



The Best Possible Self

 Mindset

 Exercise

 10 min

 Client

 Yes

The Best Possible Self (BPS) exercise can be used to change the mindset and increase optimism. The BPS exercise requires people to envision themselves in an imaginary future in which everything has turned out in the most optimal way. Over the past years, writing about and imagining the BPS has repeatedly shown to increase people's mood and well-being (King, 2001; Peters et al., 2010; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Peters et al. (2010) provided evidence that writing about and imagining the BPS can also increase optimism in terms of expecting favorable outcomes. Research has indicated a change in mindset due to the increase in optimism. This effect on optimism was independent of the effect on mood, which was also increased by the experiment.



Goal

The BPS exercise can be used to increase optimism in terms of expecting favorable outcomes (see, for instance, Meevissen et al., 2011).



Advice

- While, in most cases, the exercise is administered in a written form, it is also possible to ask clients to make drawings of their best possible selves. The most powerful way to apply the exercise is by instructing clients to visualize their best possible selves daily.
- For most people, writing down their fears and troubles has therapeutic effects, but this exercise takes a positive approach towards one's best possible self. King (2001) conducted research on the effects of this exercise and warned that this exercise might backfire if administered incorrectly. This exercise can make some people compare their current selves to their ideal selves and can cause feelings of disappointment due to the large gap. To avoid this negative result, people should write about a realistic possible future self. After the exercise, the practitioner may want to take the time to plan steps with the client to help him/her move towards his/her BPS.



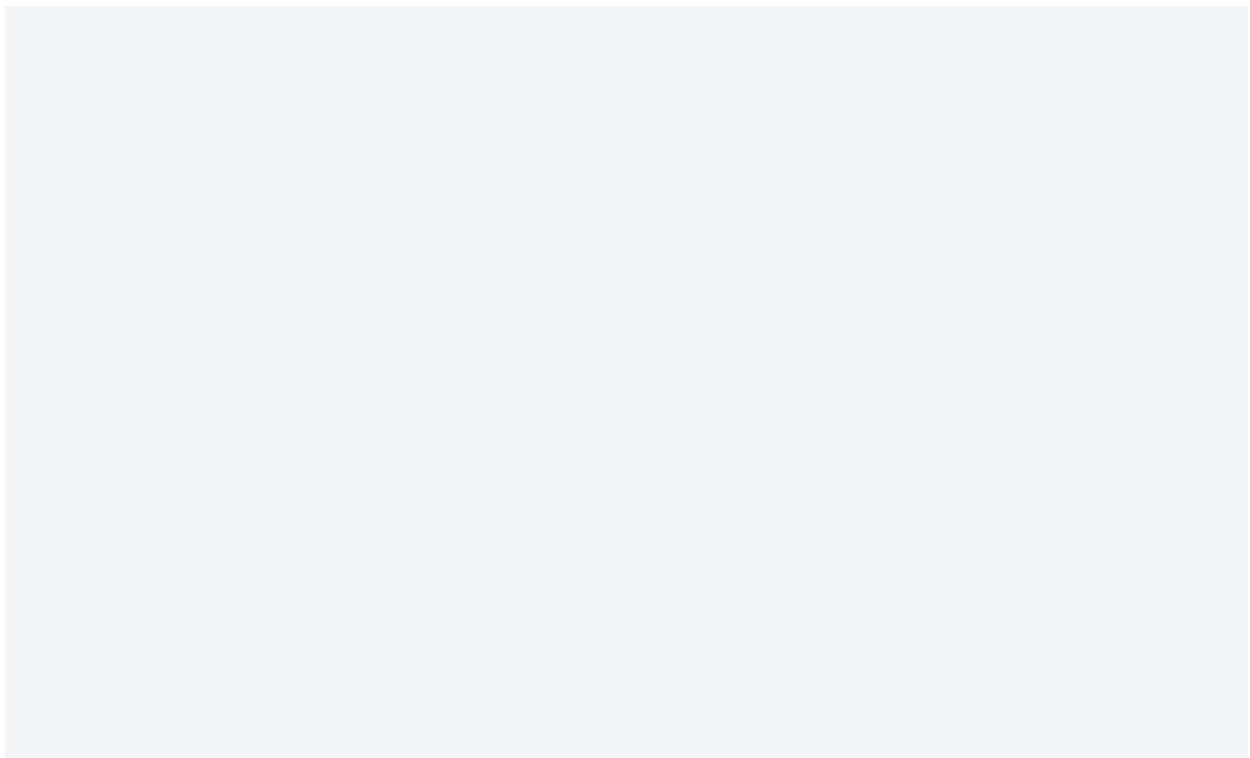
References

- King, A. (2001). The health benefits of writing about life goals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27, 798-807.
- Meevissen, Y., Alberts H., & Peters, M. (2011). Become more optimistic by imagining a best possible self: Effects of a two-week intervention. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*. 42, 371-378.

The Best Possible Self

Instructions

Set a timer or stopwatch for 10 minutes. During this time, think about your best possible future self and write it down on paper. Imagine your life the way you always imagined it would be. Imagine that you have performed to the best of your abilities and achieved all the things you wanted to in life. While writing, do not worry about grammar or punctuation. Just focus on writing all your thoughts and emotions in an expressive way. You may want to have several sheets of paper for this exercise.



Reflection

After completing the initial exercise, reflect on your feelings. Answer the following questions:

- What effects did this exercise have?
- How did this exercise affect you emotionally?
- How did this exercise affect your current self-image?
- Did this exercise motivate or inspire you?
- How did this exercise affect you overall?
- How did this exercise open you to possibilities?