

**Goals**

Exercise



15-20 min



Client



No



Inspiration and Dealing with Challenges

Researchers have argued that inspiration serves a unique goal approach function in that it motivates people to express the newly appreciated qualities of the inspiring person (Thrash & Elliot, 2004; Thrash et al., 2010). For instance, certain strengths or virtues that one observes in another person may lead to inspiration, which, in turn, motivates the inspired individual to pursue the same virtues and enhance the same strengths in a future self.

In line with this, research has shown that being inspired can help motivate people to express or actualize a new vision. In a study by Thrash and Elliot (2004), participants were asked to recall and relive an experience of inspiration and to write a narrative account of the experience. Examples of the inspiration narratives included topics like discovering one's calling and being influenced by another person to succeed. Participants in the control condition followed the same procedure, except that the target experience was a normal experience that is representative of the participant's daily life.

Although the details of the inspirational narratives differed, two underlying themes were shared by the narratives: having one's eyes opened during an encounter with a person, object, event, or idea (i.e., being inspired "by") and wanting to express or actualize one's new vision (i.e., being inspired "to").

This tool was designed to increase the client's awareness of inspiring people. This awareness can assist clients in achieving their goals.

Goal

The goal of this exercise is for your client to identify the people who inspire him/her the most, that is, those who:

1. Motivate your client during his/her goal pursuit.
2. Help your client take on a different (constructive) perspective towards overcoming the challenges he/she is currently facing, or might face, during goal pursuit.



Advice

- For some clients, it may be helpful to define what is meant by inspiring. A person can be inspirational because he/she has been successful in terms of achievements. Alternatively, a person may have overcome obstacles impressively. The practitioner can also provide personal examples of inspirational people. In this way, the client may find it easier to grasp the concept of inspiration.
- The first part of this exercise can also be used as homework: the practitioner can ask the client to search for inspirational people and bring photos of these people to the next session. An advantage of this approach is that the client can spend some time considering what inspiration means to them and who exemplifies it. Moreover, the photo can serve as a prime or reminder for the client. Regular exposure to the photo may activate the motivation and coping mechanisms discussed with the practitioner.



References

- Thrash, T. M., & Elliot, A. J. (2004). Inspiration: Core characteristics, component processes, antecedents and function. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87, 957-973.
- Thrash, T. M., Maruskin, L. A., Cassidy, S. E., Fryer, J. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2010). Mediating between the muse and the masses: Inspiration and the actualization of creative ideas. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98, 469-487.



Inspiration and Dealing with Challenges

Instructions

The purpose of this exercise is for you to identify those who inspire you and help you reach your goals. You do not necessarily need to know these inspirational people in real life. It can be a famous writer or your neighbor, a movie star, or fictitious character in a book.

1. Think of one or two people who inspire you.

Person #1:

Person #2:

2. Think about what specifically inspires you about the person(s). List at least five reasons per person.

Person #1 inspires me because:

Person #2 inspires me because:



3. In the space below, write about a goal that you are currently pursuing.

4. When you try to achieve something, you are guaranteed to have obstacles and challenges that get in your way. In the space below, write about a challenge that you are currently trying to overcome. Alternatively, you can write about a potential challenge that may arise during the pursuit of your goal.

5. Now, think about how the person(s) that inspire you would handle and think about your challenge. Use the space below to think about how he or she would respond.

Person #1's perspective on my challenge:



Person #2's perspective on my challenge:

6. Use the questions below to guide your reflection.

How can the views listed above alter your current mindset regarding the challenge you are facing?

How does the other perspective(s) inspire you?

What would the people who inspire you think or say about your mindset and approach regarding the future?