A REFLECTIVE PRACTICE TOOL

The Murky Middle *Canvas.*

Plot a week of your practice. Sit with the pattern.

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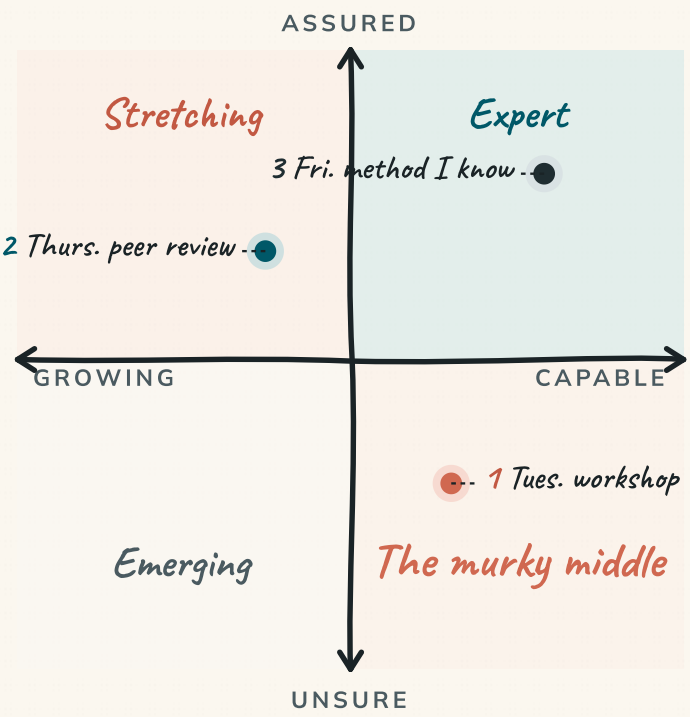
Our competency is determined by the context within which we operate. In one place we are experts, in another we are beginners. Use this reflective tool to understand your own competency through the lens of an Emergent Evaluator.

DEFINITION

Emergent Evaluator *(noun).* An evaluation practitioner whose professional identity and competence continuously arise from dynamic, context-dependent interactions within evaluation systems, rather than progressing linearly toward fixed mastery. Emergent evaluators foreground adaptive learning, critical reflexivity, contextual responsiveness, networked learning, and relational engagement with others.

HOW TO USE IT

1. Choose a timeframe to focus on — the last week, fortnight, or month. Not too long ago, as the experience needs to be fresh.
2. Read each prompt at the bottom of the page. Try to think of specific examples for each of them.
3. Place that example on the grid based on how settled or assured you felt, and how capable you felt.
4. Step back and review where all six are placed. Is there a pattern in terms of placement, or in the types of experiences and where they sit?



↕ *Sense of self in this moment*
↔ *Capability in this moment*

A worked week

1. **Tuesday.** Stakeholder workshop in a sector new to me. The method was familiar. The language wasn't.
   → *landed in the murky middle.*
2. **Thursday.** A peer reviewed my framework and pushed back hard. Sat with it overnight.
   → *stretching, then settling.*
3. **Friday.** A method I've used a hundred times. Easy in my hands; easy in the room. → *expert mode.*

Three dots, one week. The shape of it tells you something the days alone don't.

The Six Prompts.

1 Adaptive learning

A moment you went looking for feedback. Or a moment you knew you were avoiding it.

2 Relational competence

A working relationship that's shaping you right now — for better, for awkward, for both.

3 Contextual reflexivity

A moment you noticed who was getting to define what 'good' looks like.

4 Networked learning

A piece of peer learning that landed. A conversation, a paper, an offhand comment that stuck.

5 Boundary-spanning

An assignment that crossed a sector, a method, or a culture. Where the seam showed.

6 Comfort with uncertainty

A moment you held your own sense of yourself lightly, and the work was better for it.

> *Identity forms through recognition and negotiation. How clients, peers and communities read your work shapes how you read yourself in it.*
>
> Healey, 2026, p. 11

Look across your six dots. What's the shape of your week? Then show it to someone whose practice you trust, and ask what they see that you don't.

Healey, M. (2026). *The Emergent Evaluator: Reframing the Murky Middle Between Emerging and Expert Evaluators' Identities.* Evaluation Journal of Australasia, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/1035719X261435263 · Email matt@fpconsulting.com.au for a copy of the paper.