

Therapist Guide: Dyadic Conceptualization Worksheet

Purpose & Rationale

The Dyadic Conceptualization worksheet helps clients examine interactions between themselves and a loved one (partner, family member, friend) by comparing each person's experience side by side. Many interpersonal difficulties stem from misunderstandings of intent, mismatched interpretations, or unspoken emotions. By laying out both perspectives—what happened, how each person made sense of it, how they felt, and what they did—clients can develop insight into relational dynamics and reduce cycles of conflict or miscommunication.

This tool is informed by **CBT for couples**, **emotionally focused therapy (EFT)**, and **systemic approaches**. It highlights the reciprocal nature of interactions and can help shift blame to curiosity and compassion.

When to Use

- With individuals or couples struggling with conflict, miscommunication, or relationship stress.
- When a client feels “stuck” in a repetitive interpersonal pattern.
- In therapy focused on attachment injuries, trust-building, or emotion regulation in relationships.
- To help clients differentiate between *facts of the situation* and *interpretations* of what occurred.

How to Introduce It

1. **Explain the purpose:**
 - *“This worksheet helps us look at the same situation from both sides—yours and your loved ones. By comparing perspectives, we can see where misunderstandings happen and how each person's feelings and actions influence the other.”*
2. **Identify a recent situation:**
 - Guide the client (or couple) to choose a specific event that led to conflict, hurt feelings, or distance.
3. **Fill out each column:**
 - **What happened?** Stick to observable facts (e.g., “He came home late”).
 - **How I made sense of it:** Record personal interpretations or assumptions (e.g., “She doesn't care about my time”).
 - **How I felt:** Capture the emotional experience (e.g., *angry, hurt, anxious*).
 - **What I did:** Note behavioural responses (e.g., *withdrew, criticized, shut down*).
4. **Repeat for the loved one's side:**
 - Encourage perspective-taking. Clients can imagine how their loved one might have made sense of it, or if working with couples, each person can complete their own side.
5. **Process and reflect together:**
 - Compare similarities and differences across both perspectives.



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- Highlight how assumptions and emotions drove actions that may have escalated the cycle.
- Encourage compassion by recognizing the humanity of both sides.

Therapeutic Goals

- Increase awareness of reciprocal cycles in relationships.
- Differentiate between facts, interpretations, and emotional responses.
- Build empathy and perspective-taking toward the loved one.
- Interrupt unhelpful relational patterns and create space for new responses.
- Support re-framing of conflict as a shared cycle rather than individual blame.

Clinical Tip: This worksheet works best when paired with **in-session processing** (role plays, EFT enactments, or communication skill practice). It is not about proving who is “right,” but about understanding how each person’s thoughts and feelings shape the interaction.