WORKSHEET 134 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

My two speeds

The body's fast reaction and the cortex's slower view

AIM

Distinguish the automatic survival reaction (fast, approximate) from the slower, more nuanced analysis that follows, to normalise bodily reactions and practise reappraisal.

WHO IT IS FOR

Anxiety, explosive anger, reactions experienced as "incomprehensible" or "out of proportion".

DURATION

15 min

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Explain the two speeds: the fast alarm prepares the body even before we understand; the cortex analyses afterwards and can confirm or put the brakes on the alarm.
2. The person describes a recent situation: their immediate reaction (body, gesture) and what they thought a few minutes later.
3. Compare the two: what did the second look add?
4. Look for what helps the second look arrive sooner (breathing, naming, asking oneself a question).

POINTS TO WATCH

> Survival circuits and conscious experience are two different levels (LeDoux): the aim is not to prevent the fast reaction, but to leave time for the second look to arrive.

REFERENCES

LeDoux, J. E. & Pine, D. S. (2016). Using neuroscience to help understand fear and anxiety: A two-system framework. American Journal of Psychiatry, 173(11), 1083-1093.

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PSYCHOLOGIST'S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 134 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

My two speeds

Your brain reacts at two speeds. First, a fast alarm that prepares your body in a fraction of a second. Then a slower look that analyses and can say: “actually, it wasn’t such a big deal”. Both are useful.

1. Choose a recent situation in which you reacted strongly.
2. Note your first reaction, your body’s (within a few seconds).
3. Note what you thought afterwards, with some distance.
4. Write what the second look taught you.

The situation	First speed: my body	Second speed: my view afterwards	What I take from it

What helps my second look arrive sooner:

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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