

Everyday Life Triangle Technique

Part One

self/individual

Instructions:*

What are the experiences, people, or things that support your wellbeing?

In one color pen, write these things in the corner where you think they belong (self, social, or material). Some things may fall into multiple categories. Going to a fitness class, for instance, may be something you do yourself, but it may also be a social activity. You can write these things twice or write them between two categories.

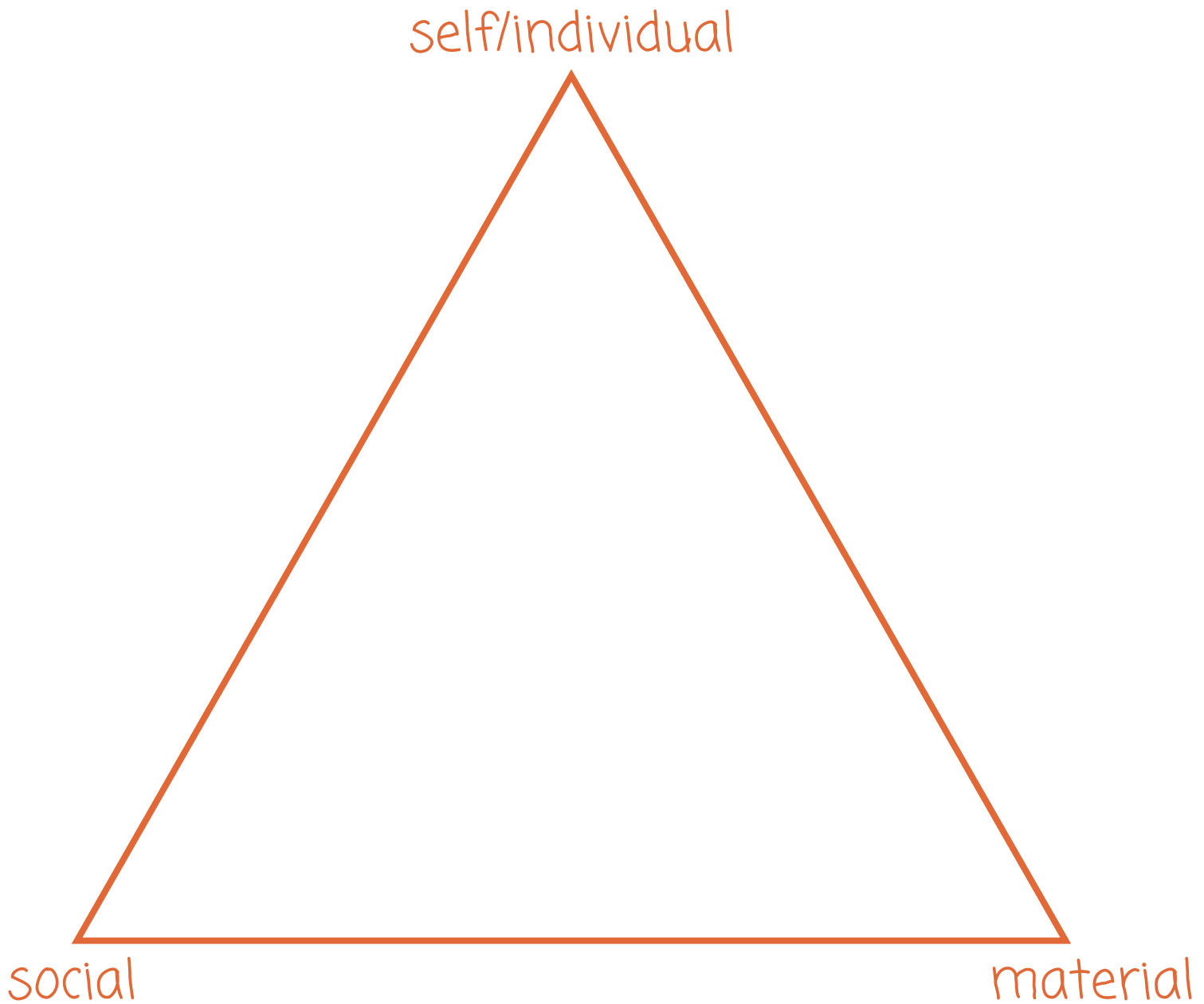
Now, think of the experiences, people, or things that get in the way of your wellbeing. Write them down where you think they belong.

social

If you are doing this activity with a partner, complete part one separately

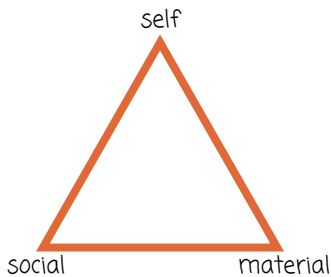
material

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Part Two



Now, consider your triangle. What does it tell you about your life? Does one point of the triangle have more in it? Does one point have less? Does one point feel heavier than the others? Do any points feel lighter? What surprises you? Does anything anger or upset you? What would you like to change?

If you are working with a partner, share your triangles and take turns narrating what you observe about your own and one another's triangles.



This activity should help you identify areas of your life that feel more stable and secure as well as areas that feel weaker, or like they are getting in the way of your wellbeing. It can also help you identify what you need to shift. Read the case studies below for examples of small shifts that can make a big difference.

Case Example 1

One woman who did this activity noticed that she had a lot of self-care practices (which fell between self-practices and material-practices) but she didn't feel like she had a lot going on in the social category. She knew that this was related to moving to a new location, but she admittedly hadn't given her new social life the attention it deserved. We talked about ways to boost up this corner of the triangle.



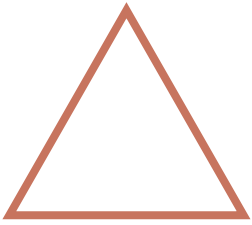
Case Example 2

A couple who did this activity together found that their triangles were in tension: Partner 1 was really satisfied with her social corner, finding joy in spending time with her extended family. Partner 2 found that this time with the extended family was in the way of her own wellbeing: it was too much, but she acknowledged it was a part of their life together. We talked about how Partner 2 could boost her self-care practices during visits to Partner 1's family in order to counteract the negative weight found in her own social corner. Partner 1 said she would help create time for this.



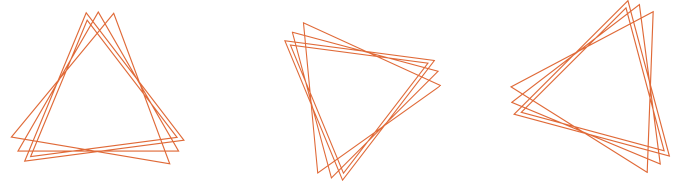
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Applying the Technique



Individuals are a part of social and material worlds as much as they are bodies with thinking minds. We are highly influenced by these social and material worlds, but they don't always get the credit they deserve, especially in individualist societies like the United States where we tend to put a lot of emphasis on self-development instead of community or the availability of resources. The triangle technique supports finding balance without losing the reality of dynamic change.

Your triangle is likely to change over time, especially in different contexts.



When we go through life transitions - such as a move, a job change, a break-up, an unsettling diagnosis, or loss - it's likely one or more of these legs destabilizes. A divorce, for instance, may upset your social life and include a change in the material structure of where you live, not to mention the psychological effects.

If you are going through a transition, work to stabilize the weak legs: call on friends (both old and new), talk to a therapist, start a new hobby, clean your house, begin a self-care routine, ask for help. Experiment until your triangle feels more balanced. You will likely revise your triangle many many times in your life.



More Info

Dr. Tess Bird developed this technique after her anthropological research with families and couples. She was inspired by the anthropological perspective on everyday life, where individuals are always considered a part of social and material worlds.