

Exercise sheet

WATERING YOUR GARDEN



One way of looking at our everyday lives is as a garden. There are different things growing there. There are solid trees that give character to the garden, there are flowers that — however small — give us moments of pleasure. Vegetables that feed us. There are also weeds that bother us and empty or abandoned plots where nothing has really taken root yet.

i The purpose of this exercise is to help you see what you are focusing on in your garden.

NOTICE WHERE YOU DIRECT YOUR ENERGY

- Do you put all of your effort into pulling up weeds (getting rid of unwanted things)? Do you battle against your unpleasant thoughts and uncomfortable emotions? Do you seek above all to avoid events that could potentially hurt you?
Or criticise the behaviours of others (or of yourself) that you find unacceptable? By concentrating on pulling up weeds, don't you find you end up exhausted and irritable, as you rarely get to enjoy the peace and beauty of your garden?
- Some people get so focused on the weeds that they forget to water the parts of their garden that they want to see grow.
- Rather than focusing your efforts on fighting uncomfortable thoughts and emotions or undesirable events that are beyond our control... **it is possible to direct your energy towards what you want to nourish, grow and strengthen.**
Which seeds do I want to water so that they take root?

THINK ABOUT IT NOW, WHICH PARTS OF YOUR LIFE DO YOU WANT TO WATER, NOURISH AND SEE GROW?

Examples:

- When I meet someone, I try to identify something about them that I like.
- I make sure I make time for myself (e.g. I have taken up a leisure activity again).
- Every day I identify a pleasant and rewarding experience and I dedicate myself to it.

QUALITIES OF A GOOD GARDENER

Do you know your qualities?

The ones you would like to acquire and the ones you would like to develop further.

For example, these are the qualities of a good gardener:

- Observational skills
- Patience
- Respect and acceptance of what is
- Understanding of interactions
- Discipline and organisation
- Flexibility and adaptability

NOW, HAVE A GO AT FILLING IN THIS TABLE AND SETTING YOURSELF SOME SMALL CHALLENGES:

I would like to be	Why?	What small action will help me to embody this quality this week?
More empathetic	I admire this quality in my friend Julia... Sometimes I'm not able to put myself in the other person's shoes.	The next time I have a conversation with someone, I will try to listen actively and rephrase what I have understood before giving my opinion.

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