

Culture - Narratives

Personal and Collective Narratives

Exploring and Comparing

This exercise will help you **identify differences and overlaps** between your personal stories and the broader narratives of your culture or community.

1. Define the Focus

Choose a theme or area of life to explore, such as:

Success Relationships Identity Work or career Health & well-being

2. Write Your Personal Narrative

Reflect on your own beliefs and assumptions about the chosen theme. Write down your answers to the following questions:

- **What do I believe** about this area of life?
- **What** stories or experiences **shaped** these beliefs?
- **How do I act** or make decisions based on these beliefs?

3. Identify Collective Narratives

Think about the group, culture, or society you belong to **and write down** the shared narratives about the same theme. Ask yourself:

- **What** does this group **value** in this area?
- **What messages** do I hear from family, media, education, religion, or peers?

- **What behaviours** or choices **are celebrated**, and which are discouraged?

4. Compare and Contrast

Review your answers and consider:

- **Alignment:**
Where do my personal beliefs match the collective narrative?
- **Tension:**
Where do my beliefs or actions differ from the collective narrative?
- **Influence:**
How has the collective narrative shaped my personal story?
Have I internalised it, rejected it, or adapted it?

5. Reflect on Impact

Finally, **think about how** these narratives **affect your life**:

- **How do the similarities** between personal and collective narratives **support or empower me**?
- **How do the differences** create **conflict or limit** my choices?
- Are there collective narratives I want to challenge or step away from to better align with my authentic self?

Optional Extension:

If you feel creative, try representing these narratives visually (e.g., through a diagram, collage, or artwork) to further explore the interplay between them.

This exercise encourages you to notice the invisible forces shaping your worldview while clarifying where your personal truth stands within or outside these cultural stories.