

Explore



Decide



Reflection
and
Resilience



Eye of the Storm

A self-help tool

Introduction

This tool is designed to help you become aware of the different influences affecting your life choices. In any situation we often find ourselves surrounded by different, competing and sometimes conflicting expectations, ideas and advice. These expectations may come from people we know personally, or wider society. These expectations may help us (if they are based on accurate information and a good understanding of who we are); or they may hinder us (if they are misinformed, or misaligned with our hopes and aspirations).

This 'Eye of the Storm' exercise invites you to become aware of the competing expectations surround you. Writing down the expectations is a practical way to become clear about what is happening. As you see the different expectations on a page, you can stand back and consider which expectations you agree with and which you disagree with.

The phrase 'the eye of the storm' has two meanings.

- The Macmillan Dictionary defines it as 'to be in the middle of a difficult situation.'
- Google defines it as 'the calm region at the centre of a storm or hurricane'.

This tool will take you through identifying the different influences surround you, to gaining a calm and clear view of your situation.



This tool is designed to...

- Help you 'hear' the different messages that compete for your attention.
- Help you acknowledge that influences from the same source may be helpful or unhelpful, so you can gain a nuanced picture of your situation.
- Help you compare different messages so you can determine which are most helpful to listen to.

Consider using this tool if you...

- Want to consider how the expectations of others or society may be affecting your life choices.
- Feel pulled in different directions by competing advice or influences.
- Want to gain your own objective perspective on a situation.

How to use this tool

First, consider the graphic below



Second, fill in the ‘messages’- the influences, ideas or expectations that are surrounding you in each of the boxes.

A message might be positive and encouraging (like ‘you can achieve whatever you set your mind to’). Or a message might be limiting (e.g. ‘whatever you do, don’t go into that career!’). Be as concrete as possible. There are 5 boxes.

1. Messages from my community which may help me (community includes friends, family, groups you belong to, etc).
2. Messages from my community which may hold me back.
3. Messages from society which may help me (society includes the papers, social media, influencers, government policies, employers etc.).
4. Messages from society which may hold me back.
5. The Eye of the Storm - my own expectations, values, ideas, and aspirations.

Many messages are unspoken or sometimes just below the surface of life. Capturing these (and other more open messages) and making them explicit is important if you are to see clearly what is going on.

This exercise asks to consider that some of the messages we get from society may help us and some may hinder us. In the same way, we may find that some of the messages we get from people who are close to us who we care about and respect may also help us, but some other messages may also hinder us. This may be uncomfortable to acknowledge so it is important to suspend judgment while noting them down. Remember, the exercise is NOT about being critical it's about being analytical.

If you can't think of anything to write in a particular box, that's OK. You can leave it blank.



Third, once you have written as much as you can in the boxes, reflect on what you can see.

For this step, you'll need to imagine that you are looking down on your situation from a meteorological satellite high above 'the storm' and directly over the middle. This 'bird's eye view' enables you to rise above the different views, and to see the big picture. Rather than them being loud and in your face, from high up in the sky the competing 'voices' sound quiet and far away. From your view point you can see each message clearly, but they are small and far off.



- What would an objective observer notice about the different messages far below?
- How do the different messages 'speak' to each other? Do some reinforce each other? Do some argue against each other?
- Which messages give you most hope?
- Are there messages which make you angry? What do you want to do about these?
- Which messages will help you move forwards with your life?
- What becomes clearer to you now looking down on your situation?

Remember, that often a message is not intrinsically 'right' or 'wrong'. Rather, it is a case of working out if a message is helpful for you in your situation as this particular point in time.

If this exercise has been uncomfortable to complete, you are welcome to talk through your feelings with a member of the Careers and Employability Service in a confidential setting, by booking a careers appointment via the CES website.



Pause, Reflect, Act

- What are the key insights you've learnt?
- When you stand back and look over the exercise, where does this leave you and your plans?
- What practically do you want to do now to take forward the insights from this exercise?
- Who could help you with this?
- Which other self-help tools would you like to look at next?

NB: Because everyone is different and no one solution on its own is necessarily a magic bullet, please look at our other self-help tools as well and use the ones that work best for you. Others which may be relevant include:

- **Unique Me** – identifying your values, interests and characteristics that form your authentic self.
- **Bridge of Reasons** – identifying all the benefits you can get by doing something.
- **Expectations Under the Microscope** – using your values as a 'touchstone' to test the different careers people expect you to do.
- **Level Playing Field** – identifying resources to help you overcome social injustice.

References and Resources

- Macmillan. (n.d.). In the eye of the storm. In *Macmillan English Dictionary*. Retrieved January 2023 from <https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/in-the-eye-of-the-storm>
- Stanbury, D. (2022). *Huddersfield model of action in context*. [Unpublished manuscript]. University of Huddersfield Careers & Employability Service.

If you are a member of staff from another educational organisation and want to use a limited number of our self-help tools with your students, we'd love to hear from you and share good practice. We'd ask that you retain references to University of Huddersfield as a matter of courtesy and acknowledge the other sources we've used. Thank you.