

# EMOTIONS VERSUS EVIDENCE

## WORKSHOP GUIDE



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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the session delegates should have an increased understanding of how to build personal strategies to deal with negative thinking, building better empathy with colleagues and not falling foul of biases.

Delegates will also learn how to keep a sense of perspective and develop their empathy skills.

## INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed for a manager or a facilitator to deliver a short workshop featuring videos from the Video Arts Wellbeing Essentials Series. Each video comes with a series of activities around the following structure:

**LOOK** - watch the video and reflect on the content and message.

**THINK** - activities and questions linking the video to their own experience and workplace.

**REMEMBER** - a summary of the key learning points.

Each section relating to the video will last around 15 minutes

**PRACTISE** – At the end of the series of videos there is a 30 minute practical training exercise which will bring the learnings together.

## FEATURED VIDEOS

- Keep a sense of perspective
- Empathy
- The worst-case scenario
- Mind reading

## VIDEO 1 – KEEP A SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE

LOOK (play video, 2 minutes)

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THINK (10 minutes discussion)

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### **When was the last time you thought something was going to be worse than it was?**

Encourage team members to acknowledge that sometimes we can all be guilty of catastrophizing and making things worse in our heads than the reality.

### **How do you deal with negative thoughts like this? What works for you?**

Help the team to share some of their own techniques for not letting things get out of hand in their minds.

REMEMBER

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- Sometimes we catastrophise: if something goes slightly wrong, we assume everything's gone terribly wrong.
- Recall previous occasions when you catastrophized, and remember that a catastrophe didn't automatically follow.
- Ask yourself how you will feel about it 10 minutes from now? 10 months from now? 10 years from now?

## VIDEO 2 – EMPATHY

### LOOK

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### THINK (15 minutes discussion)

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**What assumptions do you make of other people when you forget to be empathetic or are annoyed or distracted at something unrelated to that person?**

Start by sharing some instances when you make assumptions of others. What was the impact of these assumptions? How did you overcome them?

**What kind of stereotypes might you be drawing on when making these assumptions?**

Help team members to know we all find it easy to draw on stereotypes and it requires empathy to overcome our initial reactions to people.

**What things are likely to cause you to get upset and therefore have less capacity to have empathy with others?**

This may be a hard question for some to answer. Sometimes we're unaware what might be affecting us. Things like how tired we are, if our eating is erratic, an argument at home or with loved ones, if someone annoyed us on our commute. It's important to let team members know it's ok to feel 'out of sorts' and to understand that such feelings can impact on how we have empathy with others.

### REMEMBER

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- It's harder to be enraged by annoying colleagues when you stop to consider why they're behaving like that
- Beliefs, not events, cause distress: figure out which beliefs are getting you upset
- Recall the last time you behaved badly, and remember your reasons (tiredness, stress, etc)

## VIDEO 3 – THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO

### LOOK

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#### THINK (5 minutes discussion)

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**Have you tried being positive about an upcoming potentially stressful situation? What do you think about reversing that thinking and considering what could go wrong?**

Encourage a conversation with team members on what they think about changing their thinking to plan for the worst-case scenario.

#### PRACTISE (20 mins group exercise)

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Ask the group to think of an upcoming piece of work. First ask how they're feeling about completing it? Then ask them to take some time and write down a list of things that could possibly go wrong and make sure they number each one. Once they've written the list, ask them to consider how they'd react or respond against each number if that actually occurred.

This exercise should help team members realise that planning for the worst-case scenario can be helpful in dealing with any anxiety or stress they may be experiencing or have experienced before but didn't know how to deal with these feelings. It will also help team members understand they can build their resilience by taking some time to plan in healthy ways about their work.

### REMEMBER

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- Instead of “looking on the bright side”, try asking “what’s the worst that could happen?”
- Understand that in almost all cases, you could cope with the worst-case scenario if it occurred

## VIDEO 4 – MIND READING

### LOOK

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### THINK (20 minutes discussion and research)

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**What assumptions do you think people make of you at work? Why do you think those things? How could you find out what people actually think of you at work?**

We often make assumptions about other people and what they ‘must’ think of us. It’s something called ‘confirmation bias’. We believe something and then only pay attention to the things that ‘confirm’ what we believe, despite alternate evidence being available.

**What other forms of bias do you think we can fall foul of?**

Ask team members to do a bit of research and reading about bias and share their findings with others. This will help raise awareness that sometimes we think things that aren’t founded on reality, and we can end up acting in ways which are unhelpful to us and to others.

### REMEMBER

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- If you think people have negative views of you, it’s easy to find ‘evidence’ of that
- Don’t let a lack of confidence lead you to read things the wrong way
- Ask for feedback regularly (but not compulsively)

## PRACTICE (25 mins discussion)

For this exercise you'll need to split your team into two. Hand the first group Box A. Hand the second group Box B. They both describe a fictional character, 'Theresa'. Box A describes her favourably, and Box B describes her with some character flaws. Both boxes describe a recent mistake made she delivered.

Read out 'Theresa makes a mistake' to the group. Read it in a pacy fashion so that it takes no more than a couple of minutes to recount the story.

Once you've read the story, ask the 'questions to explore' with the team.

This exercise will help to raise awareness that depending on the information we have available to us we are easily lead into a line of thinking which can be hard to verify or protect against ourselves. Our biases and unhelpful thinking can lead us to make poor decisions and ignore things that are in front of us.

### **Theresa makes a mistake.**

On a recent project, Theresa was working on a project where she had to provide her client, a glass manufacturing company with benchmarked data about the cost of materials. She was given 3 weeks to do it in, and her manager made it clear that she was responsible for getting the job done on time.

In her first week of working on the data she needed, she ended up also helping a colleague complete some of their work. This was a colleague with whom she had a misunderstanding previously and she wants to re-build those bridges. She was able to provide help and her colleague completed their work.

This distraction caused Theresa to collect the wrong data she required. Her initial analysis showed data for the cost of materials for the year 2014, and she didn't search for 2016 data. In her report, she suggested the client not change their supplier as it wasn't going to be cost effective. It turns out this was the wrong suggestion to have made, and had the client made a decision to change supplier, they could have made cost savings of £250,000.

To the fortune of the client, no contract was signed with their current supplier to continue the contract and they were able to change within a short period of time. This mistake marked badly against Theresa, and a team member was added to her client group to ensure mistakes like that didn't happen again.

Questions to explore:

**What do you believe about how Theresa acted and the mistake she made?**

**Where's the evidence for your belief?**

**Those who had Box A, what stereotypes did you draw on about Theresa?**

**Same question for those who had Box B.**

**How could you find out what Theresa's experience of the situation was? What would this help you to know?**