

# humantold

## Observing Your Own Experience (Part 1)

This activity is to help you create some awareness of the self and take a step back from the experiences. Developing the part of you called the “observer self.”

**“You are the sky; and everything else is the weather.”**

In ACT, the skill of defusing yourself from your thoughts involves getting in touch with the observer self and creating space from your conceptualized self.

- **The observer self** can be thought of as the part of you that is able to notice your own experience. For example, you can have thoughts or you can notice that you are having thoughts. You couldn't even notice that you were noticing you were having thoughts that part of you that notices or even notices you are noticing, that is awareness.
- **The conceptualized self** are the thoughts, ideas, and beliefs about who you are. For example, I might say I am a 28-year-old, hispanic, cigender heterosexual male who lives in NYC and is a therapist. These are true, they are also not who I am or define me, rather they are facts, realities, and roles I play. These are important, but can cause pain when you identify with your struggles. “I am depressed,” “I am stupid.” These may be true, but they limit your ability to change or be different.

The positive of connecting with the observer self is it allows you a place within yourself that is stable and unchanging. You can use the space to take a step back and observe your experience which can make things more manageable. This space will hopefully allow you to hold difficult experiences in your awareness while still allowing you the freedom and flexibility to better live out your values.

What are some statements you or others might make about your conceptualized self?  
(concepts, roles, beliefs, judgements, or narratives you have about yourself)

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**Activity:**

With this activity we will be practicing connecting to the observer self.

1. Begin by closing your eyes, if that is comfortable, or turn your gaze down toward the floor in front of you.
2. Bring your awareness to your breathing, take in a few deep breaths or allow yourself to breathe naturally. Connect with the rising and falling of your chest as you breathe.
3. Feel your physical sensations of your feet on the floor and the contact your body is making with the chair. What other physical sensations do you notice?
4. Notice that you were noticing the sensations. Observe any thoughts that arise in your mind, then notice that you're noticing your thoughts.
5. Observe any emotions that may be present, even if subtle and notice that you were noticing your emotions. Notice that you were noticing the sensations.
6. Try to bring to mind a memory from your childhood. It does not need to be a difficult or even a positive memory, a neutral memory is fine.
7. Can you sense that the person you are now was present then? That there is a part of you that has always been there, that has been continuously present, a witness to or an observer of your entire life? As you were a child, an adolescent, or even as you moved into adulthood? As you have changed and transitioned throughout your life and all the many roles you have played there is a part of you that has remained unchanged, present, and observing your life unfolding. That part of you has observed your entire life from the earliest moments, all the way to this moment right now.
8. Notice the thoughts and emotions that arise from this and notice you noticing them. That in a sense they are real, but also artificial.

*\*Remember that this is a skill that is developed, that will hopefully serve you to allow more freedom and flexibility in your life\**

**Reflection:**

What was this experience like? Were you able to connect with this "observer self"?

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