

■ EXPLORING DOMAINS OF SELF-WORTH

The goal of this tool is for clients to become aware of the domains in their life that they use to base their self-worth on. This tool can be a valuable starting point for clients to develop more unconditional self-acceptance.

It is important to note that this tool was not designed to increase self-esteem or reduce the negative impact of searching for self-esteem. Rather, this tool was designed to help clients cultivate a more self-accepting attitude towards themselves. Rather than using conditions to evaluate the self's worth, self-acceptance involves the unconditional acceptance of the self, including weaknesses and strengths. By cultivating more self-acceptance, clients learn to build a relationship with themselves in which their self-worth is not reduced by their mistakes, weaknesses or failures. In order to cultivate self-acceptance, it is important for clients to become aware of what prevents them from developing a more accepting attitude towards the self. This tool can be the first step for clients to explore the conditions they have created for themselves to be worthy so that they can later move beyond these conditions.

Clients may find it difficult to indicate exactly how important each domain of self-worth is. The goal of drawing the wedges is not to be as accurate as possible but rather for the client to foster self-reflection and make an estimation of the importance of the domains of self-worth.

► STEP 1 INTRODUCING SELF-ESTEEM

What is self-esteem? Self-esteem is about self-worth. When people are said to have high self-esteem, they believe they have worth as a human being. In contrast, people with low self-esteem believe that they are not worth much. But how can we objectively evaluate the worth of something so complex as a human being? Is that even possible?

The answer is no. But yet most of us are constantly evaluating our worth as a human being. How do we determine our own worth? By evaluating ourselves against all kinds of different standards. For some people, these standards are mostly related to appearance (e.g., "I should look attractive"), whereas for others they are related to achievements (e.g., "I should perform well at work"). Whatever standard is being used to evaluate ourselves against, the idea is always the same: as long as we feel we are living up to the standard, we are worthy. Self-esteem is high in such cases. However, if we feel that we are not reaching some personal standard, our self-esteem may drop. If you hold a personal standard about high achievement at

work, receiving negative performance feedback may cause you to feel badly about yourself, as if you are somehow “less”, and self-esteem will likely drop.

So, self-esteem is all about self-evaluation. A person who is said to have high self-esteem evaluates him or herself against different standards and when this evaluation turns out favorably, he feels worthwhile. It is like an if-then code of a computer program: If I meet [insert standard here], I am worthwhile. Note that there is nothing wrong with evaluating actions. By evaluating our actions, we can learn from our mistakes and grow as an individual. However, there is a difference between evaluating actions and evaluating personal worth. In this exercise, we will explore what occurs when you evaluate your own self-worth.

► STEP 2 REFLECTING ON YOUR PERCEIVED WORTH

Take a look at the questions below. Choose five or more questions and try to answer them truthfully. Do not worry about spelling or grammar. Just write down what comes up first.

- When do you feel most insecure?
- In what areas are you most critical of yourself?
- Have there been situations in which you were pretending to be someone you are not so others would like and accept you? If so, describe these situations.
- What kind of judgments from other people make you feel the worst about yourself?
- What kind of feedback from others makes you feel as if there is something wrong with you?
- When do you feel less compared to others?
- What is the thing you fear most that people will say of you?
- What is it that you are most afraid of that others will disapprove of you?
- When do you experience the feeling of not being enough?
- In which situations do you tend to compare yourself with others?
- When do you feel like your sense of self-worth increases?
- When do you feel worthwhile?
- When do you feel like your sense of self-worth decreases?
- When do you feel worthless?

Question:

My response:

Question:

My response:

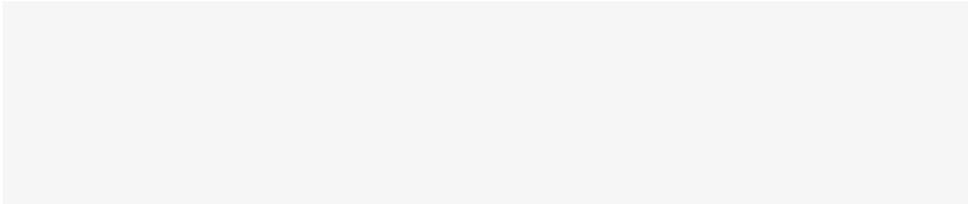
Question:

My response:

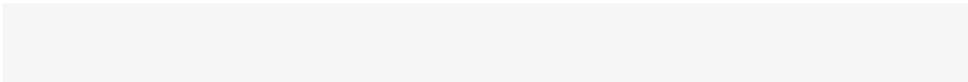
Question:



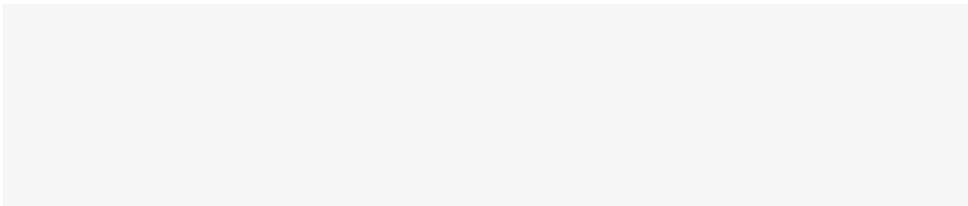
My response:



Question:



My response:



► STEP 3 IDENTIFYING DOMAINS OF SELF-WORTH

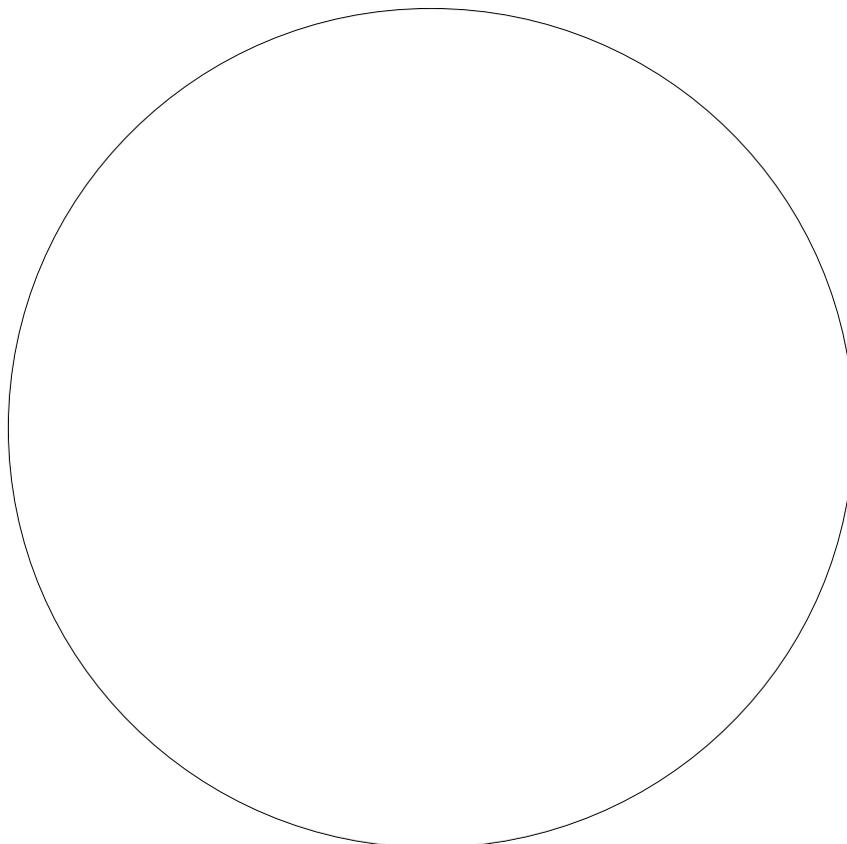
In this third part of this exercise, we are going to consider all the things in your life that you are using to evaluate yourself as a person. There are many different things that people use as a standard to evaluate their own worth. Some common examples include:

- appearance
- financial status
- creativity
- athletic ability
- artistic ability
- spirituality/religious practice

- weight
- performance at work/school
- role as a mother/sister/partner/ mentor
- competence/knowledge in certain areas
- achievements

These things are also known as 'domains of self-worth'. Take a look at your answers to the first part of this exercise. Are there common themes that relate to a specific domain of self-worth? For instance, perhaps your appearance or financial status is mentioned once or more. These are likely to be domains in your life that you base your self-worth on.

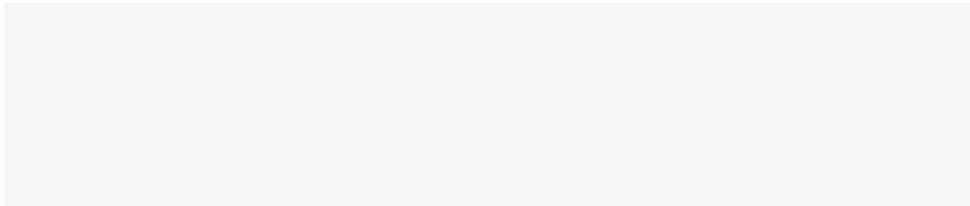
Now take a look at the circle below. Identify all your different domains of self-worth and draw a wedge into the pie to represent each domain. The size of the wedge represents the importance of that domain when you are evaluating yourself as a person. Thus, a larger wedge means that that domain is a relatively more important source of self-evaluation. Label your wedges. For an example of a completed circle, see the appendix.



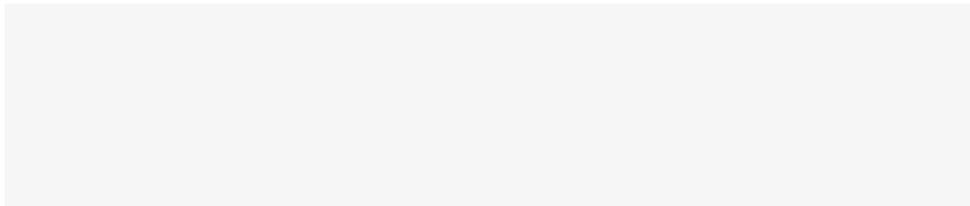
► STEP 4 EVALUATION

Now take a look at the different parts of the circle you completed in step 2.

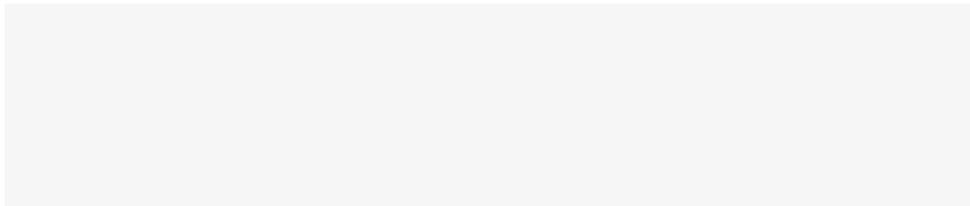
1. How was it to complete the exercise?



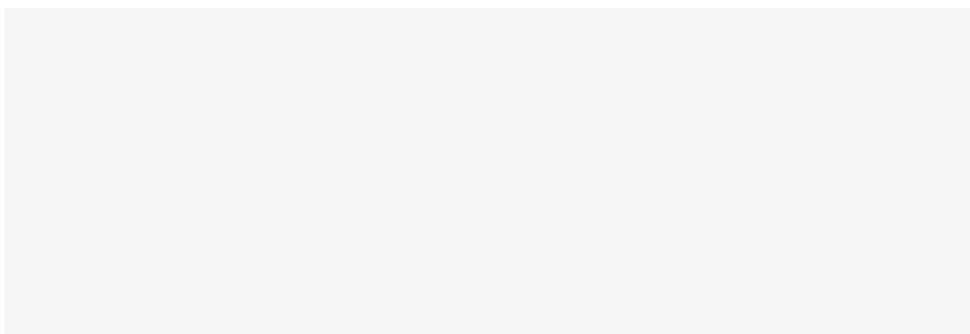
2. What did you notice?



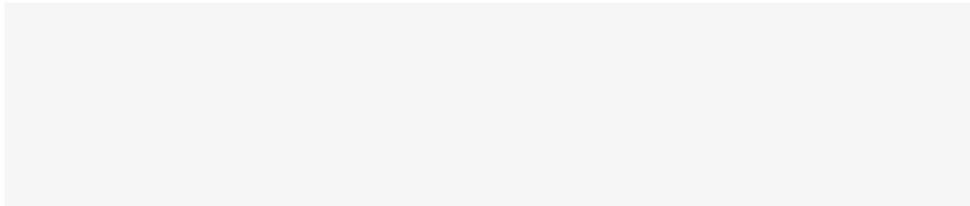
3. Which wedges (domains) are bigger than others?



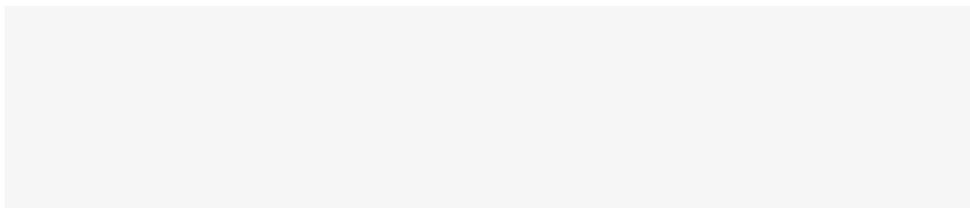
Why do you think these wedges (domains) are bigger than other wedges?



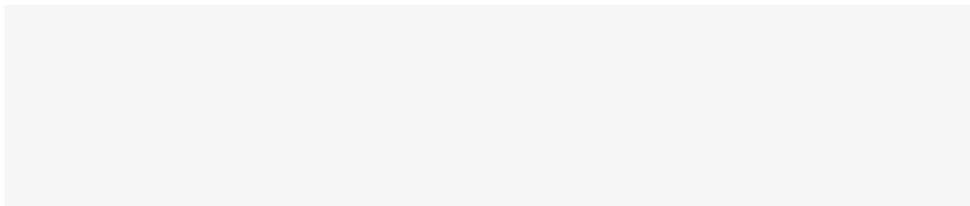
Can you identify the standard(s) that you feel you should meet in these domains?
(E.g. “I must help others” or “I should deliver exceptional work”)



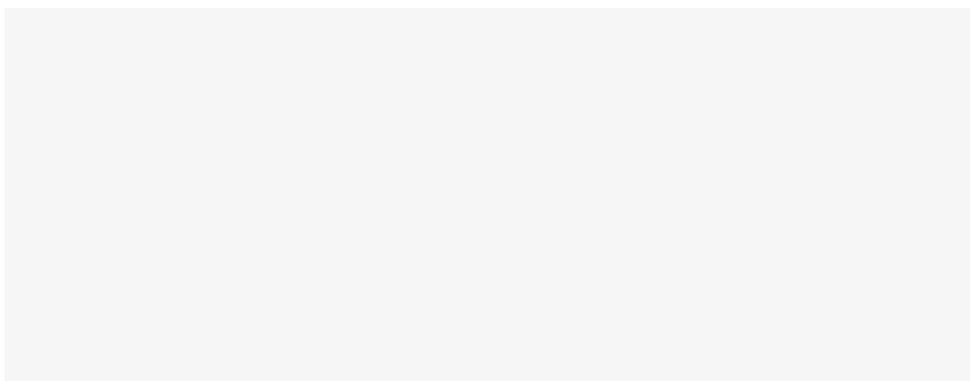
How do you feel when you are unable to meet these standards?



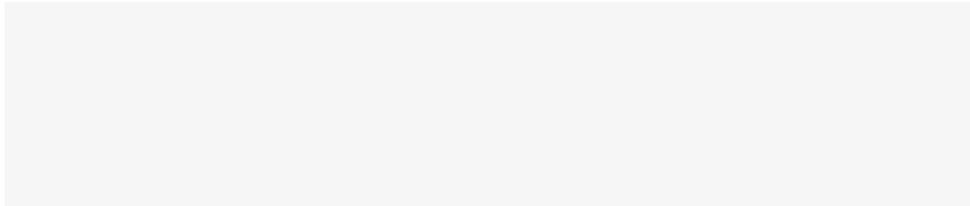
4. Are there wedges that are big today, but were not so big in the past? If so, which ones?



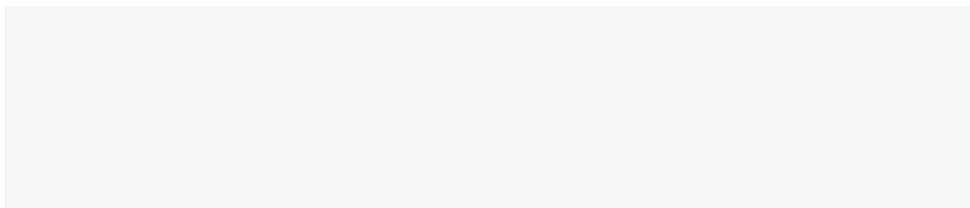
Why have these wedges increased in size?



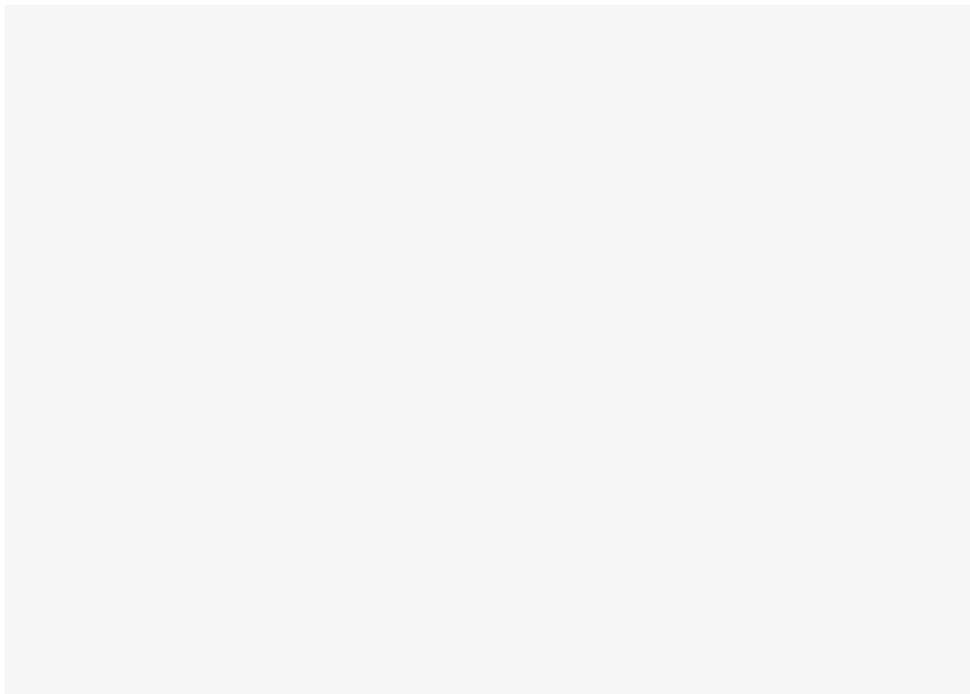
5. Are there wedges that are currently not so big, but have been bigger in the past? If so, which ones?



Why have these wedges decreased in size?



6. What would life be like if you no longer had to live up to the norms and standards in these domains? If you could learn and develop in these domains without the fear of “not being enough”?



Appendix completed domains of self-worth circle

