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Empathy Clinical Practice Workbook

A clinically branded, function-preserving edition retaining the original exercises, psychoeducation, checklists, logs, planning tools, and response space.

DSM-5-TR · ICD-11 CLINICAL ALIGNMENT

1 · Self-Assessment

2 · Self-Reflection

3 · Develop Compassionate Thinking

4 · Non-Judgmental Observation

5 · Enhance Your Listening Skills

6 · Offer Kindness

7 · Cultivate Self-Awareness

8 · Practice Self-Compassion

9 · Practice Forgiveness

How to use this workbook

- Use this workbook selectively and collaboratively; it is educational and does not replace individualized assessment, diagnosis, treatment, medical care, or crisis services.
- Skip, pause, or modify any activity that increases distress, danger, shame, or loss of functioning. Adapt language for culture, disability, neurodivergence, health, resources, and lived context.
- Ratings in this workbook are reflection tools unless a named, validated measure and interpretation are explicitly provided.

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Self-Assessment

The following are common signs of healthy levels of empathy. Rate each statement on a scale from 1-5 (1 being “almost never” and 5 being “always”):

Statement	Rate (1-5)
1. “I often find myself genuinely feeling the emotions of others.”	1-2-3-4-5
2. “When someone shares their struggles with me, I instinctively try to understand their perspective.”	1-2-3-4-5
3. “I prioritize active listening and validating others' feelings without trying to fix or solve their problems.”	1-2-3-4-5
4. “I am good at putting myself in someone else's shoes and understanding their point of view.”	1-2-3-4-5
5. “I naturally respond with compassion and kindness when someone is going through a difficult time.”	1-2-3-4-5
6. “I tend to pick up on subtle cues and emotions in people's expressions and tone of voice.”	1-2-3-4-5
7. “People often seek my support because they feel understood and heard by me.”	1-2-3-4-5
8. “I recognize that everyone has their own unique struggles and challenges, and show compassion towards them.”	1-2-3-4-5
9. “I consider the consequences of my actions on the people around me and apologize if I hurt someone's feelings.”	1-2-3-4-5

Score: ____/45

The score reflects the level of your empathy. A low score may indicate lack of empathy.

Self-Reflection

1. Reflect on past experiences:

Consider if people have ever told you that you lack understanding or come across as uncaring.

2. Recognize the importance of empathy:

Consider how empathy can improve your relationships and life in general. The following are some benefits:

- ☐ Better understanding and connection with others.
- ☐ Reduced conflict.
- ☐ Enhanced listening skills.
- ☐ Increased ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions, both in oneself and in others.
- ☐ Boosted self-awareness.
- ☐ Ability to cope better with adversity and bounce back from challenging situations.
- ☐ Greater understanding of diverse perspectives, promoting inclusivity and tolerance.
- ☐ Increased compassion and kindness.
- ☐ Improved problem-solving abilities.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Develop Compassionate Thinking

1. Self-assessment:

The following are signs of compassionate thinking. Rate each statement on a scale from 1-5 (1 being “almost never” and 5 being “always”):

Statement	Rate (1-5)
1. “I genuinely try to understand the emotions and experiences of others without jumping to conclusions.”	1-2-3-4-5
2. “I approach situations with an open mind and strive to see different perspectives.”	1-2-3-4-5
3. “I tend to give people the benefit of the doubt and consider their intentions before making judgments.”	1-2-3-4-5
4. “I believe in treating everyone with kindness and respect, regardless of their background or circumstances.”	1-2-3-4-5
5. “I resist the urge to criticize or blame others, preferring to offer support and understanding instead.”	1-2-3-4-5
6. “I am willing to compromise when I disagree with someone.”	1-2-3-4-5
7. “I don’t feel like I must always win an argument.”	1-2-3-4-5
8. “I look for good things about people.”	1-2-3-4-5

Score: ____/40

The score reflects how compassionate your thinking is. A low score may indicate that you need to work on finding ways to think and with more compassion.

2. Identify unkind or judgmental thoughts:

Recall a recent situation where you had unkind or judgmental thoughts about someone. Describe those thoughts in detail, including any assumptions or biases you may have had.

3. Challenge and question those thoughts:

Examine the validity of your thoughts and consider alternative perspectives. Ask yourself: Are these thoughts fair or accurate? How could I see this situation differently?

4. Cultivate empathy:

Put yourself in the other person's shoes and try to understand their perspective. Consider their feelings, experiences, and possible reasons behind their behavior.

5. Generate compassionate actions:

Identify ways in which you can demonstrate compassion towards others. Brainstorm specific actions or behaviors you can engage in to promote kindness and empathy. Following are some examples:

- ☐ Listen — and really hear what they have to say.
- ☐ Ask open-ended questions that show you're interested in them and their lives.
- ☐ Offer encouragement.
- ☐ Compliment them on their strengths and successes.
- ☐ Practice forgiveness when someone makes a mistake.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Non-Judgmental Observation

Preconceived notions about others can often lead to misunderstandings and negative judgments. Following are some common examples:

- ☐ Assuming someone's intelligence based on their appearance.
- ☐ Stereotyping individuals based on their race or ethnicity.
- ☐ Thinking that all individuals from a certain country or region share the same characteristics.
- ☐ Associating specific religions with negative traits or beliefs.
- ☐ Assuming that individuals with physical disabilities are incapable or dependent.
- ☐ Presuming that all individuals from a specific profession are dishonest or corrupt.
- ☐ Judging someone's personality based on their physical appearance.
- ☐ Judging someone's relationship status or marital status as an indicator of happiness or success.
- ☐ Assuming that all individuals from a particular generation have the same values or attitudes.
- ☐ Judging someone's character based on their clothing or fashion choices.

1. Identifying the Person or Situation:

Think about a person or a situation where you tend to make quick judgments or have preconceived notions about others. Write down the name of the person or a brief description of the situation.

2. Recognizing Judgment:

Take a moment to acknowledge any judgments or biases that you may hold towards this person or situation. Be honest and non-judgmental with yourself as you write down these initial perceptions.

3. Suspending Judgments:

Remind yourself of the importance of suspending judgments and approaching situations with an open mind. Write down affirmations or reminders that encourage you to cultivate a non-judgmental mindset.

- ☐ I acknowledge that everyone has their own unique journey and experiences.
- ☐ I approach unfamiliar situations with curiosity and an openness to learn.
- ☐ I celebrate the uniqueness of individuals rather than labeling or categorizing them.
- ☐ I strive to give others the benefit of the doubt before jumping to conclusions.
- ☐ I embrace the idea that change and growth are possible, even for those I may have previously judged.

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4. Practicing Observation:

Observe the person or situation without attaching any judgments or evaluations. Focus on describing observable facts such as their behaviors, actions, or words. Write down your observations in a neutral and objective manner.

5. Reflecting on Assumptions:

Reflect on any assumptions or biases that may have influenced your initial judgments. Challenge these assumptions by considering alternate perspectives or explanations for the person's behavior. Write down any insights gained from this reflection.

6. Cultivating Empathy:

Put yourself in the other person's shoes and try to understand their thoughts, feelings, and motivations. Consider any external factors or life circumstances that might contribute to their actions. Write down your reflections on their potential perspectives.

7. Examining Personal Triggers:

Explore any personal triggers or unresolved issues that may be contributing to your judgments. Reflect on how these triggers might influence your perception of others. Write down any insights or emotions that arise during this self-reflection.

8. Practicing Compassion:

Offer yourself self-compassion and understanding for any judgments you have made. Recognize that everyone has flaws and struggles, including yourself. Write down forgiving and compassionate statements to remind yourself of your own humanity.

9. Open Dialogue:

If appropriate or necessary, consider engaging in a respectful and open conversation with the person involved or seek support from a trusted confidant to gain further insights and understanding.

Enhance Your Listening Skills

Think about a recent conversation you had with someone, either in person or over the phone. Reflect on how well you listened during that conversation and identify areas for improvement by answering the following questions:

1. Did you maintain eye contact with the speaker throughout the conversation? If not, why?

2. Did you find yourself interrupting the speaker or waiting for your turn to speak instead of actively listening? If so, why do you think that happened?

3. Did you provide verbal and nonverbal cues that showed you were actively engaged in the conversation? If not, what can you do differently next time?

4. Did you ask clarifying questions when something was unclear, or did you assume you understood everything correctly?

5. How did you respond emotionally to what the speaker shared? Were you able to empathize and show understanding, or did you have difficulty connecting with their emotions?

6. Based on your reflection, write down at least three strategies or actions you can take to improve your listening skills in future conversations. The following are some examples to inspire you:

- ☐ Maintain eye contact to show your engagement and interest.
- ☐ Avoid interrupting the speaker and allow them to finish their thoughts before responding.
- ☐ Focus on understanding the speaker's perspective rather than formulating your own response.
- ☐ Minimize distractions, both internal (such as racing thoughts) and external (such as noise or technology).
- ☐ Use nonverbal cues like nodding or smiling to indicate your attentiveness.
- ☐ Avoid judging or criticizing the speaker's thoughts or opinions.
- ☐ Ask open-ended questions to encourage the speaker to elaborate or clarify their thoughts.
- ☐ Paraphrase or summarize what the speaker said to ensure your understanding.
- ☐ Avoid multitasking and give the conversation your undivided attention.
- ☐ Practice patience, even if the speaker digresses or takes longer to express themselves.
- ☐ Control your urge to provide immediate solutions or advice, especially if the speaker simply needs to be heard.

☐ Manage your emotions during the conversation, remaining calm and composed.

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Offer Kindness

Over the next week, pay close attention to the people around you. Look for opportunities where you can offer assistance or support without being asked. Aim to perform at least five acts of kindness for different individuals, tailoring your actions based on their specific needs.

- Acts of kindness can be simple yet impactful, such as holding a door for someone carrying groceries or offering a listening ear to a friend in need.
- You may also choose to perform more thoughtful and elaborate acts, like cooking a surprise dinner for a busy and stressed loved one.

Following are some ideas. Check off the ones you want to try and add more to the list:

- ☐ Smile and greet people you encounter throughout the day.
- ☐ Hold the door open for someone.
- ☐ Offer to help someone carry their groceries or bags.
- ☐ Compliment a stranger on something you appreciate about them.
- ☐ Send a handwritten appreciation note or email to someone you value.
- ☐ Buy a coffee or meal for the person in line behind you.
- ☐ Volunteer your time at a local charity or organization.
- ☐ Donate clothes, books, or other items to those in need.
- ☐ Offer to babysit or walk a neighbor's dog to ease their workload.
- ☐ Share your knowledge or skills by teaching or mentoring others.
- ☐ Listen attentively when someone needs to talk or vent.
- ☐ Offer to drive someone who doesn't have access to transportation.
- ☐ Share food, snacks, or drinks with colleagues or friends.

- ☐ Surprise a loved one with a small gift or thoughtful gesture.
- ☐ Leave a positive review for a local business or service provider.
- ☐ Offer to do a household chore or task for a family member or friend.
- ☐ Bring homemade treats or baked goods to share with coworkers or neighbors.
- ☐ Offer to lend an item to someone who needs it temporarily.
- ☐ Plant a tree or flowers to beautify your neighborhood or community.
- ☐ Pay for a stranger's parking meter or bus fare.
- ☐ Offer to accompany someone who may feel lonely or isolated.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Record your experiences using the following chart. Keep track of what prompted you to help each person, their reactions, and how you felt afterwards.

Act of kindness	What prompted you to help	The person's reaction	How it made you feel
e.g., Offering to help a friend with their workload.	I noticed that my friend was feeling stressed and overwhelmed with their workload.	They expressed gratitude and a sense of relief knowing that they had someone they could rely.	I experienced feelings of compassion and a sense of purpose and fulfillment, knowing that I was able to make a positive impact.

Cultivate Self-Awareness

When you are more aware of your own emotions and how they impact your thoughts, behaviors, and interactions with others, you become better equipped to recognize and understand the emotions of others.

1. Understanding Your Emotions:

Recall a recent situation where you experienced a strong emotion. Describe the emotion you felt and the circumstances that triggered it.

2. Identifying Triggers:

Reflect on specific situations or topics that trigger negative emotions or defensive reactions in you. Write down these triggers. The following are some common examples:

- ☐ Criticism or negative feedback
- ☐ Feeling ignored or dismissed
- ☐ Failure or perceived failure
- ☐ Feeling overwhelmed or stressed
- ☐ Conflict or arguments with others
- ☐ Financial difficulties or insecurity
- ☐ Health issues or chronic pain
- ☐ Injustice or unfair treatment
- ☐ Feeling unsupported or unappreciated
- ☐ Uncertainty or fear of the unknown
- ☐ Feeling inadequate or not living up to expectations

- ☐ Guilt or regret over past actions or decisions
- ☐ Traumatic experiences or triggers related to past trauma
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

3. Identifying coping strategies:

Brainstorm and implement healthy coping strategies. The following are some examples:

- ☐ Practice deep breathing exercises.
- ☐ Engage in regular physical exercise to boost your mood.
- ☐ Journal your thoughts and feelings to gain clarity and perspective.
- ☐ Connect with friends or family members for emotional support.
- ☐ Take breaks and engage in activities that bring you joy and relaxation.
- ☐ Practice mindfulness and meditation to cultivate a sense of inner peace.
- ☐ Engage in hobbies or creative outlets that bring you fulfillment.
- ☐ Prioritize self-care activities like taking baths, reading, or listening to music.
- ☐ Practice gratitude by keeping a gratitude journal or expressing thanks to others.
- ☐ Engage in activities that promote laughter and humor.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Practice Self-Compassion

1. Identify a challenging or distressing situation that you have been dealing with recently. Write down the details of the situation, including what happened, how it made you feel, and any negative thoughts or self-judgments that arose as a result.

2. Take a moment to acknowledge your emotions and validate them without judgment. Remind yourself that it is normal to experience these feelings and that everyone faces difficulties at times.

3. Imagine that a close friend or loved one is going through a similar situation. What would you say to them to offer comfort, support, and understanding? Write down those words of kindness and compassion.

4. Now, turn those compassionate words towards yourself. Consider what you would say to yourself in this situation to provide comfort and understanding.

5. Reflect on how adopting a more self-compassionate perspective affects your feelings and thoughts about the situation.

6. Write down self-compassionate statements you can offer yourself whenever you're experiencing a difficult emotion. The following are some examples:

- ☐ I am deserving of kindness and understanding, just like anyone else.
- ☐ It's okay to make mistakes; they are opportunities for growth and learning.
- ☐ I am doing the best I can with the resources and knowledge I have in this moment.
- ☐ It's normal to feel overwhelmed sometimes.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Practice Forgiveness

1. Identifying the Situation

Reflect on a particular person or situation that has caused you pain, anger, or hurt.

2. Acknowledging Emotions

Explore and acknowledge your own emotions related to the situation. Allow yourself to feel these emotions fully without judgment. Write down the emotions you experienced in response to the person or situation.

3. Understanding the Perspective

Now, try to put yourself in the other person's shoes. Consider their viewpoint, their beliefs, and any factors that may have influenced their actions. Write down your reflections on their perspective.

4. Recognizing the Impact

Consider the impact of holding onto negative feelings towards this person/situation. How has it affected your relationships, your well-being, and your ability to empathize? Note the negative consequences you have experienced.

5. Opening to Forgiveness

Envision forgiveness as a possibility for healing and growth. Recognize that forgiveness does not mean condoning the behavior but is a decision to let go of the burden of anger and resentment. Write down about your willingness to explore forgiveness.

6. Ritual of Forgiveness

Create a symbolic ritual to represent your intention to forgive. This could be writing a forgiveness letter (not necessarily to be sent), lighting a candle, or any other meaningful gesture that resonates with you. Describe the ritual you plan to perform.

7. Letting Go

Reflect on the power of letting go. Imagine releasing the negativity associated with this person or situation. Visualize yourself experiencing a sense of freedom, lightness, and peace. Write down any thoughts, sensations, or emotions that arise during this reflection.

8. Reflections and Insights

Take a moment to reflect on what you have learned through this practice of forgiveness and empathy. Write down any insights or realizations you have gained about yourself, the other person, or the situation.

Forgiveness is a personal journey, and it may take time to fully embrace and cultivate empathy. Be patient and gentle with yourself throughout this process.

2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

Classification status

- DSM-5-TR: No standalone DSM-5-TR diagnosis under the workbook title · educational/contextual topic unless a separately assessed disorder applies
- ICD-11 CDDR: No dedicated ICD-11 CDDR mental-disorder code under the workbook title · educational/contextual topic unless another coded condition is established
- This workbook is non-diagnostic. A title, checklist, or completed activity never establishes a diagnosis.

Pages requiring the updated interpretation

- The audit identified source pages 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 17, 19. The statements below supersede incompatible diagnostic, scoring, safety, or resource wording on those pages.

Diagnostic and differential limits

- Use Empathy material to support assessment or intervention planning, not to assign a diagnosis. Evaluate duration, severity, clinically significant distress or impairment, developmental and cultural context, medical/substance causes, exclusions, and relevant differentials.

Document-specific corrections

- Keep Empathy explicitly non-diagnostic; its exercises organize experience and goals but do not establish a mental disorder or causal explanation.
- Supersede diagnostic-sounding scoring on pages [1, 2, 3, 4, 6]: disclose whether each tool is validated or author-created, remove unsupported thresholds, and separate symptom monitoring from diagnosis.
- Replace crisis wording on pages [2] with the current U.S. 988 call/text/chat pathway, 911 or nearest emergency department for immediate danger/medical emergency, and a direction to use verified local services outside the United States.

Measures, scoring, and permissions

- Pages [1, 2, 3, 4, 6] contain named, implied, or author-created screening/rating content; extracted candidate names include: Self-Assessment . These scores are not diagnostic unless the exact instrument, version, validation population, administration, and interpretation are established. Identify provenance for every item set and scoring rule. Obtain publisher permission/license when required; otherwise remove cutoffs and label it as a nonvalidated reflection checklist, or replace it with a properly licensed measure without altering its wording/scoring.

Intervention scope and contraindications

- Use Empathy activities as psychoeducation and structured reflection, not diagnosis or a stand-alone treatment plan. Adapt or stop any exercise that worsens distress, functioning, conflict, pain, or dissociation, and escalate care according to the actual presentation.

Crisis and current resources

- For Empathy, use: ·If there is immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department. In the U.S., call or text 988 or use 988lifeline.org for 24/7 crisis support. Outside the U.S., use verified local emergency and crisis services. · Verify all topic-specific agencies and links at publication.

Authoritative references

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