

Helicopter Worksheet

Take a step back and see the bigger picture

When we are right in the middle of a difficult situation, our attention can narrow. One thought, feeling, conversation or fear can fill the whole view. The Helicopter Worksheet is a CBT-informed way of mentally rising above the situation so that you can see more of the landscape.

Imagine a helicopter lifting slowly into the air. At ground level you can see only what is directly in front of you. As you rise, more becomes visible: other people, different routes, the wider context, what happened before, what might happen next and choices that were difficult to see when you felt overwhelmed.

This is not about dismissing your feelings

Taking a wider view does not mean telling yourself that something does not matter. Your feelings remain part of the picture. The aim is to stop one interpretation from becoming the entire picture.

The helicopter questions

Ground level: What happened and what am I feeling?

My viewpoint: What am I telling myself about this?

Their viewpoint: How might another person see it?

Observer viewpoint: What might a neutral observer notice?

Wider landscape: What else is influencing the situation?

Future view: How might this look in a week, month or year?

Landing: What balanced next step can I take?

You do not need to answer every question. Use the prompts that help you gain perspective rather than forcing yourself to reach a particular conclusion.

My Helicopter View

The situation

What happened? Keep this as factual as you can.

Ground level — what is happening inside me?

Thoughts: _____

Feelings: _____

Body sensations: _____

Intensity right now: _____ /10

My viewpoint

What does the situation mean to me? What am I assuming or predicting?

Another person's viewpoint

If somebody else is involved, what might they be thinking, feeling or dealing with? This is about possibilities rather than mind-reading.

A neutral observer

If a calm person watched the situation without knowing either side, what facts might they notice?

Rise Higher — Widen the View

What else belongs in the picture?

Area	Questions to consider	My notes
Context	What happened before this? Is there missing information?	
Stress	Am I tired, overloaded, anxious, grieving or under pressure?	
Patterns	Does this remind me of an older experience or fear?	
Other people	What might they be carrying that I cannot see?	
Facts	What do I actually know?	
Assumptions	What am I filling in or predicting?	
Strengths	What have I handled before that may help now?	

What becomes visible from higher up?

Different Viewpoints

Sometimes perspective changes when we deliberately move around the situation rather than viewing it from only one position.

The friend view

If someone I cared about described exactly this situation, what would I say to them?

The future-me view

Imagine I am looking back on this from the future. What might matter most? What might matter less?

The values view

What kind of person do I want to be in this situation? Which response fits my values rather than simply reacting to the strongest emotion?

The evidence view

What supports my current interpretation?

What does not fully fit it?

A more balanced picture

Taking all the viewpoints together, how could I describe the situation now?

Land the Helicopter — Choose the Next Step

Perspective is most useful when it helps you return to the situation with more choice.

What is within my control?

- What I say ■ What I do next ■ A boundary I set
- Asking a question ■ Taking time before responding ■ Seeking support
- Resting / regulating ■ Letting something go ■ Other: _____

What is outside my control?

My next helpful step

Quick Helicopter Check

1	What happened?	_____
2	What am I thinking and feeling?	_____
3	What might another viewpoint be?	_____
4	What would a neutral observer notice?	_____
5	What is the wider context?	_____
6	How might future me see this?	_____
7	What is my balanced next step?	_____

A Message From Me

When you are standing in the middle of something painful or stressful, it can feel as though the view you have in that moment is the only possible view.

Sometimes the most helpful thing is not to solve everything immediately, but to create a little distance.

Imagine rising above the situation. Look down at the whole landscape. Your feelings are still there, and they still matter, but now you may also be able to see context, other explanations, choices, strengths and routes forward that were hidden at ground level.

You do not have to force yourself to agree with another person's perspective. You are simply allowing more than one viewpoint to exist.

And when you are ready, bring the helicopter back down. You do not have to solve the entire landscape. Choose the next manageable step.

Sometimes a wider view really can bring new possibilities.

Space to Breathe Therapy

This worksheet is intended for psychoeducation and self-reflection and is not a substitute for individual mental-health assessment or treatment.