

ACTIVITY 3
Reading about 'Chatter'
Chapter 3: Zooming out

DIRECTIONS:

1. Read an extract about a chapter from the book 'Chatter: The voice in our head, why it matters, and how to harness it'. Six sentences have been removed.

Becoming a fly on the wall...

By the time I arrived at Columbia, Walter and his postdoctoral student Özlem Adyuk had already become interested in examining how to help people think about painful experiences without succumbing to chatter. (1) ___ Several studies had shown that when people find themselves sucked into negative verbal thinking, diverting their attention away from their problems improved the way they felt. (2) ___ Thus, if you go to the movies to escape the adversities of real life, your problems are still there waiting for you when you leave the theater.



Oddly, at this time, the idea of distancing had fallen out of vogue in psychology. In 1970, Aaron Beck, one of the founders of cognitive therapy and an influential figure in mental health, proposed that teaching patients how to objectively scrutinize their thoughts, a process he called 'distancing,' was a central tool that therapists should employ with their patients. (3) ___ But in my mind, there was nothing inherently avoidant about distancing. In theory, you could use your mind to frame your problems from a zoomed-out perspective.

(4) ___ The point was to engage, but to do so from a distanced perspective, which is not the same thing as an emotionally avoidant one. That was the essence of my dad's teachings and what I had spent so much time doing growing up. So, Walter, Özlem, and I began thinking about the different ways people could 'step back' from their experiences to reflect on them more effectively. (5) ___

Indeed, a powerful optical device of sorts is built into the human mind: the ability to see yourself from afar. This mental home theater, it turns out, projects scenes when we think about unpleasant experiences from the past or imagine possible anxiety-producing scenarios in the future. They are almost like videos stored on a phone. Yet these scenes are not entirely fixed. Studies show that we do not see our memories and reveries from the same perspective every time. We can view them from different perspectives. (6) ___ Yet we can also see ourselves *from the outside*, as if transplanted to another viewpoint. We become a fly on the wall. Could we harness this ability to better regulate our inner voice?

Source: Kross, E. (2022), Chatter: 'The Voice in Our Head, Why It Matters, and How to Harness It', pp. 50-52.

2. Choose from the sentences A-H the one which fits each gap.

- A. In the ensuing years, however, distancing had come to be equated with avoidance—with *not* thinking about your problems.
- B. At the time, one of the dominant approaches to battling inner-voice rumination was *distraction*.
- C. This approach differed from the meditative practice of mindfulness in that the goal was not to stand apart and watch one's thoughts drift by without engaging with them.
- D. For example, sometimes we replay a scene happening through our own eyes as though we were right back in the event in the first person.
- E. The downside of this approach, however, is that distraction constitutes a short-term fix—a Band-Aid that obscures the wound without healing it.
- F. We landed on a tool we all possess: our ability to imaginatively *visualize*.