

Paired Prompts

I made these as a doorway into the therapy process. How you react to circumstances tells you something about yourself. This exercise is not to “diagnose where the problem is”. Rather, it’s a way to jump start our conversation.

Instructions: Below are some common circumstances we find ourselves in, put into pairs. Select a pair that you find interesting. You have to pick both sides of the pair, not just one.

Sentence starter: How are you reacting, both internally and externally, when...

- I have made a mistake
- I’ve am being accused, untruthfully, of making a mistake

- Someone does something that makes me slightly irritated inside
- Something makes me so angry

- I have to talk with someone in authority
- I get a compliment from someone in authority

- I am in a new interpersonal situation where I don’t know anyone
- I am with my family / close friends

- Someone I trust disappoints me
- I have disappointed someone whose opinion I value

- I really need something important that I have to ask for
- Someone asks me to do something that I really don’t want to do

- I try something that I cannot do very well
- I’ve done something well

Some thoughts that can guide you:

- Which situations am I most avoiding?
- Which situations make me irritated or angry?
- Which situations make me not like who I am?
- In which situations do I not like how my reaction is viewed by others?
- In which situations am I most critical of myself?

Note: Some people find it helpful to save this and use it to prepare for therapy sessions. For example “What has made me angry this week?” or “How have I reacted to this circumstance this week?”