

Thoughts. Feelings. Truth.

As we live life, it is easy for our thinking to become swept away into paths from our past or paths that are presently unhelpful. This exercise exists to give you a chance to set aside thinking that does not reflect reality. In addition, it admits the emotions we are feeling in the moment that may or may not be generating a significant portion of the thoughts we are thinking. It is best used when you are in a state of anger, numbness, or confusion (or a state of the like), as a way to give you handles with which to steer your decision making in the near future. It can give you a greater sense of your present, and help you identify proper actions to take. It can also be used as a predictor of thoughts and feelings in the future, should there be a need for such. Answer the following questions as honestly as possible.

What is your present context? Why are you currently using this worksheet?

(Example: I'm confused(angry) about why I don't understand my wife -or- I have a stressful meeting coming up and don't know how to handle my boss)

Your Thoughts:

Write down everything you are thinking. Should any feelings rise up, write them in the section below. Your thoughts often will connect in ways that seem strange, so feel free to write down all of them without editing for relevance.

(Example: My wife doesn't respect me. Doesn't she know that I've worked all day just to make her happy? I can't ever seem to make her happy! She doesn't like me. She doesn't want me. She doesn't care. I hope work is ok. I can't believe I'm having to take the time to do this sheet when I've got so much to get back to. But we didn't even get to finish our conversation! She's using it against me. She knows that I'm going to win this argument, so she doesn't want to get to the end of it. That's why she has to attack me.)

Feelings:

Write down your feelings. If you have trouble identifying them, feel free to use the prompt “I feel like...” to give pictures of situations as a reference point for your feelings.

(Example: I feel unwanted. I feel sad. I feel angry. I feel rage. I feel like no one cares about me, especially my wife. I feel like if I really needed her, she wouldn't be there for me. I feel like this is never going to end. I feel like I want to run.)

Pause and Visualize:

Imagine a room with two chairs. In one of the chairs is you, in your present state, with all the thoughts and feelings of the above answers. You are speaking with a trusted and loving friend and mentor, who sits in the other seat. As you observe yourself telling these thoughts and feelings to your mentor, what observations do you make about the reality surrounding those statements? How is your thinking not reflecting what actually is? What would you say to someone who was saying the things you are saying to your mentor?

(Example: I do sometimes make my wife happy. She does care for me, or at least she says so. She's not acting how I would expect. I wish the conversation(fight) could have been resolved, but it's ok that it's not. It doesn't HAVE to be resolved right now. I might say to me, "work seems to be interrupting your thoughts" or "I can see that you are in a lot of pain" or "what would be the best way to calm down?")

Pause and Reflect:

Consider the statements that were made at the beginning. Do any of them surprise you, stand out as out of place, or seem particularly interesting? Note these for future debriefing with a counselor or close friend. Now process them, asking, why is it strange that those statements are there?

(Example: It surprises me that I am so confident that I will “win” the argument. It surprises me that I’m so angry over something so small. It surprises me that I am experiencing many different emotions at the same time. I thought I was just angry. It’s strange because I realized that I was a lot more sad than angry. It’s strange because I want to love my wife and not fight. It’s strange because I did not even notice my pride initially. I really believe that she should just be quiet and do what I say. It’s not fair.)

Write the Reality:

In a short statement, write what is actually going on. Factually empathize with all the characters involved. Walk in their shoes too.

(Example: My wife and I are both stressed and started taking that out on each other. I don’t think she meant to hurt me, and even if she did, I am here to be her loving husband when she needs me. My wife cares for me, but is an imperfect person. I do make her happy, but I am also an imperfect person. In truth, she probably will not have processed this much when we see each other next. There will be tension still. My genuine hurt will make that tension difficult. I need to prioritize staying calm. It’s more important than being right. If I were in her shoes, I would be wondering why my husband doesn’t respect my choices.)

Pause and Choose:

Take two minutes to breathe deeply (approximately 12, 10-second breaths). Once calmed, dwell on the character of Jesus Christ and choose a course of action that reflects what you believe to be a Godly response to the situation. Seek truth. Seek Jesus. How would He respond?

(Example: STAY CALM. We definitely need to talk this out more, but probably after we have calmed down. I think I should make a special time for this so we do not forget. It's important to me that she know I was hurt, but I should make sure to speak grace and listen first, so I understand well before I come to any more conclusions. I'm NOT going to hold it over her head. Instead, I'll practice being loving in truthfulness as well as grace. I think Jesus would value her first. Jesus would want her to be safe. Jesus would lay down His life for her. But Jesus wouldn't lie either. The story of Martha comes to mind.)

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

~ Romans 12:1-2

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

~ Ephesians 5:15-17

*How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.
Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*

~ Psalm 119:103-105

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

~ John 8:31-32