Helicopter View — Reading Guide

Read in your own time · no writing required

What is the Helicopter View?

The Helicopter View helps you consider a difficult situation from more than one angle. Feelings remain important, but they do not have to be the entire picture.

At ground level

Describe the situation and notice your immediate thought, emotions and body sensations. You do not need to change them to begin.

Your own viewpoint

What feels important about the situation? How might your experiences, needs and expectations be shaping your interpretation?

Another person and a neutral observer

Consider another person's possible perspective without assuming it is true or excusing harmful behaviour. A neutral observer might distinguish what was seen from what was inferred.

The wider context

What pressures, changes, past experiences, communication differences or environmental demands are part of the larger picture?

Facts versus assumptions

Separate what you know from interpretations and predictions. Consider what evidence you have and what remains uncertain.

A trusted friend and future you

Imagine how you might respond to a friend in the same situation, and what you might still consider important after some time has passed.

Your values

Which response would reflect what matters to you, such as fairness, safety, honesty, compassion or self-respect?

A balanced picture

A wider view does not require forced positivity. You can acknowledge hurt, uncertainty and the possibility of other interpretations.

Land the helicopter

What is within your control? What might you leave undecided or let go of? Choose one manageable next step.

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Adapt the exercise

Do not use perspective-taking to excuse abuse, discrimination or threats. Skip an uncomfortable viewpoint. When distress is severe, consider professional support.

A personal message from Maggie

Your feelings are part of the landscape. A wider view can help you see what else may be present, without asking you to dismiss what happened. Sometimes one manageable next step is enough.

Worksheet 1 — Ground Level & My Viewpoint

Print and complete whenever you are ready

What happened? Describe the situation.

What thoughts or interpretations came up?

What emotions and body sensations did I notice?

What matters most to me about this situation?

Worksheet 2 — Different Perspectives

Print and complete whenever you are ready

What might another person think or notice? (This is only a possibility.)

What might a neutral observer describe?

What wider context may have affected the situation?

How might a trusted friend view my experience?

Worksheet 3 — Evidence & Bigger Picture

Print and complete whenever you are ready

What facts do I know?

Which parts of my interpretation are assumptions?

What evidence or alternative explanations might matter?

How might future-me or my values change the picture?

Worksheet 4 — Land the Helicopter

Print and complete whenever you are ready

What is a more balanced picture of this situation?

What is within my control?

What could I leave undecided or let go of?

What is my next manageable step?

Worksheet 5 — Quick Helicopter Check

Print and complete whenever you are ready

GROUND: What is happening and how do I feel?

RISE: What else could be true?

LOOK AROUND: What facts and viewpoints matter?

LAND: What is within my control? What next?