



Personal Development Profiler Personal Profile

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Personal Development Profiler About the PDP

Events, in themselves, do not cause changes in our feelings, physiological responses or overt behaviours. Such changes are dependent upon the way we view the event. The event can be anything from a pandemic to changes in the workplace or at home, or even something relatively trivial.

This insight is not new - it has been observed through the centuries and can be simplified as 'I feel the way I think'.

The PDP has been specifically designed to enable respondents to reflect on the ways they think about themselves, others and situations and explore how they can manage and re-frame their thinking to better handle day-to-day life as well as change and difficult circumstances.

Everyone sub-consciously carries with them automatic thoughts. They pop into our heads as we go about our daily lives. These thoughts are based upon fundamental underlying assumptions and beliefs that we hold about ourselves, others and the world in general. Formed from childhood onwards these beliefs and assumptions provide a structure to the way we view situations and to the way we behave.

Unfortunately, these thoughts contain errors and so they can have a troubling or uncomfortable impact on our behaviour and lives. They are frequently devoid of any evidential support. They can therefore be challenged and transformed into new ways of thinking that are more realistic and satisfying and better inform our feelings and behaviour.

The PDP is a structured way of surfacing possible errors in the way we customarily think and provides strategies to re-frame these thoughts.



Personal Development Profiler Personal Profile

Introduction to the PDP Profile and Report

The profile chart provides a graphical representation of:

- * Your patterns of thinking about yourself, others and the world

The report that follows your profile produces:

- * A report on your predominant pattern of thinking
- * Development activities and a PDP interpretation guide

Feedback Notes

When exploring the profile:

- * Remember that PDP is a self-report questionnaire
- * There are no rights or wrongs
- * No questionnaire is infallible - it is alright to disagree
- * PDP is NOT a diagnostic tool, it is for development use only



Personal Development Profiler Thinking Patterns

More like

More like

<p>Avoids black-and-white thinking. Looks for options/compromises. Seeks middle ground.</p>	•	•	•	◆	•	•	•	•	•	•	<p>All or nothing Sees self, others and life generally in extreme terms. Things will be either good or bad. Absolutist thinking - there are no shades of grey.</p>
<p>Accepts that he/she can only be responsible for things they can control. Recognises that when things go wrong they are not the sole contributor to the situation.</p>	•	•	•	•	•	◆	•	•	•	•	<p>Blaming Blames self for everything that goes wrong. Feels responsible for things even when not under their own control.</p>
<p>Takes an objective view. Avoids seeing challenges as a calamity. Keeps things in perspective.</p>	•	•	•	•	•	◆	•	•	•	•	<p>Catastrophising Always assumes that the worst will happen. Predicts a bleak future. Anticipates failure and major disappointments.</p>
<p>Distinguishes between facts and emotional reactions. Challenges feelings with a reality check.</p>	•	•	•	•	•	◆	•	•	•	•	<p>Emotional reasoning Draws conclusions based solely on feelings and ignores the facts and hard data. Emotional responses are interpreted as reality.</p>
<p>Is realistic. Tempers expectations with the art of the possible. Prepared to modify behaviour to ensure a satisfactory outcome.</p>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	◆	•	•	<p>Should or must Has fixed ideas about how they and/or others should or must be. Can become troubled if own expectations are not met by themselves, others or the world generally.</p>
<p>Looks for the positives in a situation. Doesn't let a setback overshadow successes.</p>	•	•	•	◆	•	•	•	•	•	•	<p>Mental filtering Focuses on a negative in a situation and filters out any positives. Sees the glass as half empty rather than half full.</p>
<p>Learns from an experience. Avoids turning one event into a generalised given.</p>	•	•	•	•	•	◆	•	•	•	•	<p>Overgeneralisation Allows a single example or a single situation to define themselves or others. A single event becomes all events.</p>
<p>Doesn't label self or others in a derogatory way. Gives self and other people the benefit of the doubt.</p>	•	•	•	◆	•	•	•	•	•	•	<p>Labelling Categorises people or self in a derogatory way. Overlooks actual behaviour and uses labels.</p>



Personal Development Profiler Should-or-Must Thinking

Development Activities



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Should-or-Must Thinking

Your responses on the PDP were closest to **“Should or Must”** thinking - having fixed ideas about how oneself, others or life in general “should” or “must” be. If these rigid expectations are not met or are frustrated in some way there is a tendency to over-estimate the negative consequences.

A fuller explanation of this thinking pattern is given on the next page.

This development activity is designed to help you re-frame your thinking, if you want to.

You do not have to use this activity; you do not have to share it. Many people, however, do benefit from using or adapting this approach to enable them to effect changes when faced with significant issues in their lives.

The activity is in the form of a thought record - a means of reflecting on situations and exploring how things could be even better. Writing about yourself helps you to maintain a sharp focus.

Using the Thought Record and Future Plan

The thought record is best used at a time when you are bothered about a situation/event.

First, write a description of what happened, who was involved.

Next, record your feelings, What are they? How intense are they? Try to rate these on a 1 to 10 scale with 10 being the most intense.

Now capture your thoughts about the situation/event.

The next section is really important. Here you need to dig into the evidence. Challenge yourself to be really thorough about this. You can get others to help you with this.

Finally, reframe your thoughts based on the hard data. Use the evidence to modify your thinking about the situation. Make a plan for the future.

Please note that if you are experiencing extremely troubling thoughts and feelings you are advised to seek further professional help. The PDP is a developmental tool rather than a diagnostic tool.

This pack contains one record/action plan but you can choose to copy these for ongoing use if you wish.



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Thinking Error - Should or Must

should or must

Should-or-must thinking is characterised by having fixed ideas about how oneself, others or life in general “should” or “must” be. If these rigid expectations are not met or are frustrated in some way there is a tendency to over-estimate the negative consequences.

This style of imperative thinking can lead to putting oneself first or indeed the contrary, putting others requirements before one’s own needs. “I mustn’t let her down”.

This style of thinking can lead also to thinking that others “ought” to be more like you.

Should-or-must thinking can develop in childhood. Your mother frequently says, for example, “You *must* be more like your brother, look how well he has done compared with you.”

ways forward

Rigid rules and thinking can be changed by less inflexible use of language. **Must** can be replaced with “prefer”. **Should** can be replaced with “could”. **Need** can be changed to “like” and so on.

Allow others to have different views and different ways of living. We are all unique and we have no right to impose the rules that we live by on others.

We are not the source of universal truths so if others fail to meet our rigid expectations, it does not mean that they have let us down in some way.



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Should-or-Must Thinking - Thought Record

Situation

Describe a recent situation. What happened? Where? Who was involved?

Feelings

What emotions/feelings did you experience at the time? On a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate your strength of feeling?

Thoughts

What thoughts or images went through your mind? How rigid were these? What were the shoulds and musts? Why?



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Should-or-Must Thinking

Examining the Evidence

The Thought Record poses a number of questions about situations, your feelings and thoughts. A very important part of the activity is exploring the evidence for your thoughts at the time of the event you are describing. On the spur of the moment we can often allow our underlying beliefs to sway our view of what is really happening. To change this reliance on our (often erroneous) perceptions, the following prompts are helpful.

Please consider these, then complete the “Evidence” section on the next page.

- **What is the evidence that my thoughts are true or false?**
- **How logical are my thoughts?**
- **Am I ignoring any relevant information? Where can I find information?**
- **Am I focusing solely on negatives?**
- **What is the probability that my explanation is flawed?**
- **What is the probability that my expectations will happen? Am I confusing a low probability with a high probability?**
- **What other explanations are possible?**
- **Is this situation as important as I think it is?**
- **If I was explaining my thoughts to my best friend, what would they say?**
- **Am I being realistic?**
- **In 10 years time, would I really see things the same way?**
- **Am I taking things too personally?**



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Should-or-Must Thinking

Evidence

What evidence is there to support your thoughts that something should or must be? What other options are there? What do others say the evidence was?



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Should-or-Must Thinking - The Future

Alternative thoughts

Based on the evidence you have now gathered make a list of list alternative, helpful thoughts for a similar event in the future.

Next actions

Plan here your future actions.

*1. **Feelings** - if I am feeling stressed/anxious/unhappy about a situation I will:*

*2. **Thoughts** - when thoughts come into my head automatically, I will:*



Personal Development Profiler Interpretation

Interpretation Guide: Descriptions of Thinking Patterns



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Thinking Error - All or Nothing

all or nothing thinking

This thinking pattern is characterised by viewing oneself, others, events or the world in extreme terms. There are only black-and-white, good-bad outcomes and scenarios - there are no shades of grey. The emphasis is on the negative.

Frequently used words are 'never' and 'ever', for example "I performed badly at that job interview, I will never get to be a manager in this organisation".

All-or-nothing thinking excludes the possibility that there are differing options or possible solutions to a problem.

When confronted by change, an all-or-nothing thinker will probably view the pre-change situation as perfect and the proposed change as a disaster that will *never* succeed.

In a crisis, there are likely to be absolutist thoughts along the lines of safe vs totally unsafe.

ways forward

Negative, absolutist thoughts need to be challenged. Am I 100% certain about the facts? What other possibilities exist? Finding some middle ground and acknowledging positive outcomes helps to replace the initial extremist thinking:

For example, job interviews that were successful; risks that did not lead to disaster (how many thousands of miles have been driven without incident, for example); changes in the workplace that resulted in better work-life balance, expanded learning opportunities.

All-or-nothing thinkers can avoid extreme thinking by eliminating negative words such as 'never', 'nothing', 'disaster' etc.



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Thinking Error - Blaming

blaming

Blaming is an unhelpful thinking pattern which in some respects is a way of deflecting someone from addressing the reality of a situation. Attributing the blame entirely to oneself ignores the fact that others are very often involved in whatever event has occurred.

With a blaming mindset total responsibility, even for factors outside the person's control, are taken upon themselves - whatever has happened is a direct result of their total inadequacy.

If a colleague at work appears off-hand the tendency can be to over-personalise the situation, "This is all my fault".

This distortion in thinking can also be manifested by the opposite - if something has gone wrong, the total fault is placed on someone else's shoulders. The failure of a project at work, for example, is down to the boss and her incompetence.

ways forward

At the core is the ability to acknowledge that other contributory factors almost always impact upon a situation. The responsibility is shared and is not exclusively mine. Challenge yourself to discover exactly how much you did have control over.

Take account also of what is happening to and within others rather than jumping to the conclusion that everything is down to one's own inadequacies.

Similarly, blaming others ignores both one's own contribution to events as well as the internal and external circumstances that the other person/people are facing.



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Thinking Error - Catastrophising

catastrophising

“Making mountains out of molehills” is the hallmark of this unhelpful pattern of thinking. Minor events are magnified into a major disaster. Outcomes are always terrible or terrifying. For example, a software glitch becomes a catastrophe, “...the business is finished. We’ll go bust.”

Ambiguity can be challenging. If we have only a small piece of information, there can be a tendency to fill the gap with the most fearful imaginings.

Catastrophisers are relatively easy to identify. Their language is extreme and doom-laden. Minor setbacks become life threatening; emotional consequences are always negative and extreme.

Catastrophisers are masters/mistresses of the worst case scenario.

ways forward

The world is unlikely to end. It is helpful to put things into perspective and consider a full range of possible outcomes rather than the most extreme.

As with many unhelpful thinking styles, it is important to examine all the evidence rather than simply focusing on the catastrophic. Are the prognostications based on real experiences or they simply the product of an overly fertile/anxious imagination?

Look for the pros and cons - catastrophisers are adept at only looking at one side of the issue.



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Thinking Error - Emotional Reasoning

emotional reasoning

This thinking pattern is based on emotional responses to an event, how I feel about something, rather than using hard evidence.

The challenge here is that feelings are an unreliable indicator of what is actually happening because our feelings are derived from how we perceive a situation in the first place.

So, our thoughts are based on how we feel about another thought and not informed by fact.

Quite simply, feelings are not data.

ways forward

Where emotional reasoning starts to take over it is worthwhile to take time to challenge yourself - what if I was feeling calmer, would I still arrive at the same conclusion? Could it be that your feelings have nothing to do with the current situation?

Be sceptical about your feelings - are they real or imagined?

Feelings can be transitory. Instead of acting on the immediate thought (based on feeling), give yourself some space then re-evaluate after this pause. Put your “thinking” into perspective.



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Thinking Error - Mental Filter

mental filter

Mental filtering is a selective way of thinking. Small, negative details of a situation assume greater proportions than all the countervailing positives. The totality of the circumstances is ignored and we concentrate and dwell on the unsatisfactory elements.

Ignoring or disqualifying one's daily achievements is unhelpful to mental well-being.

A presentation at work has gone well and has been praised by the boss, however the presenter agonises over one spelling error that they had made.

ways forward

Always look for the positives. To err is human and our virtues and achievements outweigh minor setbacks.

It can be helpful to tally up the upsides of situations rather than obsessing over those things that were less than perfect. Think about the things that have made you feel good about yourself and celebrate them. Accept compliments from others rather than demurring or treating them as meaningless.

Mental filtering can of course relate to others as well. As above, consider all the good that people have done rather than concentrating on less favourable aspects of behaviour.



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Thinking Error - Overgeneralisation

overgeneralisation

Why does this **ALWAYS** happen to me? Overgeneralising is a thinking pattern where sweeping generalisations are made based on one particular bad experience. We come to a far reaching, overarching conclusion about something.

Overgeneralising is characterised by using words such as “always”, “never” or “typical”.

Despite there being no evidence for something **ALWAYS** occurring, an assumption is made that one negative consequence will persist forever.

A salesperson loses a sale due to a poor pitch and concludes thereafter that all sales pitches will fail.

ways forward

Overgeneralisations need to be put into perspective. What is the evidence that supports the notion that something will *always* turn out badly?

It can be helpful to focus on the specific. **OK**, you may have made an error or behaved in an unsatisfactory manner but a one-off episode does not warrant the conclusion that the same outcome will necessarily occur in the future.

Indeed, the specificity can enable one to recognise and learn from what doesn't work and avoid a repetition.



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Thinking Error - Labelling

labelling

Labelling is a convenient way of reducing complexity to a simple, often derogatory, descriptor. Somebody accidentally deletes a file you were working on, so you label them as an “idiot” or worse.

Once labelled, you no longer have to think about them any further so this reduces mental processing time. All future interactions are conducted in the “knowledge” that the person is an “idiot” and it is acceptable to ignore any contribution they might make.

Seeing work or even life as “unfair” is reducing something that is highly complex to a simplistic and inaccurate loaded judgement.

We can also label ourselves. “I am thoughtless about my partner” because I overlooked their birthday. The fact that you were preoccupied with a critical work problem at the time is overlooked.

ways forward

It is helpful to remind oneself that people are infinitely variable and complex beings. Equally, situations at work occur for a multitude of reasons.

There are a whole range of factors that impinge upon others that can affect their behaviour. The “lunatic” who cut us up in the traffic on the way to work this morning actually made a sudden sharp manoeuvre as they were stung by a wasp!

Learn to appreciate that one small negative does not reduce the whole to a derogatory label.