

## *Exercise 1*

### **OBSERVATION OR EVALUATION?**

To determine your proficiency at discerning between observations and evaluations, complete the following exercise. Circle the number in front of each statement that is an observation only, with no evaluation mixed in.

1. "John was angry with me yesterday for no reason."
2. "Yesterday evening Nancy bit her fingernails while watching television."
3. "Sam didn't ask for my opinion during the meeting."
4. "My father is a good man."
5. "Janice works too much."
6. "Henry is aggressive."
7. "Pam was first in line every day this week."
8. "My son often doesn't brush his teeth."
9. "Luke told me I didn't look good in yellow."
10. "My aunt complains when I talk with her."

*Here are my responses for Exercise 1:*

1. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. I consider "for no reason" to be an evaluation. Furthermore, I consider it an evaluation to infer that John was angry. He might have been feeling hurt, scared, sad, or something else. Examples of observations without evaluation might be: "John told me he was angry," or "John pounded his fist on the table."
2. If you circled this number, we're in agreement that an observation was expressed without being mixed together with an evaluation.

3. If you circled this number, we're in agreement that an observation was expressed without being mixed together with an evaluation.
4. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. I consider "good man" to be an evaluation. An observation without evaluation might be: "For the last twenty-five years, my father has given one-tenth of his salary to charity."
5. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. I consider "too much" to be an evaluation. An observation without evaluation might be: "Janice spent more than sixty hours at the office this week."
6. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. I consider "aggressive" to be an evaluation. An observation without evaluation might be: "Henry hit his sister when she switched the television channel."
7. If you circled this number, we're in agreement that an observation was expressed without being mixed together with an evaluation.
8. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. I consider "often" to be an evaluation. An observation without evaluation might be: "Twice this week my son didn't brush his teeth before going to bed."
9. If you circled this number, we're in agreement that an observation was expressed without being mixed together with an evaluation.
10. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. I consider "complains" to be an evaluation. An observation without evaluation might be: "My aunt called me three times this week, and each time talked about people who treated her in ways she didn't like."

## *Exercise 2*

### EXPRESSING FEELINGS

If you would like to see whether we're in agreement about the verbal expression of feelings, circle the number in front of each of the following statements in which feelings are verbally expressed.

1. "I feel you don't love me."
2. "I'm sad that you're leaving."
3. "I feel scared when you say that."
4. "When you don't greet me, I feel neglected."
5. "I'm happy that you can come."
6. "You're disgusting."
7. "I feel like hitting you."
8. "I feel misunderstood."
9. "I feel good about what you did for me."
10. "I'm worthless."

*Here are my responses for Exercise 2:*

1. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. I don't consider "you don't love me" to be a feeling. To me, it expresses what the speaker thinks the other person is feeling, rather than how the speaker is feeling. Whenever the words *I feel* are followed by the words *I, you, he, she, they, it, that, like, or as if*, what follows is generally not what I would consider to be a feeling. An expression of feeling in this case might be: "I'm sad," or "I'm feeling anguished."
2. If you circled this number, we're in agreement that a feeling was verbally expressed.
3. If you circled this number, we're in agreement that a feeling was verbally expressed.

4. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. I don't consider "neglected" to be a feeling. To me, it expresses what the speaker thinks the other person is doing to him or her. An expression of feeling might be: "When you don't greet me at the door, I feel lonely."
5. If you circled this number, we're in agreement that a feeling was verbally expressed.
6. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. I don't consider "disgusting" to be a feeling. To me, it expresses how the speaker thinks about the other person, rather than how the speaker is feeling. An expression of feeling might be: "I feel disgusted."
7. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. I don't consider "like hitting you" to be a feeling. To me, it expresses what the speaker imagines doing, rather than how the speaker is feeling. An expression of feeling might be: "I am furious at you."
8. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. I don't consider "misunderstood" to be a feeling. To me, it expresses what the speaker thinks the other person is doing. An expression of feeling in this case might be: "I feel frustrated," or "I feel discouraged."
9. If you circled this number, we're in agreement that a feeling was verbally expressed. However, the word *good* is vague when used to convey a feeling. We can usually express our feelings more clearly by using other words, for example: *relieved*, *gratified*, or *encouraged*.
10. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. I don't consider "worthless" to be a feeling. To me, it expresses how the speaker thinks about himself or herself, rather than how the speaker is feeling. An expression of feeling in this case might be: "I feel skeptical about my own talents," or "I feel wretched."

### *Exercise 3*

#### **ACKNOWLEDGING NEEDS**

To practice identifying needs, please circle the number in front of each statement where the speaker is acknowledging responsibility for his or her feelings.

1. “You irritate me when you leave company documents on the conference room floor.”
2. “I feel angry when you say that, because I am wanting respect and I hear your words as an insult.”
3. “I feel frustrated when you come late.”
4. “I’m sad that you won’t be coming for dinner because I was hoping we could spend the evening together.”
5. “I feel disappointed because you said you would do it and you didn’t.”
6. “I’m discouraged because I would have liked to have progressed further in my work by now.”
7. “Little things people say sometimes hurt me.”
8. “I feel happy that you received that award.”
9. “I feel scared when you raise your voice.”
10. “I am grateful that you offered me a ride because I was needing to get home before my children arrive.”

*Here are my responses for Exercise 3:*

1. If you circled this number, we’re not in agreement. To me, the statement implies that the other person’s behavior is solely responsible for the speaker’s feelings. It doesn’t reveal the needs or thoughts that are contributing to the speaker’s feelings. To do so, the speaker might have said, “I’m irritated when you leave company documents on the conference room floor, because I want our documents to be safely stored and accessible.”

2. If you circled this number, we're in agreement that the speaker is acknowledging responsibility for his or her feelings.
3. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. To express the needs or thoughts underlying his or her feelings, the speaker might have said, "I feel frustrated when you come late because I was hoping we'd be able to get some front-row seats."
4. If you circled this number, we're in agreement that the speaker is acknowledging responsibility for his or her feelings.
5. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. To express the needs and thoughts underlying his or her feelings, the speaker might have said, "When you said you'd do it and then didn't, I felt disappointed because I want to be able to rely upon your words."
6. If you circled this number, we're in agreement that the speaker is acknowledging responsibility for his or her feelings.
7. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. To express the needs and thoughts underlying his or her feelings, the speaker might have said, "Sometimes when people say little things, I feel hurt because I want to be appreciated, not criticized."
8. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. To express the needs and thoughts underlying his or her feelings, the speaker might have said, "When you received that award, I felt happy because I was hoping you'd be recognized for all the work you'd put into the project."
9. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. To express the needs and thoughts underlying his or her feelings, the speaker might have said, "When you raise your voice, I feel scared because I'm telling myself someone might get hurt here, and I need to know that we're all safe."
10. If you circled this number, we're in agreement that the speaker is acknowledging responsibility for his or her feelings.

## *Exercise 4*

### EXPRESSING REQUESTS

To see whether we're in agreement about the clear expression of requests, circle the number in front of each of the following statements in which the speaker is clearly requesting that a specific action be taken.

1. "I want you to understand me."
2. "I'd like you to tell me one thing that I did that you appreciate."
3. "I'd like you to feel more confidence in yourself."
4. "I want you to stop drinking."
5. "I'd like you to let me be me."
6. "I'd like you to be honest with me about yesterday's meeting."
7. "I would like you to drive at or below the speed limit."
8. "I'd like to get to know you better."
9. "I would like you to show respect for my privacy."
10. "I'd like you to prepare supper more often."

*Here are my responses for Exercise 4:*

1. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. To me, the word *understand* does not clearly express a request for a specific action. A request for a specific action might be: "I want you to tell me what you heard me say."
2. If you circled this number, we're in agreement that the speaker is clearly requesting a specific action.
3. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. To me, the words *feel more confidence* do not clearly express a request for a specific action. A request for a specific action might be: "I'd like you to take a course in assertiveness training, which I believe would increase your self-confidence."

4. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. To me, the words *stop drinking* do not express what the speaker wants, but rather what he or she doesn't want. A request for a specific action might be: "I want you to tell me what needs of yours are met by drinking, and to discuss with me other ways of meeting those needs."
5. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. To me, the words *let me be me* do not clearly express a request for a specific action. A request for a specific action might be: "I want you to tell me you won't leave our relationship—even if I do some things that you don't like."
6. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. To me, the words *be honest with me* do not clearly express a request for a specific action. A request for a specific action might be: "I want you to tell me how you feel about what I did and what you'd like me to do differently."
7. If you circled this number, we're in agreement that the speaker is clearly requesting a specific action.
8. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. To me, the words *get to know you better* do not clearly express a request for a specific action. A request for a specific action might be: "I'd like you to tell me if you would be willing to meet for lunch once a week."
9. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. To me, the words *show respect for my privacy* do not clearly express a request for a specific action. A request for a specific action might be: "I'd like you to agree to knock before you enter my office."
10. If you circled this number, we're not in agreement. To me, the words *more often* do not clearly express a request for a specific action. A request for a specific action might be: "I'd like you to prepare supper every Monday night."

*Exercise 5***RECEIVING EMPATHICALLY  
VERSUS NON-EMPATHICALLY**

To see whether we are in agreement about the verbal expression of empathy, please circle the number in front of each statement in which person B is responding empathically to what is going on within Person A.

1. Person A: How could I do something so stupid?  
Person B: Nobody is perfect; you're too hard on yourself.
2. Person A: If you ask me, we ought to ship all these immigrants back to where they came from.  
Person B: Do you really think that would solve anything?
3. Person A: You aren't God!  
Person B: Are you feeling frustrated because you would like me to admit that there can be other ways of interpreting this matter?
4. Person A: I think that you take me for granted. I wonder how you would manage without me.  
Person B: That's not true! I don't take you for granted.
5. Person A: How could you say a thing like that to me?  
Person B: Are you feeling hurt because I said that?
6. Person A: I'm furious with my husband. He's never around when I need him.  
Person B: You think he should be around more than he is?
7. Person A: I'm disgusted with how heavy I'm getting.  
Person B: Perhaps jogging would help.
8. Person A: I've been a nervous wreck planning for my daughter's wedding. Her fiancé's family is not helping. About every day they change their minds about the kind of wedding they would like.

Person B: So you're feeling nervous about how to make arrangements and would appreciate it if your future in-laws could be more aware of the complications their indecision creates for you?

9. Person A: When my relatives come without letting me know ahead of time, I feel invaded. It reminds me of how my parents used to disregard my needs and would plan things for me.

Person B: I know how you feel. I used to feel that way too.

10. Person A: I'm disappointed with your performance. I would have liked your department to double your production last month.

Person B: I understand that you are disappointed, but we have had many absences due to illness.

*Here are my responses for Exercise 5:*

1. I didn't circle this one because I see Person B giving reassurance to Person A rather than empathically receiving what Person A is expressing.
2. I see Person B attempting to educate Person A rather than empathically receiving what Person A is expressing.
3. If you circled this we are in agreement. I see Person B empathically receiving what Person A is expressing.
4. I didn't circle this one because I see Person B disagreeing and defending rather than empathically receiving what is going on in Person A.
5. I see Person B taking responsibility for Person A's feelings rather than empathically receiving what is going on in Person A. An example of an empathic response might be: "Are you feeling hurt because you would have liked me to agree to do what you requested?"

6. If you circled this we are in partial agreement. I see Person B receiving Person A's thoughts. However, I believe we connect more deeply when we receive the feelings and needs being expressed rather than the thoughts. Therefore, I would have preferred it if Person B had said, "So you're feeling furious because you would like him to be around more than he is?"
7. I didn't circle this one because I see Person B giving advice rather than empathically receiving what is going on in Person A.
8. If you circled this we are in agreement. I see Person B empathically receiving what is going on in Person A.
9. I didn't circle this one because I see Person B assuming they understand and talking about their own feelings rather than empathically receiving what is going on in Person A.
10. I didn't circle this one because I see Person B starting by focusing on Person A's feelings but then shifting to explaining.