

## Mentalization-Based Worksheet: Identifying Emotional States

### Exercise 1: Expanding Emotional Vocabulary

1. Take a moment to reflect on how you are feeling right now. Try to describe your emotion beyond basic terms like "happy," "sad," or "angry."

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2. Use an *emotion wheel* or list of nuanced emotions (e.g., frustrated, hopeful, overwhelmed, content) to refine your description.

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3. Write a short paragraph describing how this emotion feels in your body (e.g., "I feel a tightness in my chest" or "My shoulders feel lighter").

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4. Consider what might have triggered this emotion and whether it is a reaction to an internal thought or an external event.

**Reflection:** How does identifying your emotions with more precision affect your understanding of yourself and your reactions?

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### Exercise 2: Differentiating Thoughts from Emotions

1. Identify a recent situation where you felt a strong emotional reaction.

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2. Write down the emotion you experienced.

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3. Now, write down the thoughts that accompanied that emotion. Were they interpretations of the situation or direct feelings?

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4. Challenge yourself to separate facts from emotional interpretations (e.g., "I felt rejected when my friend canceled plans" vs. "My friend canceled plans because they don't like me").

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**Reflection:** How does separating emotions from thoughts change the way you perceive the situation?

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### Exercise 3: Identifying Others' Emotional States

1. Observe a conversation or interaction between two people (e.g., in a movie, TV show, or real life).
2. Pay attention to facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language.
3. Try to identify the emotions that each person might be experiencing.
4. Consider alternative explanations—could there be multiple emotions at play? Could your own emotions or biases be influencing your interpretation?

**Reflection:** How does observing others' emotions help you improve your own emotional awareness and interpersonal understanding?

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### References

- Bateman, A., & Fonagy, P. (2012). *Handbook of Mentalizing in Mental Health Practice*. American Psychiatric Publishing.
- Fonagy, P., Gergely, G., Jurist, E. L., & Target, M. (2002). *Affect Regulation, Mentalization, and the Development of the Self*. Other Press.