

Mentalization-Based Worksheet: Differentiating Thoughts from Feelings

Exercise 1: Identifying Thoughts vs. Feelings

1. Read the following statements and label each statement in "quotation marks" and italicized as either a "thought" or a "feeling":

Example: (Someone walked by without acknowledging you) *"She ignored me because she doesn't respect me."* - Thought

- (No one called you today) "I feel like nobody cares about me." **T or F**
- (You have a test tomorrow) *"I am worried about the outcome of my test."* **T or F**
- (You received no feedback on a work project) *"I feel unimportant."* **T or F**
- (Have to give a presentation tomorrow) *"I am nervous about my presentation."* **T or F**
- (Missed a deadline) *"I feel like I am always failing."* **T or F**
- (A friend did not reply to text) *"He must be angry with me because he didn't reply back."* **T or F**
- (You were not invited to a party) *"I feel hurt and disappointed."* **T or F**
- (Someone you know avoided eye contact when you talked) *"They are avoiding me because they don't like me."* **T or F**
- (You did not complete all the tasks you get out to accomplish) *"I feel overwhelmed and exhausted."* **T or F**

2. Rewrite the statements to separate the thoughts from the feelings.

Example: (Someone walked by without acknowledging you) *"She ignored me because she doesn't respect me"* → Thought: "She walked by and ignored me." Feeling: "I feel hurt and unimportant."

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

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Reflection: How does recognizing the difference between thoughts and feelings change your perception of these situations?

Exercise 2: Thought vs. Feeling Journal

1. Choose a recent emotional experience.

2. Write down what happened in a factual, neutral way.

3. List the thoughts you had in response to the situation.

4. Identify the emotions you experienced.

5. Reflect: Were your emotions based on thoughts or actual events? How might viewing them separately impact your response?

Exercise 3: Reframing Thoughts to Improve Mentalization

1. Identify a situation where you assumed another person's thoughts or intentions (e.g., "My friend canceled plans because they don't like me").

2. List alternative explanations for their behavior.

3. Identify how your emotions shift when you consider multiple perspectives.

Reflection: How does this exercise help reduce emotional reactivity and improve understanding of others' mental states?

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Final Reflection Questions:

- What challenges do you face in distinguishing thoughts from feelings?
 - How can practicing this skill improve your emotional regulation and relationships?
 - What strategies can you use to pause and evaluate thoughts before reacting emotionally?
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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.
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Exercise 1, Section 1: Answers

- "I feel like nobody cares about me." → **Thought** (This is an interpretation or assumption about how others feel, rather than a direct emotional experience.)
- "I am worried about the outcome of my test." → **Feeling** (Worry is an emotional response to uncertainty.)
- "I feel unimportant." → **Feeling** (Feeling unimportant reflects an emotional experience of low self-worth.)
- "She ignored me because she doesn't respect me." → **Thought** (This is an assumption about another person's intentions, not a direct emotional experience.)
- "I am nervous about my presentation." → **Feeling** (Nervousness is a direct emotional response to an anticipated event.)
- "I feel like I am always failing." → **Thought** (This is a broad conclusion or belief rather than an immediate emotional state.)
- "He must be angry with me because he didn't text back." → **Thought** (This is a speculation about another person's emotions, not a personal feeling.)
- "I feel hurt and disappointed." → **Feeling** (These are direct emotions based on a perceived event.)
- "They are avoiding me because they don't like me." → **Thought** (This is an interpretation of others' behavior rather than a personal emotional experience.)
- "I feel overwhelmed and exhausted." → **Feeling** (These are direct experiences of emotional and physical exhaustion.)