

Self of the Therapist Inventory

Read the article first. This inventory accompanies *Self of the Therapist: The Capacities That Make a Balanced Therapist* at ThoughtsFromATherapist.com, which describes each capacity as it lives in us, what it looks like thin, what it looks like running hot, and what the working balance asks of us. Search “self of the therapist” on the site to find it.

For clinicians and supervisees. This is the clinician edition of the emotional intelligence self-assessment on the site, with the same capacities written for the chair. It is a map, not a competency checklist, and it does not resolve into a score. Each capacity sits on a spectrum. Too little creates rigidity in one direction. Too much creates chaos in the other. The point is to notice which direction a capacity is drifting, in which context, and what that drift is telling us about the rest of our life.

TWO MARKS

An ordinary day,
and a hard one

Each row gets two marks: **X** for an ordinary day, **O** for the hardest client on the caseload or the end of a long week. A gap between the two marks is information about context, not a flaw. The empathy that was accurate at nine in the morning is absorption by four in the afternoon.

BOTH ENDS

Thin and running
hot

The left anchor is the capacity when it is thin, the right when it runs hot. We often miss the failures at the high end because they arrive wearing the costume of virtue. The therapist who feels everything the client feels is not more empathic. The therapist who never wavers is not more grounded.

READING IT

No total, no type

Read the marks by degree and context. Where am I balanced, where do I drift, and with which clients? Circle the three widest gaps between X and O, star anything running hot that I have been calling a strength, and choose one capacity to bring to supervision.

Which way is this capacity drifting, and when?

What is the drift saying about the rest of my life?

SEVEN SECTIONS

How the map is
organized

Self-oriented, other-oriented, relational and interpersonal, cognitive and emotional, somatic and embodied, ethical and moral, existential and ecological. The anchors are short versions of the article's own descriptions. Read the full entry for any row that is hard to place.

IN SUPERVISION

Supervisor and
supervisee

A supervisee can mark it before a supervision meeting, and a supervisor can mark their own copy alongside. The marks open a conversation and are never an evaluation. Becoming a therapist and becoming a person are part of the same process.

A WORKED EXAMPLE: ONE CAPACITY, TWO CONTEXTS

CAPACITY	Empathy: accurate perception of another person's affective state, including what they are not showing.
X, ORDINARY DAY	Near the center. Clear perception paired with differentiation, and an aperture we can narrow.
O, LATE IN THE WEEK	Two dots right. Emotional information from everywhere. The disgruntled couple three tables away at dinner arrives whether or not we invited them.
READING	A wide gap, so the capacity is intact and the context is pulling it. The question is what the week is doing to the instrument.
PAIRED ROW	Attunement drifts with it: resonance without limit, taking on the client's state rather than offering ours. Rather than instructing a client to breathe, it is usually better to breathe.

Self, other, and relationship

X for an ordinary day, O for my hardest client or late in the week. The center dot is the working balance.

SECTION I · SELF-ORIENTED CAPACITIES

		TOO LITTLE		BALANCED		TOO MUCH
Self-awareness	We react. Our patterns run the hour	☐	☐	☒	☐	We watch ourselves work instead of working
Self-compassion	Shame organizes. Mistakes become verdicts	☐	☐	☒	☐	Discomfort becomes a reason to stop looking
Mindfulness	Planning the next question as this one lands	☐	☐	☒	☐	There, and not quite in the room
Acceptance	We push and treat slow work as failure	☐	☐	☒	☐	We accept what should have been contested
Intuitive insight	Formulation alone. Signals pass unread	☐	☐	☒	☐	Intuition and anxiety become one
Discipline	Documentation slips. Learning stalls	☐	☐	☒	☐	Rigidity. Rest gets overridden
Perseverance and dedication	We disengage or refer out prematurely	☐	☐	☒	☐	Effort becomes identity
Existential fulfillment	Sessions blur. We start counting them	☐	☐	☒	☐	Every hour has to be meaningful
Observer capacity	Feedback lands as attack	☐	☐	☒	☐	We hover above the session
Identity fluidity	The model becomes a place to hide	☐	☐	☒	☐	Different people in different rooms

Filling this in on a screen: click a dot and type the letter for the mark.

SECTION II · OTHER-ORIENTED CAPACITIES

		TOO LITTLE		BALANCED		TOO MUCH
Empathy	We work from the literal content	☐	☐	☒	☐	Emotional information from everywhere
Compassion and kindness	Competence they cannot reach	☐	☐	☒	☐	We soothe what needed to be felt
Reflection	Clients feel unseen, stay on the surface	☐	☐	☒	☐	Intrusive. The narrative becomes ours
Attunement	Timing is off. Interventions land flat	☐	☐	☒	☐	We take on the client's state
Boundaries and leadership	We collapse into compliance	☐	☐	☒	☐	The session organizes around our formulation
Authenticity and congruence	Guarded and professional	☐	☐	☒	☐	Disclosure starts serving us
Capacity for repair	We bypass the rupture	☐	☐	☒	☐	The client manages our fragility
Perspective-taking	Our view is the accurate one	☐	☐	☒	☐	The harm loses its name
Reciprocal influence	We become a well-trained mirror	☐	☐	☒	☐	Mutuality overrides the asymmetry

SECTION III · RELATIONAL AND INTERPERSONAL CAPACITIES

		TOO LITTLE		BALANCED		TOO MUCH
Relational timing	We interrupt, miss openings, push	☐	☐	☒	☐	We wait for a perfect moment
Attachment integration	Defended. Competent and far away	☐	☐	☒	☐	Everything becomes an attachment formulation
Contextual judgment	One relational style for every client	☐	☐	☒	☐	Clients feel the calculation
Signal and noise discernment	We respond to surface content	☐	☐	☒	☐	We dismiss what did not fit the formulation

Mind, body, ethics, and worldview

X for an ordinary day, O for my hardest client or late in the week. The center dot is the working balance.

SECTION IV · COGNITIVE AND EMOTIONAL CAPACITIES

		TOO LITTLE		BALANCED		TOO MUCH
Wisdom and dialectic maturity	Simple explanations. Formulations harden	☐	☐	☒	☐	Everything relative. No direction
Open-mindedness	We defend our formulation against the data	☐	☐	☒	☐	Every framework weighs the same
Knowledge and curiosity	A diagnosis with a history attached	☐	☐	☒	☐	We analyze when we should witness
Creativity	We run the protocol regardless of fit	☐	☐	☒	☐	Ideas multiply without direction
Playfulness	Heavy and controlled	☐	☐	☒	☐	The joke arrives where the grief was about to
Cognitive flexibility	We cling to a familiar explanation	☐	☐	☒	☐	We shift with every new piece of information
Attentional flexibility	Stuck on one hypothesis	☐	☐	☒	☐	Focus scatters
Response flexibility	We speak before we know what we felt	☐	☐	☒	☐	The pause becomes analysis. Timing dies
Flow	The work feels mechanical or overwhelming	☐	☐	☒	☐	We select for clients who provide it

SECTION V · SOMATIC AND EMBODIED CAPACITIES

		TOO LITTLE		BALANCED		TOO MUCH
Somatic awareness	We discover anger by hearing it in our voice	☐	☐	☒	☐	Clinical hypotheses out of digestion
Somatic regulation	A hard hour follows us home	☐	☐	☒	☐	Calm and unreachable
Stress and arousal	Recovery does not complete	☐	☐	☒	☐	Steadiness that has become insulation
Embodied awareness	The hour goes unrecorded in us	☐	☐	☒	☐	Every bodily cue read as symbolic

SECTION VI · ETHICAL AND MORAL CAPACITIES

		TOO LITTLE		BALANCED		TOO MUCH
Compassion with boundaries	Correct and emotionally inaccessible	☐	☐	☒	☐	The frame becomes the practice
Grounded hope	Chronicity looks like character	☐	☐	☒	☐	Hope keeps us attached to the improbable
Gratitude	A catalog of what is wrong	☐	☐	☒	☐	Positivity becomes pressure
Values discernment	We drift and cannot say why we are tired	☐	☐	☒	☐	Values become rules. We moralize
Moral imagination	Habit or policy, called professional	☐	☐	☒	☐	We carry consequences that are not ours
Integrity	Small breaches accumulate. Self-trust erodes	☐	☐	☒	☐	A standard with no room for error
Courage	We manage the relationship instead	☐	☐	☒	☐	Confrontation becomes a style

SECTION VII · EXISTENTIAL AND ECOLOGICAL CAPACITIES

		TOO LITTLE		BALANCED		TOO MUCH
Ambiguity and paradox	We grasp for certainty	☐	☐	☒	☐	Vagueness. Openness reads as absence
Worldview flexibility	We meet categories instead of people	☐	☐	☒	☐	We absorb each new framework
Spiritual openness	Existential material becomes symptoms	☐	☐	☒	☐	Transcendence where grief was needed
Ecological awareness	A system's symptom made personal	☐	☐	☒	☐	Scope expands until agency disappears

Reading the marks

No total and no cutoff. The marks describe a direction of drift in a context, which can change by next month.

THE WIDEST GAPS

The three rows where X and O sit furthest apart. What does the hard context have in common?

CAPACITY, AND WHAT PULLS IT:

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CAPACITY, AND WHAT PULLS IT:

RUNNING HOT

Anything on the right that I have been calling a strength. High-end failures arrive wearing the costume of virtue.

DRIFTS THAT TRAVEL TOGETHER

Most failure in skilled therapists is an excess of one capacity left uncorrected by another. Compassion without boundaries becomes enmeshment. Empathy past its range becomes absorption.

ONE CAPACITY RUNNING HOT, AND THE ONE BESIDE IT THAT IS THIN:

ONE CAPACITY FOR SUPERVISION

These capacities are difficult to observe from inside. What we can see alone is limited by our current organization, which is the constraint supervision exists to loosen.

THE CAPACITY:

WHAT A SUPERVISOR MIGHT SEE THAT I CANNOT:

WHAT THE WORKING BALANCE WOULD LOOK LIKE IN ONE SESSION THIS WEEK:

WHAT IS THIS DRIFT SAYING ABOUT THE REST OF MY LIFE?

Sleep, caseload, grief, a relationship, a season. The instrument and the person are not separable.

None of these are traits we were issued at birth. They are capacities, and capacities move across a career, a caseload, and a single hour.