WORKSHEET 139 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

Threat or challenge?

Looking at the same situation from another angle

AIM

Practise reappraising a situation experienced as a threat towards a more balanced reading that includes the challenge (what is possible, what can be learnt), drawing on real resources.

WHO IT IS FOR

Performance anxiety (exams, interviews, public speaking), career changes, life abroad.

DURATION

15 min

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Introduce Lazarus and Folkman's distinction: the same situation can be seen as a threat (what I may lose) or as a challenge (what I may gain or learn).
2. The person describes the situation as they experience it as a threat.
3. Then they look for what would also make it a challenge, and the resources to draw on.
4. Compare the stress felt with the two readings.

POINTS TO WATCH

> It isn't about denying the risks or forcing a positive view: both readings can coexist. Avoid it in situations of recent loss (bereavement), which first need to be acknowledged.

REFERENCES

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

Lazarus, R. S. & Folkman, S. (1987). Transactional theory and research on emotions and coping. European Journal of Personality, 1(3), 141-169.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 139 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

Threat or challenge?

The same situation can be experienced as a threat (“I might fail”) or as a challenge (“it’s difficult, but I can learn or gain something”). Both views can exist at the same time. The second usually leaves more room to act.

1. Describe the situation as you experience it.
2. Write what makes it a threat for you.
3. Write what could also make it a challenge: what you can gain, learn, show.
4. Note the resources that help you experience it as a challenge.

The situation	Seen as a threat	Also seen as a challenge	My resources

What I feel when I hold both views at once:

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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