

This card—**Five Ways of Looking at Yourself**—is Number 22 in a series of “Diversions for You and Your Friends” created by Arlene Harder, MA, MFT, Support4Change Blog.

Being sick or having a major problem in your life is a pain in the neck. This is because, in large part, any situation that negatively impacts your life forces you to think about *it*, rather than more pleasant things. That is why this card is designed to **take your mind off your troubles**, at least for a while—and you can find more diversions every Monday on the blog.

(Be sure to read to the end of Page Four.)



I took a picture of these baboons on a safari in Kenya many years ago and wondered what these guys thought about us when we were parked in our SUV watching them. They didn't seem to care that they had bright pink genitalia, although we found that interesting.

But how did they see themselves? How deeply did they delve into an analysis of “who they were.” In any case, as far as we can tell, they wouldn't be interested in doing a meditation on looking at themselves from different perspectives.

However, you are not a baboon and, like most of us humans, you spend a lot of time thinking about yourself—generally coming to the same conclusions about who you are. Much of your self-image may be positive. But what if you are overly critical? What if you could see yourself in a more positive, more holistic way?

To help you do that, I give you a suggestion for something you may not have tried before. It comes from the lovely blog by David Spero that he has given me permission to use. (He was the author of a diversion card I did some time ago called "Five Things Not to Think About." He is good at creating groups of five ideas, as well as sharing many creative ways to explore the mystery of life.)

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### **FIVE WAYS OF LOOKING AT YOURSELF**

These five meditations will help you step outside your mind. You can see things differently out there. I suggest trying one at a time over a series of days to see which you like. Some may not be right for you, and all at once would be too much. As with any meditation, you will be distracted; your mind will wander. Just keep bringing your attention back to the theme as best you can. We're not grading you. Find a quiet place and at least ten minutes and go for it.

#### **Outside / Inside**

See yourself from the outside. Imagine you are in the room watching yourself, or watching through a camera on the ceiling or the wall. Notice how you move, how you interact with the environment, how you feel. Are you comfortable? Are you present?

See yourself from the inside, from your body's point of view – your breathing, your muscles, your organs. Feel as much as you can. Realize you are a physical body. And you are the one watching that body. Your thoughts take up most of your time, but thoughts are only a small part of who you are.

#### **From the Audience**

See yourself as if you were a character in a play. Watch yourself from the audience. See the things your character does and the trials your character goes through. Visualize him or her going through the day. Let yourself feel compassion for your character's pain and happiness for their pleasure. Laugh at their foibles and quirks. Admire your character's strength in keeping on.

### **Being Yourself**

Imagine again you are a character in a show. Look at yourself as the playwright would look at this character she created. Are you playing the character that you were created to be? Are you fully yourself, or are you holding back important parts? How could you be more of the person you were meant to be? Remember, the show is largely improv. Your life has been scripted up to here, but you can ad lib. You can step out of character. Imagine a way you could change your performance to be truer to your self. What would that be like?

### **100 Years from Now**

See yourself as an historian 100 years from now might see you. What have you left to the world? How was the world affected by your presence? For most people, their effect may have been small, but that doesn't mean it's not important. Think about all the people who have touched your life and whom your life has touched. Even a small contact, even one you're not aware of can make a big difference as it vibrates outward.

### **Through God's Eyes**

Take the longest view you can possibly imagine. Look at yourself through the eyes of God, a real or imaginary presence that sees and embodies the entire universe. What do you look like to God? Can you see you are part of a limitless creation, infinitesimal but wonderful? See how beautifully you fit in to your place, like a tiny cell in an infinite body. Can you feel how perfect you are for your role?

All these exercises aim to do what meditation does: take you out of your thinking mind so the rest of you has a chance to be heard [and to heal.] I hope you will find some of them relaxing at least.

You may also feel strong emotions while doing them, or a rush of creativity on days you practice them. Let me know how it goes for you.

You can contact David Spero at his blog, *The Inn By the Healing Path*.

I realize that it may take awhile for you to see yourself in a new way. This is particularly true if you don't know how to sit quietly and create a feeling of serenity because you're paying a lot of attention to your mind's disquieting chatter.

Yet if you sit quietly long enough, if you listen carefully enough, eventually you will hear other words that tell you life need not be so frantic. You can then hear words that give you a more positive perspective on life, words that convey clearly the message that inner peace is a gift deserve and that you can achieve it if you're willing to learn.

If you have trouble seeing yourself from a new perspective in these five methods of looking at yourself because you don't know how to quiet your mind, perhaps you can follow the advice of Wendell Berry. He is an American novelist, poet, environmental activist, cultural critic, and farmer. This is the advice he gives for creating a space in which you can see yourself in a different way:

*I go among trees and sit still.  
All my stirring becomes quiet  
Around me like circles on water.  
My tasks lie in their places  
Where I left them, asleep like cattle . . .  
Then what I am afraid of comes.  
I live for a while in its sight.  
What I fear in it leaves it,  
And the fear of it leaves me.  
It sings, and I hear its song.*

— Wendell Berry

Take your time. There is no end to the process of self-exploration.

*I hope this card helps you create a little  
peace, joy and love in your life*