development. You could also use it at the beginning of team meetings to help set expectations for the behaviours we need. This can empower your team to promote more above the line thinking and behaviours and help to embed the expectations we expect in high performing teams.

