

Self-as-Context

The Observer Self Worksheet

What is Self-as-Context?

Self-as-Context helps individuals recognize that they are more than their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. It develops a sense of self that observes experiences without being defined by them—a stable, continuous perspective from which all experiences are observed.

There is a part of you—the observer—that has been consistently present throughout your entire life, watching all your experiences unfold. This observing self is separate from the content of your experiences. You are the context in which all these experiences occur, not the experiences themselves.

Key Characteristics:

- Recognizing a stable "observing self" that remains constant
- Understanding that you are not defined by your thoughts or experiences
- Developing perspective-taking flexibility
- Creating distance from rigid self-narratives and labels
- Experiencing the "continuous you" that has been present throughout life

| Exercise 1: The Continuous You

Duration: 15 minutes | Difficulty: Intermediate

Purpose: Contact the observing self that has been present throughout life

Instructions:

Take a journey through different times in your life. For each period, reflect and write:

When you were a child (around age 5-7):

What did you look like?

What did you enjoy doing?

Now notice: Who was aware of those experiences?

As a teenager:

How had you changed?

What were you interested in?

Now notice: Who was aware of those experiences?

Five years ago:

What was your life like?

How were you different from now?

Now notice: Who was aware of those experiences?

Right now:

What are you thinking and feeling?

Now notice: Who is aware of this experience?

Key Insight:

Your body has changed. Your thoughts have changed. Your feelings have changed. Your circumstances have changed. But there's been a consistent "you" observing all of it. That observing awareness—that's the continuous you. This observing self is always present, always safe, always stable.

Reflect:

What did you notice about the "you" that's been present throughout your life?

| Exercise 2: Notice Who's Noticing

Duration: 5 minutes | Difficulty: Beginner

Purpose: Develop awareness of the observing self

Instructions:

Practice this sequence right now, then throughout your day:

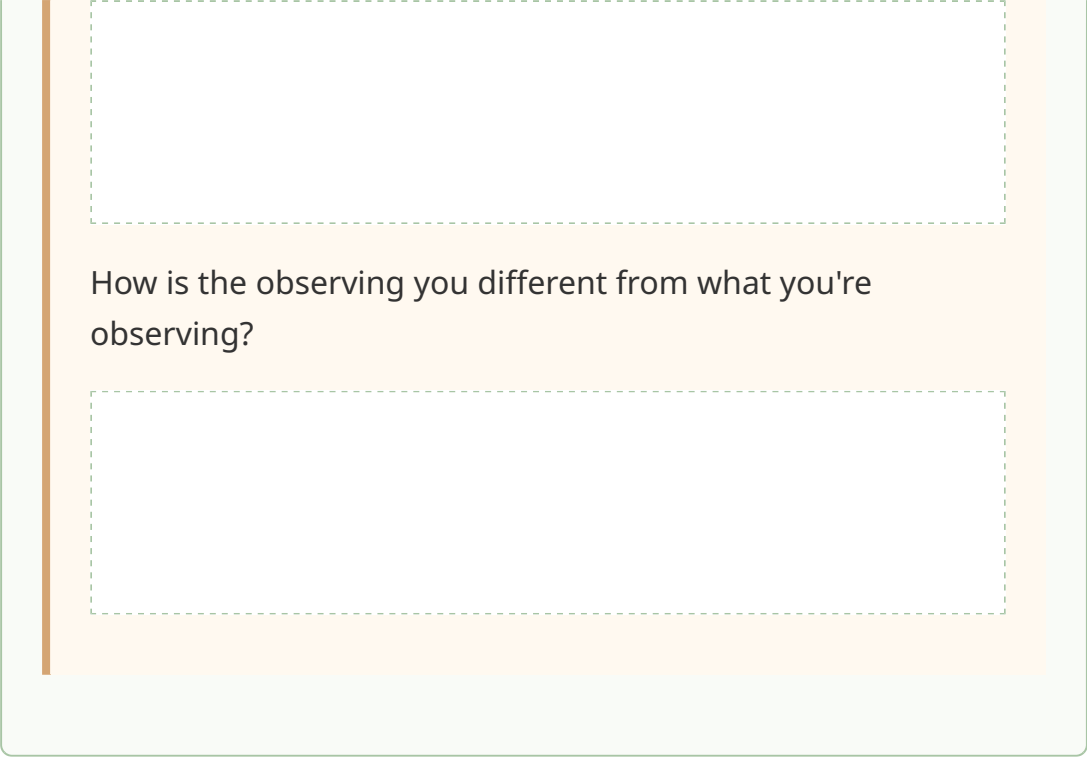
1. Notice what you're thinking
 - What thought just arose?
2. Now, notice who is noticing that thought
 - There's a part of you observing the thought
 - That's the observing self
3. Notice what you're feeling
 - What emotion is present?
4. Now, notice who is noticing that feeling
 - There's a part of you observing the feeling
 - That's the observing self
5. Notice a physical sensation
 - What do you feel in your body?
6. Now, notice who is noticing that sensation
 - There's a part of you observing the sensation
 - That's the observing self

Practice throughout the day:

- Notice an experience
- Then notice who's noticing

Reflect:

What's it like to notice the noticer?



How is the observing you different from what you're observing?

Exercise 3: Chessboard Metaphor

Duration: 10 minutes | Difficulty: Intermediate

Purpose: Understand that you are not your thoughts and feelings

The Metaphor:

Imagine a chessboard. On the board are chess pieces—black and white.

The pieces represent your thoughts and feelings:

- **White pieces:** positive thoughts and feelings (happy, confident, hopeful)
- **Black pieces:** negative thoughts and feelings (anxious, sad, self-critical)

These pieces are constantly in battle:

- "I'm good enough" vs. "I'm not good enough"
- "I can do this" vs. "I'll fail"
- Happiness vs. sadness
- Confidence vs. anxiety

Here's the key insight: You are not the pieces. You are the board.

The board:

- Holds all the pieces
- Is not threatened by any piece
- Doesn't take sides
- Remains stable regardless of the battle
- Has room for all pieces

Reflect on your life:

Have you been identifying with the pieces?

Have you been trying to get rid of the black pieces?

What would it be like to be the board?

As the board, you can:

- Hold all experiences
- Not be threatened by difficult thoughts and feelings
- Have room for everything
- Remain stable and whole

Exercise 4: Perspective-Taking Practice

Duration: 10 minutes | Difficulty: Intermediate

Purpose: Develop flexibility in perspective

Instructions:

Think of a recent difficult situation and describe it from multiple perspectives:

1. Your perspective (first person):

"I felt... I thought... I wanted..."

2. Observer perspective (third person):

"She/He felt... They thought... They wanted..."

3. The other person's perspective:

"They might have felt... They might have thought..."

4. Big picture perspective:

"In the grand scheme of things... In 10 years, this will..."

Reflect:

What changed as you shifted perspectives?

Which perspective was most helpful?

Practice Tips:

- The observing self is not a concept but an experience
- Return to "The Continuous You" exercise when you feel defined by difficult experiences
- The observing self is always present, we just don't usually notice it
- Use "Notice Who's Noticing" when you feel overwhelmed by experiences
- You don't have to win the battle between pieces—you are the board
- The board is always safe, always whole

- Perspective-taking is a skill that develops with practice
- Different perspectives are useful in different situations

Hexaflex Model - Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

Practice regularly to develop psychological flexibility