WORKSHEET 32 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

The chessboard

Not being one of the pieces, but the board (observing self)

AIM

Show, with the chessboard metaphor, that you can hold “white” and “black” thoughts at war without taking sides in the battle, and that the fight between pieces never ends.

WHO IT IS FOR

Inner struggle (positive versus negative thoughts), people trying to “beat” their doubts. Adults.

DURATION

15 min in session

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Describe the board: the black pieces (doubts, fears, criticisms) and the white ones (positive thoughts, encouragement) fight each other.
2. Explore: has the person spent time backing the white pieces to defeat the black ones? Has the battle ever been won?
3. Offer another point of view: you are not a piece, you are the board. The board holds all the pieces and stays steady.
4. Ask what the board can do that the pieces can’t: move somewhere, carrying them all.
5. Connect with values: where does the board want to go?

POINTS TO WATCH

> Don’t present positive thinking as useless in itself: the problem is the endless war between thoughts. Keep it concrete, with the person’s own examples.

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 32 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

I am the board

In your head, the black pieces (doubts, fears) and the white ones (encouragement) fight endlessly. What if you weren't one of the pieces, but the board that holds them all?

1. What are my black pieces (the harsh things I tell myself)?
2. What are my white pieces (what I tell myself to counter them)?
3. Has the battle ever been won for good?
4. As the board, where do I want to go, with all my pieces?

Black piece	White piece that answers	Time I spend fighting	Where I want to go

What changes when I see myself as the board?

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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