WORKSHEET 28 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

What I have already tried

Taking stock of control strategies (creative hopelessness)

AIM

Help the person take an honest look at everything they have tried in order to get rid of anxiety or difficult thoughts, in the short and long term, to open up the possibility of a different approach.

WHO IT IS FOR

People exhausted from fighting their emotions, who have "tried everything". Start of ACT work.

DURATION

20-30 min in session

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Ask: "What have you tried to stop feeling this?" Make the complete list, without judging (avoiding, distracting yourself, drinking, reasoning, forcing yourself…).
2. For each strategy: did it work in the short term? And in the long term? What has it cost you?
3. Make the pattern visible: quick relief, but the problem comes back and life narrows. It is not a lack of effort.
4. Introduce the idea that perhaps the struggle itself is the problem, and suggest trying something else (acceptance, values).
5. Close kindly: the person has done what they could with what they knew.

POINTS TO WATCH

> "Creative hopelessness" must be done with a lot of validation: the person should not feel they have failed. Avoid it if there is an unassessed suicide risk; some strategies (sleep, social support, treatment) are helpful and should be kept.

REFERENCES

Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K. D. & Wilson, K. G. (2012). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: The Process and Practice of Mindful Change (2nd ed.). Guilford.

Harris, R. (2019). ACT Made Simple: An Easy-to-Read Primer on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (2nd ed.). New Harbinger.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 28 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

What I have already tried

Best done with your psychologist

You have probably already tried many things to stop feeling what makes you suffer. It is not a lack of willpower. Let's take stock, honestly and without judging yourself.

1. List everything you have done to get rid of these thoughts or emotions.
2. For each one: did it help in the moment?
3. And in the long run: did the problem go away?
4. What has it cost you (time, energy, relationships, plans)?

What I have tried	Did it help in the moment? (yes/no)	Did it help in the long run? (yes/no)	What it has cost me

What do I notice when I look at this list?

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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