

From Yuck to Yay! (Or at least OK)

If your mind is going around and around on the same topic like a gerbil on a wheel -- then these tools are for you! The following exercises are great for those times when your perspective, your negative beliefs, or your habitual thinking patterns could use a fresh outlook.

While I did not create these tools myself, I have used them often to go from obsessing (or freaking out) to calmly seeing the bigger picture.

Each exercise can be done in two ways:

- a) Get a pen & paper & journal through the exercise
- b) Have a good friend (who is also a good listener) be there while you talk your way through the exercise. Or, you can also talk out loud to yourself.

Whether you're more of a writer, or a talker (or both) -- take your time with these and let your mind open to new ways of seeing things.

Enjoy!

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Exercise #1: Fact vs. Interpretation

Take an event that happened recently and write down (or say) the facts of what happened. Just the FACTS -- what actions took place, what exactly was said, who did what, etc.

Then write (or say) how you interpreted what happened -- what thoughts you had, what feelings you had, what meanings you gave to other people's actions and/or words, what assumptions you made, what conclusions you formed, what judgements you had, etc.

Then consider if there might be other ways to look at the situation. What other interpretations might be possible?

(The exercise above came from the "Vision & Will" program developed by Allen Schoer of The Actors Institute in New York City.)

Exercise #2: Ask yourself the four questions below:

What am I doing? (Describe the facts of your actions)

How do I feel? (Describe your emotions and/or sensations)

What am I thinking? (Give some examples of the thoughts in your mind)

What else could I think? (It's your mind -- if you could be thinking about anything, what would it be? Another perspective on the situation? Another topic altogether? Things you are grateful for in your life? What you want to have for dinner? etc., etc.)

The questions above can be converted to the past tense if needed -- What was I doing?, How did I feel?, etc.

(This exercise came from the book “Sick & Tired of Being Sick & Tired” by Solomon & Lipton.)

Exercise #3: From A to E

Activating Event: What was the circumstance that triggered your reaction?

Belief System: What do you believe about it? What old beliefs come up?
What types of thoughts are you having?

Consequence: What are the consequences of having those thoughts?
What is the impact on your life of holding those beliefs?
What happens to your body, feelings, life, etc.

Disputation: Argue against those thoughts and beliefs.
What other beliefs & outlooks might be possible?

Enlightened Response (and/or Evolved Consequences):
What is the opportunity? What other ways might you respond?
What could you learn? What difference could a new outlook make?

(The exercise above came from the Getting Well program in Orlando, FL)