

Safety Rating Scale and Observations List

Prepared by Timothy J. Hayes, Psy.D.

(815) 455-0590 x 2 www.ch4cs.com

Safety Rating Scale

These two exercises have been most helpful to people I have worked with over the past many years. The point is for you to take a moment to use your conscious mind to focus on how you are feeling at the moment. Then rate it on scale of 1 to 10. A rating of “10” would be completely safe, comfortable and secure. A rating of “1” would be very unsafe or “life threatening”. The number you give your feelings is not as important as just doing the exercise. The next time you do the exercise you can use your first rating and the feeling that went with it as a reference point. So if you gave yourself an eight on the first attempt and the next time you felt much safer, you may decide the that true rating for the first feeling was five or six, and the current feeling is seven or eight.

The exercise requires that you do this safety rating many times a day. I suggest a minimum of twenty times a day, and more if possible. There are two reasons to do this exercise. 1) The first thing it does is establish the habit of paying attention to how you are feeling, physically and emotionally. The more often you do this, the better chance that it will become a habit and build in strength. Staying in touch with how you are feeling physically and emotionally is a very valuable thing to do. The knowledge that you are having a strong emotional and or physical reaction can be used with input from your logical mind, to make better decisions. 2) The second thing this exercise does is show you map of the people and places and situations in your life that leave you feeling comfortable and relaxed, or tense and even threatened. This is extremely useful information for anyone who wants to restructure their life to help themselves feel safer and more secure.

Observations List

The next exercise is to take a sheet of paper and write a list of observations, or statements, that follow four rules.

- 1) Each observation/statement is something that is 100% unconditionally true.
- 2) Each observation/statement is neutral.
- 3) Each observation/statement begins with “I” or has you as the subject.
- 4) Each observation/statement is as true for anyone on the planet as it is for you.

When you have compiled a list of five to seven observation/statements that follow all these rules, make a copy and put it in a safe place. Take the original list and keep it with you at all times. Take this list out and read it a minimum of five times a day. After a while, the list will be memorized and you can just think of the paper and recite the list in your mind.

Finally, you can combine these two exercises. Anytime you do a safety rating and find the rating to be 5 or less, immediately pull out the list of observations and recite them.

Most times, when we do a safety rating and feel we are at a 5 or less, there is nothing going on around us that is truly unsafe or threatening. This means that something inside of us has been triggered. This is often an old habit of strong emotions and physical response. Reciting the list reminds you about observations you have made when you were feeling safe and calm, that are 100% unconditionally true. This helps focus our attention on the present moment and the reality around us, rather than the emotionally disturbing memories and thoughts and beliefs from an earlier time in our lives. This helps us feel more aware of what is actually going on and what we have control over, and this allows us to feel more calm and capable.

The following is a list of statements I have used with people in the past. Notice how they are not based on people's skills, appearances, actions or accomplishments.

1) **I am a human being and I deserve to be treated with respect.**

By way of explanation, I ask people to think about the man found guilty of bombing the Oklahoma City Federal Building. This person got three meals a day and lawyers appointed to defend him, and had all his rights protected according to the constitution. If this person deserves to be treated with respect then certainly so do you.

2) **"I am not responsible for other people's emotions and reactions."**

(The example I use here is that if my wife is late getting home by two hours, and does not call to tell me where she is, I may be frantic by the time she gets home, if I have been waiting by the door and watching the clock. If she shows up and acts as though nothing is wrong, I will be very unhappy. If I throw a fit and start swearing and slamming doors and yelling about how inconsiderate she was not to call, who would be responsible? The answer is that she is responsible for her actions, and I am responsible for my reaction. I may be entitled to be angry, but what I do with it and how I express my anger are things I am totally responsible for. If I had been absorbed in my work or playing a game on the computer, I may have passed the two hours without even knowing she was late. If this were the case, I would NOT have all the anger, fear and frustration that were mentioned in the first example, because I was not watching the clock and thinking of all the terrible things that may have gone wrong to cause her to be late.)

3) **"I am entitled to and responsible for my own emotions and reactions."**

(In the previous example, I frequently get asked whether I would be mad if my wife was two hours late, without calling. I reply that I would probably be very angry, but I would hope that rather than throwing a tantrum and scaring my children, I would be able to hold my tongue until I cooled off and then discuss the problem in a civil tone.)

- 4) **“As a human being, I am capable of loving and being loved.”**
(Many of us may not be good at this yet, but we are capable of it by the very nature of our being human. It has been observed that as infants we need warmth and nurturance as much as we need food if we are to thrive.)
- 5) **“It is O.K. for me to say “NO”.”**
(In this country, it is recognized that people have the ability and the right to make their own decisions.)
- 6) **“I am not responsible for the failures of other members of my family.”**
(The person who came up with this was shocked to hear me say that I thought it was a wonderful statement, but that I would never put it on my list. The reason is that while I think this meets all the requirements of this exercise, my family members have never accused me of being responsible for their failures.)
- 7) **“I did nothing to deserve the abuse I have received in my life.”**
(Even the people convicted of the most evil crimes in our society are treated with respect and have their rights protected. They are even protected from “cruel and unusual punishment” under the law.)
- 8) **“If I could have done things differently, I would have.”**
(The point here is that no one has a time machine which would enable them to go back and change things in the past. The next point is that people don’t make a conscious effort to make their lives miserable or abusive. Although most people who have been in abusive situations feel guilty about causing or failing to put an end to their abusive situations, the fact remains that people get out of abusive situations as soon as their personalities, strengths, and outside resources will allow.)
- 9) **“If I don’t look out for my best interests, no one else will.”**
(Some people feel that this statement praises selfishness. However I feel there is a real difference between selfishness, and doing what is needed to keep oneself healthy and to keep one’s situation from becoming or staying abusive.)
- 10) **“Those things which are my greatest assets will at times be my greatest liabilities.”**
(This is true for everyone, and everything.)

11) **“My Successes and Failures, (in any area), do not Increase or Decrease my value as a person.”**

(Everyone makes mistakes. The important differences between people have to do with their choices. Do you choose to admit and learn from your mistakes? Do you deny and make excuses for your mistakes and in so doing, ensure that you will not improve your performance in the future?)

12) **“Other people’s opinions of me do not increase or decrease my value as a person.”**

(Other people’s opinions and ideas are things that are totally beyond my control. As such, any energy I spend on trying to control them is completely wasted and will cause me to be frustrated.)

Whether you use some of the statements above, or create your own, they will only work for this exercise if they follow all four rules listed earlier. When people construct their first list, the most useful statements are the ones that are difficult for the person to say or they stir up strong emotions. Most people who take this exercise seriously find that they need to change their statements from time to time, because the original statements become a part of their basic thoughts, and they don’t need to be reminded of them. I recommend that you keep the list between five to seven statements because if it gets too long, it is a burden to read. If there are many statements you think would be good for you to include, you can start adding new ones after the original statements become a habit of your thoughts and no longer need to be included your list.

Prepared by:

Timothy J. Hayes, Psy.D.
Licensed Clinical Psychologist
800 McHenry Ave.
Suite B
Crystal Lake, IL 60014
www.ch4cs.com
(815) 455-0590 x2