

ACT and The Observing Self

Main Ideas:

1. There is a part of us that thinks, a part of us that feels, and a part of us that is able to notice and observe our thinking and feeling.
2. We can call this part of us the Observing Self, the Noticing Self, the Watching Self, Pure Awareness, or any other name that makes sense to us.

The observing self is the part of you that notices thoughts and emotions without getting caught up in them. Imagine the sky being your observing self, and the specific weather being your various thoughts and feelings. Not matter how intense the weather may be the sky has enough room to make space for those weather events. Likewise, the more we are in touch with our observing self the more effective we are able to make room for even negative thoughts and emotions.

MyNotes: _____

3. The Observing Self is a safe place that we can learn to connect with at any time.
4. When we connect with our Observing Self, our thoughts and feelings have less impact on us.

Imagine that your mind is like the sky. When we are calm and happy, there are probably only a few clouds in that sky. When we experience negative thoughts and emotions, it's as if the sky is cloudy and stormy. However, the calmness and brightness of the sky is there above the clouds even in the worst storm. Through connecting with our observing self, we learn to access that calm part of the mind even during an emotion storm.

MyNotes: _____

5. Connecting with our Observing Self isn't about controlling how we think and feel, it's about having the freedom to make choices that improve our lives.

This is a vitally important point that must be stressed throughout ACT treatment. At first, you will naturally view these skills as methods of controlling your unpleasant emotions and will judge the success or failure of your efforts based on the extent to which your negative emotions decrease. ACT is about giving up those underlying motives of control and living a values-oriented, committed life.

Practice new skills:

Please choose one of the options below to help you experience the process of connecting with the Observing Self. Sometimes it is easier to understand something if you experience it, rather than have some try to explain it to you in words. As you listen to the exercise, follow along as best you can with the instructions. Don't worry if you get distracted or lose focus. This is normal. Just refocus on the exercise as soon as you notice that your mind has wandered.

Option 1:

6 Minute Observer Self Exercise: You can access this guided meditation through YouTube

Option 2:

Brief Observer Self Exercise

MyNotes: _____

