

HOW SKILLS

The HOW Skills refer to *how to let go* of your desire to be right or wrong; should or shouldn't; fair or unfair; and doing what works best for you. You don't have to agree or like the situation. You simply have to let go to effectively deal with a distressing situation.

The following worksheet teaches you how to keep control over your mind, stop worrying about the past or future, and live your present fully—using three exercises: *Non-Judgmental*, *One-Mindful*, and *Effective*.

Identify a distressing situation where you want to apply the HOW skills. Mention who, what, when, and where.

NON-JUDGMENTAL

We tend to make automatic judgments about people, places, or situations that happen to us. “*He didn't complete the project on time*”; “*Buying that car is a waste of money*”; “*They must be lazy if they can't find time to exercise*.” “*I look terrible today*.” But in reality, judgments are emotionally painful. They can create a sense of guilt, shame, or even inadequacy.

Do not try to replace these negative judgments with positive ones. Rather, try to let go of them. This exercise requires you to stop fighting what is or what isn't and describe the thing as it is. Use the what, where, when, and who aspects of the situation to replace your judgments with what actually is.

Example:

- Replace “I look terrible today” with facts— “I just didn't do my hair today as I usually would.”
- Replace “They must be lazy for exercise” with facts— “They must have other priorities that keep them occupied.”

Here are some exercises to help you get started:

1. Describe the facts of a situation based on only what you observe with your senses.
2. Let your facts be based on the consequences of the situation.
3. If you want to describe your feelings, do it as *your response* to facts.
4. Journal about your day. Describe it as concretely as possible, based on only what you observed.
5. Imagine a person you're angry with. Try to describe what the person has done without involving your judgments.

ONE-MINDFUL

If you're a multi-task person trying to juggle three tasks at once, then this exercise is for you. It requires you to slow down enough so that you can get in touch with your wise mind and make effective decisions. If you're in a painful situation, then one-mindfully encourages you to focus only on the pain instead of adding on the pain by worrying about the past or the future.

Attempt to pick one thing to do at a time. One way to practice this is by observing what you observe while focusing on the task. Let go of distractions. If your mind is trying to do two things at a time, then stop and go back to one thing at a time.

EXAMPLE:

- If you're eating, then eat (Observe the taste, texture, and smell of the food).
- If you're planning, then plan. (Observe your planning process, your journal, and so on).

- If you're worrying, then worry (Observe the thoughts that occurred in your head, your behavior, and so on).

Here are some exercises to help you get started:

1. Make a cup of tea or coffee. Observe that you're pouring it into the cup. The fragrance, temperature, and color. Observe each step and breathe gently.
2. Wash dishes consciously. Notice the smell of the soap, temperature, and sensations of rubbing hands over the dishes.
3. Take a slow-motion bath. Do not rush to get the job done. Notice the stream of water on your body. Put on clean clothes. Think of yourself as being clean and fresh.

EFFECTIVE

Since we often get stuck into right and wrong; fair and unfair thinking—the key to acting effectively is by doing what works best for you. We can't always prove a point, but we always align our actions towards reaching our goals in that situation.

Consider a distressing situation. Let go of persistence to be '*right*' or '*proving a point*.' Focus on what your goals are and list down what works best for you.

EXAMPLE:

- If someone cuts you off in traffic, you might get tempted to honk a horn or pull up next to them to prove how they have been unfair. Rather, you take a pause and ask yourself, "Is this effective?" slow down the car and let the person move on.

Here are some exercises to help you get started:

1. Observe when you're being angry towards someone. Ask yourself, "Is this effective?"
2. Notice your persistence to be right. Ask yourself, "What is more effective than this?"
3. Think of what is needed in the situation you're in, rather than the situation you wish you were in.
4. Consider what grudges are you holding towards someone. Ask yourself if it is benefitting you in any way. Consider a more effective response than holding grudges.

Remember that practicing the HOW skills could be frustrating and challenging some days, while other days it will be easy. It's perfectly normal if you get discouraged let your practice lapse. The key is to get into the habit of non-judgment, focusing on one task at a time, and picking up effective responses. Over time, you'll be able to reduce judgment, experience less anxiety, and discover life as enjoyable just as it is.