

## **Guide to Completing Your Personal Formulation**

This guide is designed to help you understand and complete your own formulation. This process can provide valuable insight into the experiences that have shaped your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, and help identify patterns that contribute to distress. Below is a breakdown of each section with explanations and examples to guide you.

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### **1. Historical Experiences & Vulnerabilities**

These are past experiences that stand out and have shaped how you view yourself, others, and the world. They contribute to the development of your core beliefs and influence how you navigate through life.

#### **Examples:**

- Growing up in a highly critical household led to feelings of never being good enough.
  - Experiencing bullying in school created a belief that people will always judge you.
  - A past relationship where trust was broken contributed to fears of abandonment.
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### **2. Core Beliefs**

Core beliefs are deeply held assumptions about yourself, others, and the world. These beliefs influence how you think, feel, and behave in different situations.

#### **Examples:**

- "People cannot be trusted."
  - "I have to be perfect to be accepted."
  - "My opinion doesn't matter."
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### **3. Symptoms**

These are the emotional, physical, and behavioral responses that result from triggers activating your core beliefs. Symptoms may include thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, or behaviors.

#### **Examples:**

- **Emotional Symptoms:** Anxiety, sadness, frustration, guilt.
  - **Physical Symptoms:** Headaches, stomach aches, heart palpitations.
  - **Behavioral Symptoms:** Avoidance, overworking, people-pleasing.
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#### **4. Triggers**

Triggers are situations, people, or events that activate your core beliefs and lead to symptoms. These can be external (such as interactions with others) or internal (such as specific thoughts or memories).

##### **Examples:**

- Receiving feedback at work reminds you of past criticism and triggers self-doubt.
  - Seeing a group of people laughing makes you feel excluded and unworthy.
  - A deadline approaching brings up fears of failure and leads to avoidance.
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#### **5. Maintaining Factors**

These are the patterns, behaviors, and thoughts that keep core beliefs and symptoms going. They often reinforce unhelpful cycles.

##### **Examples:**

- Ruminating about past mistakes reinforces feelings of inadequacy.
  - Avoiding social situations strengthens the belief that you don't belong.
  - Overworking to prove yourself maintains the fear that you're never enough.
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#### **6. Protective Factors**

These are strengths, coping strategies, and support systems that help reduce distress and counteract unhelpful beliefs and behaviors.

##### **Examples:**

- Having a close relationship with family members or friends.
  - Engaging in activities that bring joy and relaxation, like exercise or hobbies.
  - Practicing self-compassion and challenging negative self-talk.
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## **Final Thoughts**

Understanding these different elements can provide clarity on how past experiences, core beliefs, and current behaviors interact. By identifying your triggers and maintaining factors, you can begin to challenge and shift unhelpful patterns. Protective factors play a key role in building resilience and promoting healthier coping mechanisms.

Take your time completing your formulation, and remember, this is a reflective process meant to provide insight and self-awareness. If needed, reach out for professional support to guide you through this journey.