

ACT: Observing Self

Practicing the difference between having an experience and being defined by it.

A useful distinction

You can notice a thought without becoming the thought. You can experience fear without being “a fearful person.” ACT sometimes calls this perspective the observing self or self-as-context.

Practice language

- “I notice my mind telling me...”
- “I notice sadness is here.”
- “I notice an urge to withdraw.”
- “Part of me is having this experience, and I am also the person noticing it.”

Why it can help

This perspective can create enough distance to choose behavior instead of reacting automatically. It is not about denying or minimizing emotion.

Try this reflection

Complete the sentence: “I notice that my mind is telling me _____, and I can still choose _____.”

Using this resource: For education and skill-building only; not diagnosis, medical advice, or crisis care. If you feel overwhelmed, pause and seek appropriate professional support. In the U.S., call or text 988 for crisis support; call 911 for an immediate emergency.