

# Worksheet

Professional Version | US English

# Perspective-Taking



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## Description

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Clients may have habitual, biased, or schema-driven ways of viewing difficulties in their lives. Training them to think flexibly about their difficulties is an essential component of cognitive behavioral therapy. Cognitive restructuring techniques in CBT teach clients ways of analyzing situations that might initially be unfamiliar. A simple way of introducing cognitive restructuring is by framing it as *Perspective-Taking*: trying to look at difficulties from different points of view. This worksheet helps clients to identify their automatic interpretation of a situation and then prompts them to think about that situation in a variety of ways. The goal of such an introductory exercise is not necessarily to effect dramatic changes in affect, but to gently introduce the concept of cognitive flexibility.

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# Instructions

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Clients should be instructed to record specific instances in which they felt bothered, uncomfortable, or upset.

- **In the first column** (Situation that bothered you) clients should be instructed to record what they were doing when they started to notice a significant change in how they were feeling. Training clients to record specific details (such as who they were with, where they were, and what had just happened) is often helpful when later elaborating a memory for an event, or simply in understanding the reasons for subsequent thoughts and responses.
- **In the second column** (How did you feel) clients should be instructed to record their emotional reactions in that moment (which can typically be described using single words, e.g. sad, angry, disappointed). Clients should be encouraged to rate the intensity of these sensations on 0–100% scale.
- **In the third column** (Interpretation / Thought) clients should be directed to record their thoughts prompted by that situation. How did they interpret what was happening? Clients can be reminded that cognitions can take the form of verbal thoughts, but can also take the form of images, or memories. If a recorded cognition is an image (e.g. “I had a picture in my mind of people laughing at me”) clients should be directed to question what that image means to them (e.g. “It means I’m a failure”) and to record that idiosyncratic meaning.
- **In the fourth column** (Alternative viewpoint) clients should be encouraged to try to view their difficult moment from a variety of perspectives. The prompts guide them to view the situation from the perspective of a compassionate other (“a friend”, “someone who truly liked themselves”), a different temporal perspective (“when you are aged 80 and looking back on this moment”), and the faintly absurd (“what would Batman say”).

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# References

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Beck, A.T., Rush, A.J., Shaw, B.F., & Emery, G. (1979). *Cognitive therapy of depression*. New York: Guilford.

Day, A., Howells, K., Mohr, P., Schall, E., & Gerace, A. (2008). The development of CBT programmes for anger: The role of interventions to promote perspective-taking skills. *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 36(3), 299-312.

# Perspective-Taking

<b>Situation that bothered you</b> Who were you with? What were you doing? Where were you? When did it happen?	<b>How did you feel?</b> What did you feel in that situation? (Rate intensity 0–100%)	<b>Interpretation / Thought</b> How did you interpret what happened? What went through your mind?	<b>Alternative viewpoint</b> Try to interpret that situation differently. Use the prompts below.
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What other ways are there of looking at this situation?</li><li>• What would a friend say to me about this?</li><li>• What would Batman say to me?</li><li>• Name 3 good outcomes that might come from this event.</li><li>• When you're aged 80 and looking back on this event will it still bother you?</li><li>• What would someone who truly liked themselves think in this situation?</li></ul>

# Perspective-Taking

<b>Situation that bothered you</b> Who were you with? What were you doing? Where were you? When did it happen?	<b>How did you feel?</b> What did you feel in that situation? (Rate intensity 0-100%)	<b>Interpretation / Thought</b> How did you interpret what happened? What went through your mind?	<b>Alternative viewpoint</b> Try to interpret that situation differently Use the prompts below
<p>Parents talking to me over dinner about how the job-hunting was going. I thought that Dad sounded cross with me.</p> <p>Was sat with a friend who was telling me about their problems.</p>	<p>Tense, angry, pathetic, ashamed.</p> <p>Frustrated.</p>	<p>They think I'm a waste of space and want me out of their house.</p> <p>When are they going to stop talking about themselves? I must mean nothing to them for them not to even ask how I'm doing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Someone who truly liked themselves would be ok with what they're doing, and wouldn't worry about what other people think.</li> <li>- When I'm 80 this won't even figure in my life. I'll probably miss being told off by my parents.</li> <li>- I know for a fact she cares about me - she's a good person and doesn't mean anything by it.</li> <li>- Finn would say "That's just Ashley - she doesn't have an 'off' switch".</li> <li>- Batman would tell me to fight crime and interrupt her!</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What other ways are there of looking at this situation?</li> <li>• What would a friend say to me about this?</li> <li>• What would Batman say to me?</li> <li>• Name 3 good outcomes that might come from this event.</li> <li>• When you're aged 80 and looking back on this event will it still bother you?</li> <li>• What would someone who truly liked themselves think in this situation?</li> </ul>

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