



The IDEA Technique for Decision Making and Coping with Challenging Feelings

The IDEA technique has four basic steps:

1. **Identify**
2. **Discern**
3. **Express**
4. **Act**

IDEA Worksheet – Think about a challenging life situation such as an argument or other interpersonal problem. The IDEA technique is designed to help people get away from the dangerous and often impulsive pattern of THINK – FEEL – REACT. **What is happening?**

Identify – (First try to understand your thoughts and feelings about what is happening)

- What are my thoughts about what is happening?

- What are the feelings associated with my thoughts? – (Use feeling words and look deeper beyond surface feelings like anger)

Discern- to recognize or perceive clearly

- **Devil's Advocate** – Even if you do not agree, what are some other viewpoints beside your own view on the situation?

- **Empathy** – Thinking about the other person involved, even if you don't agree what are some reasons why they may be doing what they are doing? (Try to look at it from the other persons understanding. How would they try to justify their viewpoint? What reasons might you have overlooked that could explain their behavior?) Or if something is happening that is a problem try to understand what may be the reason for it:

- **Re-adjust/Re-state** – Is there a more positive or realistic way to view this situation?



Express –

- **Non-Verbal Expression** – Are there some ways you can take care of your feelings (relax, exercise, write, draw, etc.)
- **Expression to a neutral person** – Is there someone who cares about you that you can discuss this with?
- **Express yourself to the person or persons involved:** How could you discuss this assertively (calmly, directly, honestly and respectfully) with the person involved? What might be a good time and place to do so?

Act – Make a decision and act on it

- **Easy** – After doing the earlier steps in this process, is there any chance you could just let this go and move on and still be OK? What would you need to do in order to take care of your feelings afterward? (Like go for a walk, pray, rest and relax, etc.)
- **Moderate** – Is there a way to solve this by just talking about it? If so what are you going to say and when and how are you going to say it?
- **Challenging** – Have you decided that action is required? If so what are your choices? Fill out the following chart by listing your choices and the potential consequences of each choice.

BRAINSTORM – My choices:

CONSEQUENCES of choices

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Act – **My final choice is:** What have you decided to do and when and how are you going to do it?