WORKSHEET 137 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

Problem or emotion?

Separating what I can change from what I can't

AIM

Break a stressful situation down into aspects, assess for each one whether it can be changed and choose accordingly a problem-focused or emotion-focused strategy (fitting the strategy to controllability).

WHO IT IS FOR

Chronic stress, worries, complex situations (illness, conflict, work), people who wear themselves out trying to solve everything or who endure everything.

DURATION

20 min

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Remind them that how effective a strategy is depends on what is controllable (Folkman, 1984).
2. The person lists 3 to 5 aspects of the situation.
3. For each one: changeable, partly, or not at all.
4. Changeable: a concrete action (worksheet 65). Not changeable: a way of looking after the emotion (accepting, calming down, seeking support).

POINTS TO WATCH

> Anxious people often overestimate what depends on them, and people with depression underestimate it: help them assess it realistically.

REFERENCES

Folkman, S. (1984). Personal control and stress and coping processes: A theoretical analysis. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 46(4), 839-852.

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Lazarus, R. S. & Folkman, S. (1984). Stress, Appraisal, and Coping. Springer.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 137 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

Problem or emotion?

Faced with stress, you can act on the problem or look after what you feel. Neither is better in general: it depends on what can change. Often the same situation has a part that can be changed and a part that can't.

1. Break your situation down into 3 to 5 aspects.
2. For each one, ask yourself: can I change it? Yes, partly or no.
3. If yes or partly: write a concrete action.
4. If no: write a way of looking after what you feel.

One aspect of the situation	Can I change it?	Acting on the problem	Looking after the emotion

What I stop trying to change, and what I start doing:

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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