

A stylized illustration of a human head in profile, facing right. The head is filled with a grey brain pattern. A large, teal-colored gear is positioned over the ear area. Two thick, wavy lines, one orange and one teal, flow from the top of the head down towards the bottom left corner of the page.

THE MENTALIZATION JOURNAL

MASTERING MENTALIZATION
MENTALIZATION-INFORMED JOURNALING

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THE MENTALIZATION JOURNAL

30 Days of Mentalization-Informed Journaling to
Master Your Mentalization Competencies

*A journal inspired by Anne Frank and based
upon the Mastering Mentalization Series*

Anique van der Putten

Edited by Dennis Weyrauch



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Edited by Dennis Weyrauch

Book cover image and book design by Anique van der Putten



Publisher: ToM PRESS

ToM PRESS is an imprint of the Center for Applied Theory of Mind

First published 2024

The Mentalization Journal

ISBN: 978-989-53691-5-7 (hardcover)

ISBN: 978-989-53691-6-4 (paperback)

Other Publications:

Mastering Mentalization: Complete Volume

ISBN: 978-989-53691-1-9 (hardcover)

ISBN: 978-989-53691-0-2 (paperback)

Mastering Mentalization: Volume I, Basic Mentalizing

ISBN: 978-989-53691-2-6 (paperback)

Mastering Mentalization: Volume II, Affective Mentalizing

ISBN: 978-989-53691-3-3 (paperback)

Mastering Mentalization: Volume III, Strategic Mentalizing

ISBN: 978-989-53691-4-0 (paperback)

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MENTALIZATION-INFORMED JOURNALING

The Mentalization Journal is made available by ToM PRESS, an imprint of the Center for Applied Theory of Mind (CAToM). We at CAToM are dedicated to introducing mentalization and related theory of mind concepts to the general public, extending familiarity with these fascinating concepts, and promoting the practice of mentalization beyond the clinical and scientific environments.

Mentalization and the related concepts of theory of mind refer to our ability to see into the minds of people. Through the recognition and decoding of verbal and nonverbal signals and cues in the behavior of others, we are able to form meaningful inferences about their mental states. These inferences help us to understand how they feel, what they are thinking about, their intentions, etc.

Mentalization and theory of mind are well-established terms in research fields that focus on the natural mindreading abilities of people. Mentalization originated more than 35 years ago within the research field of attachment theory. Miriam and Howard Steele showed that the capacity of caregivers to help the children in their care make sense of their experiences and their relationships with others through the use of mental state terms, such as feelings, thoughts, desires and beliefs, was a critical ability to the establishment of a secure relationship. The ability to form secure relationships is crucial to the development of a human being that has agency and that is able to form healthy social relationships. This understanding laid the groundwork for the theoretical model upon which Bateman and Fonagy founded their Mentalization-Based Treatment approach.

The concept of theory of mind can be traced back as far as the 17th century in René Descartes' Second Meditation, where he discussed "[t]he nature of the human mind, and how it is better known than the body." In 1978 the term Theory of Mind (ToM) was coined by Premack and Woodruff in their research paper entitled "Does the Chimpanzee Have a Theory of Mind?" This term is used in research on mental state attribution across many disciplines such as social neuroscience, developmental psychology and psychological disorders. Throughout this journal we will be using the term mentalization to refer to both concepts.

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Mentalization is increasingly becoming recognized as a valuable social competence. Research shows that we are significantly more effective in shaping our social environment and achieving our personal and shared objectives when we:

- Have an acute awareness of our own mental states and those of others
- Accurately infer the motivations and intentions of ourselves and others
- Accurately explain the past behavior of ourselves and others
- Accurately predict the future behavior of ourselves and others
- Have well-developed social competencies to act upon these social perceptions

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