

## Exercise

**Note:** If you, your team members, colleagues or fellow activists have gone through traumatic experiences and you want to know how this might impact your perceptions of threats, you can run this deepening exercise. This exercise may be more emotionally challenging so if you do not presently feel ready, consider completing it at another time.

### Self-awareness exercise: How traumatic experiences affect our perception

**Purpose & Output** The purpose of this exercise is to help you recognise areas in which your perceptions are most accurate and areas in which you might be less clear-sighted due to traumatic experiences.

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**Input & Materials** It is helpful to take time over these questions and to write down your answers clearly so that you can come back to them over time and as you deepen your self-awareness. If you do this, take care to keep your notes in a private place, sharing your personal thoughts and questions only with people that you trust.

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**Format & Steps** Think back on any past traumatic experiences that may not be fully resolved. These will be experiences that you think about often and which still have the power to make you feel frightened, angry, guilty, ashamed, or sad. Don't go into the actual situation, but focus on what you did to help yourself, what you did to help others and what others did or might have done to help you.

Consider the following questions:

- What kinds of dangerous situations are particularly emotionally loaded for you as a result of your past experiences?
- When you find yourself in potentially dangerous environments, are there any situations that make you anxious or scared quite easily?
- Is there someone you trust who could help you identify any unfounded fears you may have?
- What kind of threats do you feel you fail to recognise easily?

**Format &  
Steps**

- How might you check whether you are failing to recognise some indicators of danger?
  - With whom do you feel comfortable discussing your fears and possible blind spots?
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**Remarks &  
Tips**

As this exercise might prove to be emotionally challenging, communicate this clearly to your colleagues. It is important that nobody feel coerced into participating in this exercise, and if someone starts to become distressed, they should stop immediately. It might also be a good idea to relate it to other activities, which cover areas of psycho-social well-being.

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## Optional Exercise: Use of Time<sup>1</sup>

As human rights defenders, a very important aspect of our lives which we often lose track of is our use of time. Our workloads are often extremely difficult to manage and our struggle to stay on top of them may come at the cost of our physical and emotional well-being. It may also have a negative effect on our ability to perceive dangers. You can explore this for yourself in the exercise below.

The development of successful security practice demands the commitment of resources, most notably time. As individuals, we need time to reflect on the effect our work is having on us, to ask questions and find answers, to identify successful tactics and tools, to plan and co-ordinate and to integrate new practices into our lives and work.

Feelings of emotional security are often related to our use and perception of time. What is the ratio between our working or engagement hours and the time we spend with our loved ones or for recreational activities? As activists, we nearly always face the dilemma that our workload never ends but our energies do. So where do we draw the line? The “Use of Time” exercise from the Integrated Security Manual helps us to make conscious steps towards a healthier and more emotionally secure use of time, which you can find in **Appendix E**.

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<sup>1</sup> Reproduced from Barry, J. (2011) Integrated Security: The Manual, Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, Stockholm.