

Observing Your Own Experience (Part 2)

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.”

Another exercise to help develop this scale involves a visualization, in which she will connect with the part of yourself that is the sky and notice that everything else is just the weather.

1. Begin by closing your eyes, if that is comfortable, or turn your gaze down toward the floor in front of you. 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. Use this rise and fall as an anchor to the present moment.
2. Bring to mind a difficult experience, perhaps not the most difficult experience you have had, but something that carries a manageable level of distress or weight that you feel willing to use. Perhaps something that has you feeling stuck and that you may have been trying to change, avoid, or get rid of.
3. Once you have brought this experience to mind, notice what thoughts arise, what emotions are present, which physical sensations you feel. Allow these to be for now.
4. Imagine your awareness like the sky, vast and limitless, able to hold all things, unchanged by the intensity of the weather. This is not to minimize your experience, but allow you to hold it in awareness, observing it all from a place of safety. If this becomes overwhelming or not safe, return to your breath.
5. As best you can hold your difficult experience in awareness as expansive as the sky and notice that the sky itself is not affected by the weather. Noticed that even in turbulent times, the sky is not changed by the storms, no matter their intensity, and is able to hold and contain at all.
6. See if you can observe these intense aspects of your experience without getting swept away in it. Notice the part of yourself that draws this memory into your mind and is watching the storm observing it from a distance or above. Notice that the things you have been struggling with and are trying to change, avoid, or get rid of —those difficult emotions, thoughts, or sensations are not you, they're simply the weather, whereas you are the sky.

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

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Reflection:

What was this experience like? Were you able to connect with this “observer self”?
Were you able to visualize yourself as the sky and separate from the weather?
Is there another metaphor that feels more resonant that you could utilize?

Gustafson, C. (2019). *Reclaim your life: Acceptance & commitment therapy in 7 weeks: Strategies to manage depression, anxiety, Ptsd, Ocd, and more*. Rockridge Press.