

Describe – Perspective Exploration
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Describe is a creative, fun, and interesting set of games and activities used to engage people and understand their unique perspectives. Originally conceived as an ice breaker and assessment tool by a Licensed Professional Counselor, *Describe* can also be played/used by therapists & counselors, families, teachers, RPG players, actors, school and camp counselors, life coaches, companies, team builders, or any individual or group wanting to explore how they view themselves, and the world and people around them.

INTRODUCTION

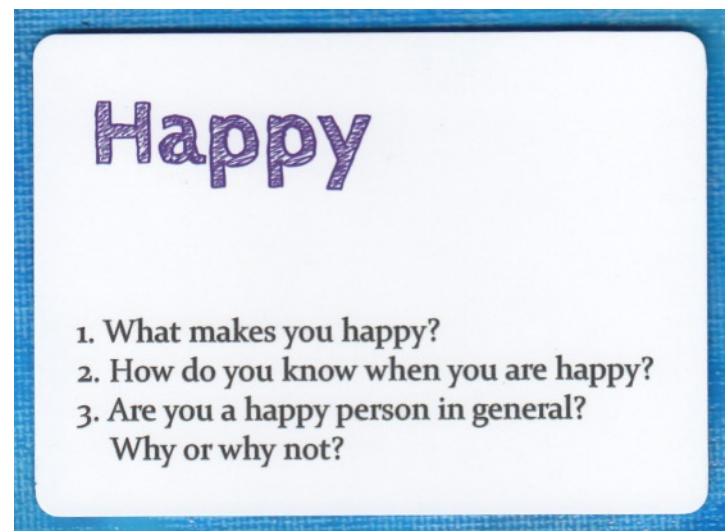
Adjectives (words that describe people, places, or things) are incredibly important when it comes to understanding how we view our world. We paint the picture of our world through adjectives, and it is through adjectives that we better understand our experiences. For example, when we ask someone to tell us about themselves, we're looking for more than, "I am male and I work in a factory." Facts are useful, though add much less to our understanding of each other than adjectives do. What we really want to know is *what kind of person* this person is. Is he Kind? Unhappy? Creative? Loving? Bored?

When we explore emotions, adjectives are just as important. It's not enough to know that a person was frightened by an encounter with a dog. We want to know why. Knowing that the dog was big, angry, and aggressive paints a fuller picture of the person's experience. It's also very different from the person that was frightened of a dog that was small, calm, and friendly.

Adjectives are how we understand a person's emotional experience, as well as their perception of the people in their lives, their relationships, their work... everything! Therein lies the power of *Describe*. Through the activities outlined below, perspectives can be explored and understanding of personal experiences increased. It's also possible to develop additional activities using these cards. We'd love to hear about new and interesting ways that people are using *Describe*. Find our contact information at the end of these instructions.

The Describe Cards

Each of the *Describe* cards contains a specially selected adjective, as well as three intriguing questions related to that adjective. (Additional adjectives and questions can be found in expansion decks.) Below are some of the many activities and games that can be enjoyed with *Describe* cards.



How Is Describe Played?

How *Describe* is played depends on who you are playing it with! There are games and activities for individuals, couples, families and groups. Some are interactive games, while others are ice breakers, introspective, or communication activities. The activities and games are divided according to whether they can be played by “Individuals”, “Couples”, or “Groups/Families”. This allows you to jump to the appropriate section of the instructions. Following are some recommendations and clarifications:

Therapists/Counselors/Coaches

- *Describe* was developed by a Licensed Professional Counselor so all of the original activities (those presented in the instructions) have been used in that setting.
- Most of the activities mention “participant(s)”. Typically the counselor/therapist will not be a participant, but rather will guide their client(s) through the activity.

Families/Groups

- **Games** - Families or groups looking for a fun game should jump to the Families/Group section and enjoy the Guessing Games to be found there.
- **Conversation** - Many families enjoy drawing a random card and answering the questions over a meal or during family time. This can also be a great icebreaker for groups.
- Members of a family, in different configurations can also enjoy all of the other activities in these instructions. Many of the individual activities can also be engaged in as a group.

Teachers

- **Vocabulary** - *Describe* cards contain a large number of regularly used vocabulary words and can be used for various activities in a classroom. Teachers might have a “word of the day”, including a discussion of the questions on the card.

Creatives (RPG Players, Authors, Actors, Lateral Thinkers)

- Adjectives are important in, and often guide, creative endeavors. *Describe* is a great tool for getting creative juices flowing and even providing direction.
- **Character Development** - One activity authors, actors, and role-playing gamers have used *Describe* for is to flesh out and further understand characters. A character can be created from scratch by drawing a few adjectives to describe the kind of person they are. They, or an established character, can be further fleshed out by exploring what their answers would be to the questions on the *Describe* cards.

Individual

(Note that some of these activities can take place in groups, but focus on individual perspective).

Relationships

- Participant(s) choose four or five people that play a prominent role in their life. *Optionally ask them to include specific people (e.g. parents, siblings, significant others, the participant)*
- For each person, have the participant(s) create a pile of five adjectives that describe that person.
- Once their piles are complete, have them choose one pile at a time to discuss.
- For each pile, have the participant(s) reveal the person that pile describes, the adjectives in the pile, and the reason(s) they chose each adjective.

Work/School

- Have the participant(s) choose one or more of the following aspects of work/school: Environment, Tasks, People, Performance, General
- For each aspect, have the participant(s) create a pile of five adjectives that describe that aspect.
- Once their piles are complete, have them choose one pile at a time to discuss.
- For each pile, have the participant(s) reveal the aspect that pile describes, the adjectives in the pile, and the reason(s) they chose each adjective.

Self-Exploration

- Participant(s) choose five adjectives that best describe them. Once chosen they can discuss the reason(s) for their choices.
- Alternately, or as an exercise in comparison, the participant(s) choose the five adjectives they would like to best describe them; the adjectives that describe the person they are striving to be. If they've already completed the first self-exploration activity, compare and contrast. If appropriate, consider exploring how the participant can become more like their ideal.

(See Page Seven for an expanded version of this activity that addresses self-esteem/self-awareness)

Relationship Exploration

- Participant(s) choose five adjectives that describe their current or most recent relationship partner. Alternately, they may choose adjectives that current and past relationship partners have had in common. Explore the choices.
- Alternately, or as an exercise in comparison, the participant(s) choose the five adjectives that describe their ideal relationship partner. If they've already completed the first relationship exploration activity, compare and contrast. If appropriate, consider exploring whether the participant's picture of an ideal relationship partner is realistic and how they might attain such a partner.

Relationship Partners

Current Status

- Divide the cards between partners (encouraging them to pass their portion to the other person after looking through them for the next step).
- Have each partner choose five adjectives that describe the other.
- Once they have each chosen their cards, have partners take turns sharing one adjective at a time and the reason(s) they chose it.

Ideal Status

- Divide the cards between partners (encouraging them to pass their portion to the other person after looking through them for the next step).
- Have each partner choose five adjectives that describe how they would like the other partner to be.
- Once they have each chosen their cards, have partners take turns sharing one adjective they chose and the reason(s) they chose it. Explore the possibilities of partners meeting each others' needs.

Self-Exploration Within Relationship

- Divide the cards between partners (encouraging them to pass their portion to the other person after looking through them for the next step).
- Have each partner choose five adjectives that describe how the relationship or their relationship partner makes them feel, or the type of person they feel they are within the context of the relationship.
- Once they have each chosen their cards, have partners take turns sharing one adjective at a time and the reason(s) they chose it.

Families/Groups

Individual Focus

- Choose one participant to be the focus of the activity. (i.e. the “describee”)
- Divide the cards between all participants (encouraging them to pass their portion to the next person after looking through them for the next step).
- Have each participant choose two adjectives that describe the describee.
- Once everyone has chosen their cards, have participants take turns sharing their adjectives and the reason(s) they chose them.

Families/Groups (cont'd)

Individual Focus Variant

- Choose one participant to be the focus of the activity (i.e. the “describee”).
- Have the remaining participants work as a team to choose five adjectives that describe the describee. It may be a good idea for them to do this in a room or area separate from the describee.
- Have the participants share the adjectives they chose and the reason(s) that they chose them.

Everyone Involved

- Assign each group member another participant to describe (i.e. the “describee”). This may be done randomly (e.g. drawing names), with purpose, or the group may determine this.
- Divide the cards between all participants (encouraging them to pass their portion to the next person after looking through them for the next step).
- Have each participant choose two to five adjectives that describe their assigned describee.
- Once everyone has chosen their cards, have participants take turns sharing their adjectives and the reason(s) they chose them.

Guessing Game One

(Suggested # of Players = 3-10)

- Choose one participant to be the focus of the first round. (i.e. the “describee”)
- Shuffle the Describe cards and deal 7 to each player, including the “describee”.
- Have each participant (except for the “describee”) choose one adjective that describes the describee and place it face down in front of them.
- Once everyone has chosen their card, shuffle them all together and hand them to the describee.
- Option One (Just for Fun) - One at a time, the describee should look at one of the cards and state which group member they believe chose this adjective and why.
Option Two (Keep Score!) The describee examines all of the Describe cards handed to them. They then hand each *Describe* card back to the person they believe chose it. Each one they get correct is worth one point. Optionally, a point can also be awarded to both people in the match. (Example: Betty chose the “Thankful” card to describe Joe. Joe correctly hands the “Thankful” card back to Betty. Both Betty and Joe score a point).
- The person to the left of the current “describee” now becomes the new “describee” and a new round is played.
- Play until everyone has had a turn as the “describee” (Optionally, play until everyone has had an agreed upon number of turns as the “describee”).

Group Guessing Game Too

(Suggested # of Players = 3-10)

- The players will need pieces of paper or something else that they can write on and “hand in” to the guesser.
- Shuffle the *Describe* cards and place them in the middle of the playing area.
- This game is played in several rounds. In each round, one person is the “guesser”.

Group Guessing Game Too (cont'd)

- The guesser draws the top card, chooses one of the questions on the card and reads it aloud.
- All other participants now write down their answer to the question and turn it face down.
- Once everyone has written an answer, shuffle them all together and hand them to the guesser.
- The guesser now places the answers in front of the participants they believe wrote them. The group can now discuss the answers, including the reasons the guesser placed the answers where they did.

Options:

- Keep score. For each answer the guesser matched correctly with the participant, they receive one point. Keep playing so that everyone gets at least two rounds as the guesser. Highest score wins. (Optionally, you might also award a point to participants that get matched correctly.)
- About handwriting - If you have a group that knows each other's handwriting, you may need to select one person to read the answers aloud to the guesser and then have them attempt to match the answers to the participants.
- Alternative version: When participants answer, have them give the answer they believe the guesser would give. All other rules remain the same, including the option for scoring.
- If you have a large white board available, it may be possible for the guesser to cover their eyes or leave the room as participants write answers on it. If you're keeping score, have the guesser write the name of the person they believe wrote each answer next to the answers themselves.

Describe - Charade Me Game (2+ players)

- Shuffle the Describe deck and place it face down on a flat surface that is readily accessible to all players.
- Each player takes a card from the *Describe* deck and, **without looking at it**, holds it to their forehead so that the other players can see the adjective on the card.
- Players now randomly pair up with another player
- Each player in the pair, without saying any words (sounds are okay), acts out the word they see on the other player's forehead for five seconds.
- Players now move on to pair up with someone they haven't paired with yet. Repeat steps four and five until players have had an opportunity to pair with every other player in the game.
- Still holding their card to their forehead, one at a time, players guess what word they are holding to their forehead.
- If you'd like to keep score, decide up front how many rounds you will play. Players score a point each time they correctly guess the word they held to their forehead.

Options:

- To add challenge, have each player pair up with only one other player each round, providing them only one charade clue before guessing. In this case, both players score a point if the word is guessed correctly. (So each player has an opportunity to earn two points per round). Players should pair with a different player each round until they have paired with everyone else.

Perspective Exploration Questions

On each *Describe* card are three questions related to the adjective on the card. These questions are designed to be open-ended and prompt exploration and discussion. One way to use these questions is to have the participating individual draw a random card from the deck and explore one or more of the questions there. They might be allowed to answer the question of choice, or someone else might choose instead.

The questions can also be explored as part of any of the previously mentioned activities. A great time for exploring one of the questions is after a participant explains their reason(s) for choosing a particular *Describe* card. Alternatively, questions can be explored after the completion of the activity.

Don't be afraid to adjust the questions or even come up with your own. The questions can be about the participant that chose the card, or the person they chose the card for. Feel free to expand on all of the possible meanings of the cards (e.g., when talking about "tough", talk about physical, mental, and emotional toughness). The cards can be used in many ways to prompt discussions that increase understanding of each other.

Variants

Feel free to experiment with the activities above. Changes can be as simple as varying the number of *Describe* cards chosen or as significant as creating your own activity!

In the following pages both new activities, and expanded versions of the current ones are included.

Self-Esteem / Self-Awareness

Describe can be adapted to address many different situations. Sometimes this means a simple adjustment to one of the included activities, others it can be creating something entirely new.

People dealing with self-esteem issues are often dealing with a perceptual challenge. Their low sense of self-esteem comes from how they feel they “don't measure up” either to others or to the image of who they think they should be. It can be the case that they haven't been prioritizing their choices well. What I've found to be true most often, however, is that they aren't giving themselves proper credit and/or are basing their conclusions on faulty assumptions or perceptions.

Following is an activity I use to help a person form a more solid, evidenced-based picture of themselves. This can be engaged in by an individual, with a counselor/coach, or adapted to a group setting. To be clear, this activity can be used by anyone wishing to improve their awareness of self.

Who Do You Want To Be?

Step One – Choose five or six *Describe* cards that complete the picture of the person you are striving to be. (For example, someone might choose: Friendly, Strong, Wise, Talented, and Thankful to *Describe* the person they want to be)

What Does It Mean To Be That Person?

Step Two – Explore what it means to be this “ideal person”. What does it mean to be “Friendly”? What does one have to do to be “Strong”? What behaviors does a person display to be thought of as “Thankful”? The *Describe* cards themselves contain many questions that can help guide this exploration.

How Do You Measure Up?

Step Three – Now that you've defined what it means to be your “ideal person”, how do you measure up? Do you meet your definitions of the words you chose? Are you engaging in the behaviors that make you that kind of person? What are your strengths in these areas? What are your opportunities for improvement?

What Now?

Step Four – Create an action plan based on your conclusions in step three. It can be as simple as continuing to foster your strengths while incrementally improving in other areas. Get specific. What things will you do to be a more Thankful person, for example.

By completing this activity, a person can increase their self-awareness and become more focused on working toward the person they want to be, instead of comparing themselves to others. I've often found this helps people realize they already are well on the way to being that person and simply haven't been giving themselves credit!

RPG Players, Actors, Authors, Creatives

Historically, RPGs and their players have used random tables to generate traits and descriptors of characters and NPCs to stir the creative juices of those playing and provide depth. Anyone who has watched a movie knows that they will probably be more interested in characters that have more than one dimension, who have a back story, who are relatable.

As a Counselor, Describe has helped me connect with and better understand my clients. I thought, “Wouldn’t it do the same for fictional characters?” Sure enough, I found that, using Describe, I could quickly “learn” about the NPCs I was generating.

For example, by drawing three random cards, I might learn that the NPC is Quiet, Careless, and Powerful. Great grist for the mill in role-playing! To add more depth, I then explore some of the questions on those cards from the NPCs perspective:

- How important is it to you to have Quiet times?
- Tell about a time that you were Careless.
- What does it mean to be Powerful?

By answering these questions from the NPCs perspective, I now know enough to portray them as a fully dimensional being that will be interesting for the players to interact with!

This same approach can work for the players when generating characters. And the method doesn’t have to be random. Sometimes, just looking through the deck for Describe words that seem appropriate for the NPC or character provides the same, effective result.

Have you used Describe cards as part of your RPG experience? [I’d love to hear from you!](#)

More to Come

I am currently in the process of updating the Describe instruction manual in conjunction with the Kick-starter for the expansion. The new instructions will include additional activities in this category! Have ideas for activities? [Share them and they may be included!](#)

Disclaimer

The information contained in these instructions, on the www.describecards.com web site, and other materials, is educational in nature and is provided only as general information and is not intended as medical advice, diagnosis nor treatment.

Learn About New Describe Games and Activities

New games and activities are regularly created for Describe and added to the instructions online. To ensure you find out about new activities as they are released:

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