

■ SEEING THROUGH THE ILLUSION OF SELF-RATING

The goal of this exercise is to understand that self-rating is irrational inasmuch as there is no objective basis for determining the worth of a human being. Accurate or true self-ratings or global ratings are virtually impossible to make. This realization may help you to stop trying to measure your inherent value as a human being and facilitate the development of self-acceptance.

When used with clients, the practitioner should allow clients to come up with their own arguments for the irrationality of self-rating. If clients are unwilling or unable to come up with counter-arguments, it is advisable for the practitioner to abandon the exercise and refrain from starting an intellectual debate about whether or not a worthless person exists or not. Such a rational debate misses the point of the exercise completely as it is often driven by the “need to be “right”. It is not unusual that “being right” represents a way for clients to prove their “worth” (e.g. their intellectual capabilities), which is exactly the opposite of what this exercise aims to accomplish.

This exercise considers the “worthiness” of human beings. Are people either worthwhile or worthless? Can people be superior or inferior? Are these concepts meaningful or meaningless? In fact, considering the worthiness of people is nonsensical.

If we were to attempt to define a “worthless” or “inferior” human being, we would find that we are in fact describing all humans. For example, one may hold the belief that a worthless or inferior person is someone who can’t do anything right or someone who makes many mistakes; however, everybody can do some things right, just as everybody makes mistakes. Thus, according to these definitions, all human beings are worthless.

► STEP 1. COUNTERING DEFINITIONS

In the table on the following page are a set of definitions describing a worthless or inferior person. Your task is to write a rebuttal to each of these definitions. You can also make up some definitions of your own to rebut. Once you have completed the exercise, compare your answers with the ones provided in the appendix.

definition of a worthless or inferior person	rebuttal
Someone who does bad things	
Someone who fails or make mistakes	
Someone who is unattractive	
Someone who does mean, hateful things on purpose to hurt other people	
Someone who has no value to society because he/she is lazy, self-centered, and unproductive	
Someone who is unpopular	
Someone who is unintelligent	
Someone who is untalented	
Someone with low self-esteem	
Other	

► **STEP 2 EVALUATION**

How was it to do this exercise?

What did you learn?

What was easy or difficult about the exercise?

Did your definition of the worthiness of a human being change? If so, how?

► STEP 3 DEBRIEF

This exercise aimed to demonstrate that it is impossible to define human beings as “worthless.” While specific activities may be described as more or less worthwhile, we cannot describe people in the same way. People may be less talented or less intelligent than another person, but this does not make them inferior or less worthy.

It is important to understand that people cannot be described as worthless or inferior because, unfortunately, it is an all too common occurrence. When we feel low, we tend to believe with all our heart that we are somehow inferior, or not as worthy. In the same vein, believing one is they somehow superior to others characterizes narcissism.

Hopefully, this exercise will help you stop trying to measure your inherent value as a human being. While behavior may be described as good or bad, or foolish or silly, human beings may not. Put simply, we can rate our traits, but not our selves.

Appendix Examples of rebuttals to each of the definitions of a worthless or inferior person

definition of a worthless or inferior person	rebuttal
Someone who does bad things	We must all be worthless then, because everyone does bad things from time to time
Someone who fails or make mistakes	Failing and making mistakes is an inevitable part of life.
Someone who is unattractive	Different people have different views on what (or who) is beautiful.
Someone who does mean, hateful things on purpose to hurt other people	We all do things that are somewhat mean or hateful at times, especially when we feel hurt and angry. The urge to get back at someone who has wronged us is an undesirable but virtually universal human characteristic.
Someone who has no value to society because he/she is lazy, self-centered, and unproductive	Everyone can be lazy and unproductive at times, therefore we must all be worthless.