

Evelyn Fendler-Lee
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Thetaland™
The Game of Inquiry

Manual



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Scope of Application

Thetaland™ is a professional tool for education, coaching, and facilitation. It is applicable wherever thought is creative.

In educational contexts, you can use Thetaland™ as a method for gaining deeper understanding of subject matter and for self-reflection. In the context of counseling and coaching, you can apply it for professional profiling, for the explication of personal experience in a specific field of practice, and for the formulation of an authentic leadership concept or a self-employment concept. As a moderation tool, Thetaland™ opens up a creative space for in-depth and topic-oriented interaction with yourself and with others.

The thinking tool Thetaland™ is a companion to innovative projects in large corporations, small businesses, and government organizations of any size as well as in nonprofit and grassroots movements. Thetaland™ supports the development of visions, missions, and strategies as well as the design of concrete products or services. It brings a subjective perspective to student theses and is a tool for comprehensive scientific theory formation. Thetaland™ opens ways to solve complex problems in all these cases.

Thetaland™ can also be played just for fun and to enjoy thinking.

The Method

As a playful thinking tool, Thetaland™ enables thought and interaction processes that advance topics and people alike. It promotes original thinking, thereby fulfilling a twofold purpose: It lifts the wealth of experience of individuals, and it brings that which comes to light into fruitful communication with others.

The methodology used in Thetaland™ is based on Thinking at the Edge (TAE). TAE is, alongside Focusing, a second practice that emerged from Eugene T. Gendlin's philosophy of the implicit. Since the publication of Gendlin's book of the same name in 1978, Focusing has been used successfully worldwide as a self-help method and in consultative and therapeutic settings.

TAE is related to Focusing and provides a rhythmic oscillation between experiencing and expression. Engaging in a TAE process is like writing a poem or painting a picture. The artist has a physical sense for what he or she wants to express—an inner compass to which he or she refers again and again. The artist carries neither the picture nor the poem as a finished product within him- or herself; it comes into existence only when put to canvas or paper. As the work gradually emerges, it unfolds by being repeatedly checked for coherence against the artist's fine inner sense.

The origin of TAE goes back to a lecture on theory formation that Gendlin led at the University of Chicago for many years. Based on a vague feeling, a content-based position or a theory is developed in coordinated steps. TAE's structured thinking process invites you to turn your attention to those places where something is still unclear or even contradictory. Since original thinking cannot be limited to a particular sequence of steps, the fourteen TAE steps are to be understood as thinking exercises. The individual TAE steps are valuable triggers to nudge people beyond their usual ways of thinking and to tread new paths of thought.

Thetaland™ is a way to make TAE easy to use without having to learn the method first. Thetaland™ was developed by Dr. Evelyn Fendler-Lee and Dr. Tony Hofmann with the support of a multi-professional team of experienced TAE practitioners. The conception and development of Thetaland™ and its areas of application are scientifically

accompanied by research activities at the University of Würzburg in Germany.

The Game Metaphor

The basic idea behind Thetaland™ is to make thinking with the implicit (the TAE process) widely applicable without requiring individuals study this thinking method in detail. A game is best suited to this claim; whoever plays, accomplishes steps of thinking, experiencing and action effortlessly and easily. Consequently, we created a fantasy world as the framework for a game of inquiry. The players embark on an adventure journey through their own worlds of thought in Thetaland™, the (still) unexplored inner continent:

Imagine a whole undiscovered continent is hidden deep inside of you. Its land is fertile and rich, enabling many exotic plants to grow in its soil.

We are about to begin a journey to discover this continent. You will explore its landscapes and cities, delve into its foggy valleys and climb its highest peaks. Ancient wisdom rests between dusty book covers in the libraries. The dwellers of this continent know magical rites and traditions.

This continent is Thetaland. Its language expresses truths that no one has ever expressed before. Nothing is impossible here. No challenge is insurmountable. The sky is vast and wide; it has no limit.

On this journey, you start to search for what you already vaguely sense and wish to express in concrete words. The starting point of the journey is the marketplace in the big town. In the safety of your own home, right next to the marketplace, you ask yourself the initial

question: *Is there something within me that I have always wanted to deal with?*

As you venture out into the unknown of your own implicit knowledge of experience, you discover the fertile land within you. Just beyond the town wall begins the adventure, where the enthusiasm for new discoveries begins. The paths open in the game.

The Dwellings

The *Thetaland™ Toolkit* consists of twelve dwellings in the form of colored hexagons, each with twenty-four cards containing questions and stimuli that invite you to linger in thought and dialogue with your inner world of experience. A characteristic metaphor supports each dwelling, so you can explore your own theme in a particular way. The *Toolkit* variants *Wood* and *Business* contain one and two additional dwellings, respectively. The game set *Thetaland™ Kickstart* consists of six stacks of cards representing six dwellings, each with twelve questions or suggestions.

The design and description of the dwellings in the *Toolkit* are kept deliberately simple in order to create space for one's imagination. The colors orient players in the game. Yellow stands for the knowledge that already exists and is relevant for the topic at hand. Orange refers to what is not yet articulated but is already sensed. Red dwellings mark places where solutions can arise from conflicts. Blue dwellings invite you to formulate precise terms and relations between them. Green dwellings allow creative interaction with yourself and with other players. From the standpoint of the purple dwellings, you have the whole thought process in view.

The Yellow Dwellings—Knowledge

Dwellings that are symbolized in yellow allow to integrate what is already known (e.g. what is written in books) into the game in a meaningful way.

At Home (*Thetaland™ Toolkit, Thetaland™ Kickstart*)

Next door to the marketplace you will find your base camp. This is home, where your story begins with a special task you assign to yourself. From here, you will venture out into the foreign land and tap into your inner wisdom and treasures.

Home as a base camp provides security and it is a place to find a topic. It is a familiar place to which you can return time and again to formulate and to specify the theme for your adventure journey.

The Big Library (*Thetaland™ Toolkit*)

In the big library you can research the clever thoughts that already exist. Consult the Book of Wisdom to learn what other dwellers have discerned about your topic.

The big library symbolizes the wealth of information that is available nowadays to everyone. The questions give orientation to what is relevant for your topic. Despite the available knowledge, there are areas of knowledge that are not (yet) described in books, on websites, or in dictionaries, but in which you have special experience. This experience is to be explored.

The Orange Dwellings—Felt Sense

Orange is a mixture of yellow (knowledge) and red (conflict). It is the color of curiosity and creativity.

The Foggy Valley (*Thetaland™ Toolkit, Thetaland™ Kickstart*)

The foggy valley is a magical dreamland. Your inner sense will serve as the compass that guides your journey through this foreign land.

The foggy valley is a symbol of what is still unclear and of the vague, often physically felt hunch that has not (yet) been articulated. Here, you can take your time to track your felt meaning. This is how you recognize where a path of thought might open up. If you have already found a topic, this place invites you to trace its subtle depth.

With the Elves (*Thetaland™ Toolkit*)

A soft and soothing whisper surrounds you. You feel safe and gently held. You realize these shy beings mean well. You relax and become drowsy. Pictures emerge.

Pictures can help give vague ideas initial concrete forms of expression. Starting from the visible aspects of a picture, new, coherent insights can emerge in conjunction with one's topic.

The Red Dwellings—Conflict and Solution

Red is the color of fire, heat, and energy. It is the color of life.

The Oracle (*Thetaland™ Toolkit*)

The oracle will help orient you during your journey. No matter what challenge you face, the oracle will provide wondrous advice and powerful questions to guide you.

The oracle rejoices over any conflict to make wise sayings and to help you in the midst of the worst dead end. With the support of the oracle's wisdom, difficulties become opportunities.

The Volcano (*Thetaland™ Toolkit, Thetaland™ Kickstart*)

Atop the volcano is where you will feel the heat of the matter. Explore the crux of the conflict and frictions. Trust this to be the place where something special comes to light.

A volcano is a paradox. From its destructive power it gives birth to fertile soil. A tense discharge of energy can bring about the unconventional, the unusual, and the unexpected. Wherever it crunches and rubs most, the most appropriate solutions emerge.

The Green Dwellings—Interaction

Green is the color of nature and recreation. The green dwellings are places of connection that help you be creative in relationship with yourself and with others.

The Idyllic Garden (*Thetaland™ Toolkit, Thetaland™ Kickstart*)

The idyllic garden is a place for you to rest from the rigors of your adventure journey. Go for a walk or linger in a cozy place. You are safe and sound here.

This is about your well-being. You can clear a space and become aware of what it takes to start or to continue the journey in a good way. Or just let yourself be.

The Murmuring Brook (*Thetaland™ Toolkit*)

You tell a companion about your journey. They actively listens in order to decipher your true meaning. They refrains from commenting.

Having a benevolent listener encourages you to let the words flow freely. The questions give you additional courage to speak from your inner compass, especially when it is still unclear.

The Mountain Lake (*Thetaland™ Toolkit*)

The water sparkles like a thousand stars. You sit on the shoreline and you talk about your journey. The water mirrors your most important flashes of inspiration across to your counterpart who reflects the most inspiring ones.

The view is good on the mountain. You look back on what has been clarified and what has been revealed by surprising findings. Actively listening to your counterpart helps you become aware of your own progress.

The Waterfall (*Thetaland™ Toolkit, Variants Wood and Business*)

The creek gently flows through a dense forest. At the mountain's edge, the water falls and collects in a clear, deep basin. It refreshes you thoroughly.

The waterfall is a place to refresh all your senses and your body. The freshness helps stopped processes flow again.

The Blue Dwellings—Concepts

The color blue is relaxing and inspiring. It stands for clarity. Like a cloudless sky reflected in the water, it promotes conceptually clear thinking.

The Sculptor (*Thetaland™ Toolkit, Thetaland™ Kickstart*)

At the sculptor your thoughts will begin to take shape. You are chiseling out a rough form bit by bit.

Many words and phrases have already been written down. However, *the sculptor* is all about bringing the conceptual essence of the topic to the point in a linguistic way.

The Purple Dwellings—Findings

The purple dwellings mark the starting point and the end of the adventure journey. With a view of the whole journey, they reflect the big picture. Purple, as a mixed color, illustrates the conceptual result (blue) interacting with the conflict (red).

The Marketplace (*Thetaland™ Toolkit*)

At the marketplace you may exchange words and ideas with your fellow players. You may also check in with yourself and decide how to proceed. A horse is saddled up in the stable, ready to take you anywhere in Thetaland.

The marketplace always provides orientation in the thought process, and it is particularly helpful if some dwellings have already been visited. You are encouraged to decide which step to take next.

The Glade (*Thetaland™ Toolkit, Thetaland™ Kickstart*)

A silent, sunlit glade lies ahead. Go back to where your journey began and let whatever comes to mind bubble out freely.

With a clear view of *the glade*, you are able to capture the essential findings of the journey and how they relate to each other. You collect what you've learned.

The Ocean (*Thetaland™ Toolkit, Variants Business and Wood*)

At the ocean, we bow in humility. We trace the vibrating mystery without writing down a single line. Waves come and go. We are silent.

The ocean is unlike any of the other Thetaland™ dwellings. It has no number and it is not assigned a color. At *the ocean*, there are no cards with questions or suggestions. *The ocean* is here. You do not have to do anything while visiting it. It simply is. You are. We are. That alone is sufficient.

Conduct of the Game

Game Concept

Thetaland™ can be played alone, in a coaching setting, or in groups of three to twenty players. The game concept is simple:

1. Go to a dwelling.
2. Select a question card.
3. Answer the question or follow the suggestion of the card in writing.

This basic pattern is followed throughout the game. It creates a rhythmic structure, and in this way gives you an outer framework to help you to deal fruitfully with your inner worlds of thought.

In addition to your dialogue with yourself, in groups you have the opportunity to exchange ideas with your fellow players.

Rules of the Game

The only rule in Thetaland™ is: *Give the question a chance!* This means:

1. If the question or suggestion feels cumbersome or unsuitable, answer or follow it anyway.
2. If this fails, mentally rewrite the question or suggestion, and spin and rotate it until it fits. Make it your own.
3. If neither option works, make an exception to the rule and select another question card.

Preparation

If you are playing in a group, you must first choose a game master. The task of a game master is to explain the game and to lay out new dwellings and the corresponding question cards in each round. The game master is also welcome to play.

Before starting, determine the total playing time and the time for each round. The playing time can be between thirty minutes and three hours. A playing time of about three hours is enough to cover all twelve dwellings of the toolkit. For shorter playing times, you have to make a choice of dwellings. It is particularly helpful to choose dwellings from each of the colors for a game cycle.

You play the game in several rounds between five and thirty minutes each, with short breaks for questions and feedback. If you play for more than two hours, you should take at least one longer break.

A timer is helpful to keep track of the time of the game's rounds (hourglasses, for example, are visible to all). The time can be monitored by the game master or another player may take on this task.

All players need paper and writing utensils. We recommend shuffling the question cards beforehand.

Course of Play

Game Master

First, you explain the game concept and rules to the other players. The game begins with you reading the prologue slowly and clearly. Then lay out the first one to four dwellings and read aloud the description of each. Place the corresponding question cards on the areas provided for this purpose so that the symbol is visible (*Toolkit*). All dwellings remain in the game once they are laid out.

At the beginning of each additional round, you will introduce one to four more dwellings. The numbering of the dwellings represents the recommended, but not mandatory, order. At the end of the game, read the epilogue aloud.

Players

There is no set order of play; you play for yourself at your own pace. Roll the dice and then select the top question card of a dwelling corresponding to the color shown by the dice. Linger with the question and answer it in writing. When you feel the question is answered or the suggestion accomplished, place the card at the bottom of the pile of question cards. Now roll the dice again, and answer the next question. Repeat these steps until the agreed time for the round is over.

If no dwelling of the color shown on the dice has been laid out, keep rolling the dice until you get a color of a dwelling that has been laid out. If several dwellings of the same color have been laid out, you may choose any of those dwellings.

Each round follows the same pattern.

End of the Game

The game ends when the scheduled playing time is over. There are no losers in Thetaland™. At the end of the journey, everyone has won as expressed in the epilogue:

The journey through Thetaland is now coming to an end. It leads, like all roads, to the sea. Here, by the sea, we clearly feel the infinite riches of not-yet-knowing. At the same time, we are proud of the beauty, goodness, and truth that we were able to find thanks to our inner compasses. We take these findings with us to use in our actions with courage and confidence.

Modes of Play

We recommend that you always begin play by rolling the dice, which promotes playfulness. If you have experience playing Thetaland™, you can choose a dwelling without rolling the dice. This gives you the opportunity to visit any dwelling you prefer.

The pace of the journey can be determined by each player. You can take as much time as you need to answer the questions. Both modes—answering only a few questions intensively or answering the questions one after the other in shorter time intervals—have their appeal.

Sometimes it happens that players start taking cards from two different dwellings. Interestingly, such a combination of questions is often in harmony. We allow such game variants, according to our rule and the exception to the rule: *nothing is impossible in Thetaland. The sky is vast and wide; it has no limit.*

Further Suggestions for the Game

This section includes suggestions for the design of the environment and how to play the game. It is especially interesting for the game master.

Ambiance

For a successful gaming experience, it is essential that Thetaland™ occur in a relaxed, attentive, and creative environment. How to achieve such a setting will vary greatly depending on the group and location. As the game master, ask yourself (and possibly the players) in advance what exactly is needed.

The biggest responsibility for the game ambiance lies with the game master. You have flexibility for how to design your role, which you can systematically use. For instance, take your time when reading the prologue and the dwelling descriptions, even if the total playing time is only 30 minutes. Celebrate the laying out of the dwellings and adopt the tone of voice of a practiced storyteller.

Take care for yourself and maintain your enthusiasm throughout the course of the game. The attitude you radiate affects the course of the game and the success of the big picture. Enjoy your role, especially the creative power that comes with it. Give the players your utmost respect and allow sufficient room to be creative. Listen attentively to them during the breaks, patiently explain the rules of the game, and appreciate even small questions about the course of the game or about ambiguities concerning the method.

Spatial design measures can also prove helpful. Create free space by setting up as many tables and chairs as possible so that players can find their own undisturbed places to think and write, far away from

each other. If nothing else is possible, even a simple bouquet of flowers can significantly change the ambiance of the game’s setting.

Settings

Depending on the room setup, you can lay out the hexagons of the dwellings on a table or on the floor. *The marketplace* serves as the center, on one side of which you will place the dwelling *at home*. It makes sense to place *the big library* and *the sculptor* around *the marketplace* as well.

You can distribute the remaining dwellings freely. You will find an example of the arrangement of the dwellings in Fig. 1. There are no limits to your creativity. The same applies to the design of individual dwellings (e.g., you can design *the idyllic garden* with flowers and refreshments as a feel-good place).

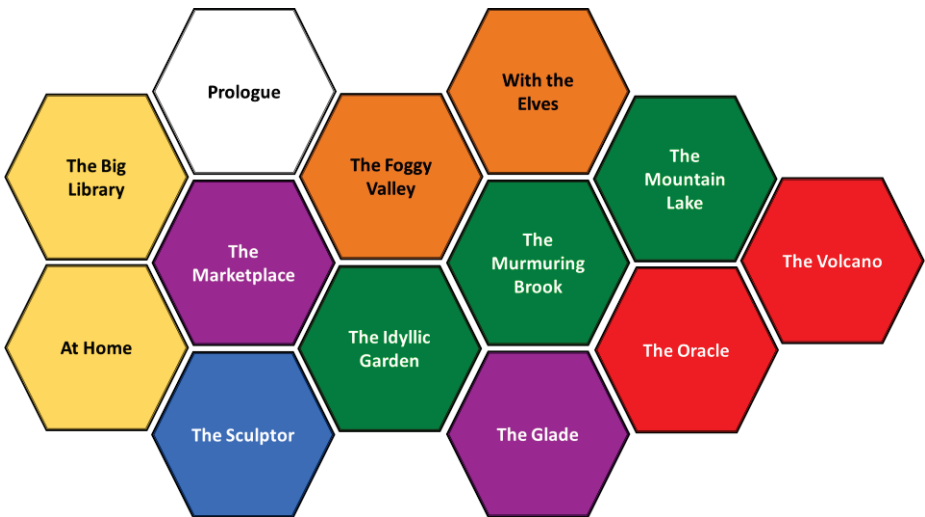


Fig. 1—example of the arrangement of the dwellings

Group Work

In groups, depending on the area of application and objective, each player can work on her or his own topic, or there can be a common topic that is predetermined or chosen by the group.

Unlike in other games, participants in a Thetaland™ group do not take turns but play all at the same time. Although there is also the option of exchanging ideas within Thetaland™ (see below), we recommend always starting with individual work. As a player, you have the opportunity to develop your own experiences and original ideas and to express them in writing before such an exchange takes place. Each exchange in the group will be significantly richer when the individual work happens first.

The questions and suggestions of the green dwellings *the murmuring brook* and *the mountain lake* can be used for the exchange. Not only do they invite the exchange of ideas, they can also be relevant to the interactions of the entire group. Use the questions and suggestions e.g. in a reflection run.

Prototypical Roadmaps

The numbering of the dwellings gives a possible order for the course of the game. To explore all twelve dwellings, a minimum of three hours of playing time is required. Find below prototypical roadmaps for using *Thetaland™ Toolkit*. For the *Kickstart* variant, you can adjust the plans accordingly.

Game Time of Three Hours

- Preparation (15 minutes)
- First round (25 minutes + 5-minute break):
The Marketplace, At Home, The Idyllic Garden
- Second round (25 minutes + 30-minute break):
The Foggy Valley, The Oracle, The Murmuring Brook
- Third round (25 minutes + 5-minute break):
With the Elves, The Big Library, The Sculptor
- Fourth round (25 minutes):
The Volcano, The Mountain Lake, The Glade
- Wrap-up (25 minutes)

Game Time of Two Hours

- Preparation (15 minutes)
- First round (25 minutes + 5-minute break):
The Marketplace, At Home, The Idyllic Garden
- Second round (25 minutes + 5-minute break):
The Foggy Valley, The Oracle (or The Big Library), The Sculptor
- Third round (25 minutes):
With the Elves, The Volcano, The Mountain Lake, The Glade
- Wrap-up (20 minutes)

Game Time of One Hour

- Preparation (5 minutes)
- First round (20 minutes + 5-minute break):
The Marketplace, At Home, The Idyllic Garden, The Foggy Valley (or With the Elves)
- Second round (15 minutes + 5-minute break):
The Volcano, The Sculptor, The Glade
- Wrap-up (10 minutes)

Game Time of Thirty Minutes

- Preparation (5 minutes)
- First round (10 minutes):
At Home, The Idyllic Garden, The Foggy Valley (or With the Elves)
- Second round (10 minutes):
The Volcano, The Sculptor
- Wrap-up (5 minutes)

A Good Way to Finish

The sculptor, the mountain lake, or the glade are suitable dwellings at which to finish the game. Make sure the players can finish their thoughts and that there is a reflection round to conclude. You are welcome to end with a celebration of what has been achieved.

Combination with Other Methods

All methodology has its limitations, and Thetaland™ is no exception. We encourage you to be flexible and combine question cards, dwellings, or entire game units with other methods.

The Thetaland™ Network

For more information about game variations, combinations with other methods, and samples of applications, visit www.thetaland.net. There, you will also find hints about actual dates and offers for the *Thetaland*SM training and the extensions of the Thetaland™ game: *Meanings, Practical Relevance, Theory Formation and Learning from Each Other*.

If you need a dwelling that is tailored to your application context, please contact us. Developing tailor-made dwellings not only is fun and deeply satisfying but also greatly contributes to everyone's journey.

We invite you to share your personal experience with Thetaland™. We are happy to answer your questions and assist you personally in the planning of Thetaland™ game events.

Your Thetaland™ Team,

Evelyn Fendler-Lee and Tony Hofmann

Extensions of the Game

E1: Meanings

The first expansion is dedicated to “fine-tuning the language.” The implicit knowledge is revealed by the interplay of experiencing and linguistic symbolization. New meanings are precisely differentiated. The result is wording that vividly describes your individual wisdom and is readily understood.

E2: Practical Relevance

“From practice to practice” is the motto of the second expansion. Players explore situations they have lived and systematically derive connections and conceptual patterns from relevant events. “Aha” moments allow players to understand the events and concrete ideas for action to emerge. Their application to current tasks and problem situations in practice leads to unsuspected yet practical solutions.

E3: Theory Formation

The central concern of science and research is to put concepts together in such a way that a consistent theory emerges that captures the core of a field or topic. The subject of the third expansion is how individual concepts and contexts can be transformed into a linguistic form that serves as a model. The motto is “interlock concepts consistently.”

E4: Learning from Each Other

The fourth expansion is dedicated entirely to the interaction between the players so they can integrate their individually developed insights with the experience of other players, thus inspiring new ideas and thoughts among the group. The insights of individual

group members intermesh into a coherent whole, which is supported by all participants—the group thus moves “from the ego to the we.”

