

# Perspective taking

what is it and how can it improve wellbeing?



## Perspective taking can be thought of as a series of cognitive strategies that maintain wellbeing

Managing cognition is a critical part of wellbeing (along with emotion and behaviour). Cognitions are simply thoughts. When we have a string of thoughts, they become the stories we tell ourselves to make sense of our internal and external world. So knowing how to work with your own cognitions is important for maintaining equanimity and wellbeing. Most thoughts are constant noise in our minds – an ongoing commentator we live with (mindfulness can help you see the commentator clearly or create a compassionate voice, not a critic).

### Rumination

The stories we tell ourselves are often influenced by our brains' natural bias towards the negative (remember its job is to keep us safe) and our past experiences (our brain is also pretty lazy and relies on short cuts and automatic thinking to make sense of the world). We can become attached to the stories we tell ourselves and some may cause long term harm. If an unhelpful story becomes part of us (stuck), we lose perspective. Rumination is getting lost in the cycle of thinking.

### Psychological Flexibility – remember the super skill of resilience

If we practice non-avoidance of uncomfortable stories and continue to act in ways that matter, we are resilient. If our values guide our actions towards what matters, we prevent avoidance from setting our direction.

### How to Take Perspective

Know your stories – write them down on paper. Fold up the paper. Put it somewhere safe.

“Hello and welcome to the party”: name your stories. It helps get distance and unhook.

Practice asking yourself: Is this accurate? Is this helpful? If I’m thinking this way, what do I need?

Act in a way that disputes the negative story. Value-based actions disproves your inner critic (works better than positive affirmations).

Shift your attention from the thoughts. Count or name things in your environment.

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