

"This book could save you years of psychological struggle."
—Martha Beck, author of *The Joy Diet*

The *illustrated* Happiness Trap



How to Stop Struggling and Start Living

A user-friendly guide to ACT: the mindfulness-based program for reducing stress, overcoming fear, and creating a rich and meaningful life | **RUSS HARRIS & BEV AISBETT**

ABOUT THE BOOK

There's this idea going around that we're always supposed to be happy—and it's making us miserable. The good news is, if you can learn to let go of that impossible expectation, your life will be a whole lot happier. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a simple, self-administered therapy that uses mindfulness to enable you to do just that. This fun, illustrated guide to the method that's made life better for millions is the easiest way yet to learn how to escape the happiness trap and start living a life that's more rewarding, more meaningful—and happier.

With ACT you'll learn to:

- Reduce stress and worry
- Handle painful feelings and thoughts more effectively
- Break self-defeating habits
- Overcome insecurity and self-doubt
- Recognize and treasure the whole range of emotions that make up a satisfying life

Dr. RUSS HARRIS is a physician, therapist, and speaker specializing in stress management. He travels nationally and internationally to train individuals and health professionals in the techniques of ACT. Born and educated in England, he now lives in Australia. For more information, visit actmindfully.com.au.

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The Illustrated
Happiness Trap

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How to Stop Struggling and Start Living

Dr. Russ Harris
& Bev Aisbett



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How to use this book

Welcome to *The Illustrated Happiness Trap*, an illustrated and simplified version of the international bestseller, *The Happiness Trap*. There are at least three ways you could use this book:

1. As an easy-to-read introduction to Acceptance & Commitment Therapy

This book presents a delightfully easy introduction to the main ideas of Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (better known as ACT). We see it as especially useful for people who are not really into reading traditional self-help books, or for those who are so stressed, anxious, or depressed that reading is difficult. Of course, we hope that you will then go on to read the original book, which explores ACT in far greater depth.

2. As an adjunct to coaching or therapy

If you are seeing a coach or therapist who uses the ACT approach, this book can be a valuable adjunct. You can read chapters ahead of time to prepare for a session, or after a session as a reminder.

3. As a quick refresher course

If it's been a while since you read *The Happiness Trap*, you can use this book as a quick refresher course to remind yourself of the main ideas and exercises.

An Important Message

Simply reading this book will not be enough to make any real difference in your life. You actually will need to do the exercises if you want your life to be richer, fuller, and more meaningful. It is much the same as reading a book on how to play tennis or guitar. Your tennis or guitar skills won't improve simply from reading it; you actually have to do the recommended exercises.

Of course, you can read through the book quickly and then go back and do the exercises, but it's far better to do them as you go.

So, good luck with it all. And remember: life gives most to those who make the most of what life gives.

Cheers

Russ Harris

Introduction

♪ ♪ If you're HAPPY and you know it,
CLAP YOUR HANDS ... ♪ ♫



OH DEAR!

We should be HAPPY, shouldn't we?

That's what the multitude of self-help books out there suggest – just think happy thoughts and you'll be FINE. But trying to be perpetually positive can be downright STRESSFUL!



MY DOG DIED, I LOST
MY JOB, MY WIFE
LEFT ME ... BUT IT'S
ALL GOOD!

BUT ISN'T IT *NORMAL*
TO BE HAPPY?



You'd think that it would be normal to be happy in the Western world, where we have access to so many of the ingredients to build happiness ...

GOOD HOUSING



MORE & BETTER
FOOD



EXCELLENT
MEDICAL
FACILITIES



EDUCATION



ACCESS TO

JUSTICE



WELFARE



CLEAN WATER



&

SANITATION

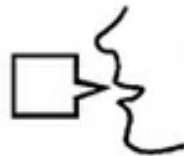


Along with FREEDOM TO

TRAVEL



SPEAK OPENLY

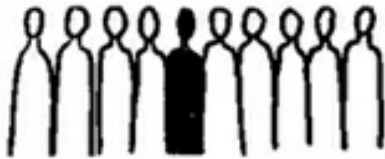


VOTE

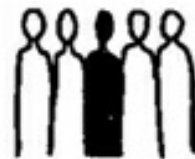


But the truth is, on the whole we're NOT happy.
In fact, often we're downright MISERABLE!

Here are some sobering statistics:



1 in 10 has
CLINICAL DEPRESSION



1 in 5 is DEPRESSED
at some time



1 in 4 has or has had an
ADDICTION



30 percent of the adult
population has a recognized
PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDER

And of all the people you know, almost HALF of these will
SERIOUSLY CONTEMPLATE SUICIDE at some point ...



... and 1 in 10 will actually
ATTEMPT IT!

SO WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO BE HAPPY?

TO ANSWER THAT, WE NEED TO GO BACK IN TIME TO SEE HOW OUR MINDS EVOLVED!



HANG ON!



WOW!!

HERE'S AN EARLY HUNTER/GATHERER. WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE HIS NEEDS?

HMM ... WELL, THE *BASICS* FOR SURVIVAL!

FOOD
WATER
SHELTER
SEX



AND HE HAS AN EVEN *GREATER* PRIORITY!

DON'T GET **KILLED!**



THE BETTER WE WERE ABLE TO ANTICIPATE AND AVOID DANGER, THE BETTER OUR CHANCES OF SURVIVAL!

GOOD? BAD? HELPFUL?

TRUE, BUT THERE AREN'T ANY *SABER-TOOTHED TIGERS* IN MY SUBURB! WHAT'S THIS GOT TO DO WITH MODERN-DAY HAPPINESS?



WELL, LOOK AT HOW WE'VE "EVOLVED"! COMPARE THE "DANGERS" ON OUR ANCESTORS' LIST TO OUR CURRENT PERCEIVED "DANGERS" — MOST OF WHICH WON'T EVEN HAPPEN!

SO I GUESS WE'VE JUST EVOLVED TO BE BETTER AT LOOKING FOR TROUBLE!



PREDATORS
BAD WEATHER
ILLNESS
LACK OF FOOD OR WATER

WAR

PAYING BILLS
SPEEDING TICKET

Climate Change
GETTING CANCER

OBESITY *DRUGS* **STUFF**

MORTGAGE REJECTION *JOB*

EMBARRASSMENT **LOSS**
UPSETTING LOVED ONES

BANKRUPTCY

THEFT

POLLUTION
ATTACK

WHAT DO YOU THINK WAS THE GREATEST THREAT TO SURVIVAL FOR OUR FRIEND HERE?



LET'S SEE ... WELL, BEING ALONE WOULD BE DANGEROUS, I GUESS!



YES! WITHOUT THE PROTECTION OF THE TRIBE, HE WOULD BE EASY PREY!

SO HOW DOES THIS PLAY OUT IN MODERN TIMES?



WE STILL FEAR REJECTION AND TRY TO "PROTECT" OURSELVES BY COMPARING OURSELVES TO OTHERS!

AM I FITTING IN?

AM I DOING ANYTHING WRONG?

AM I AS GOOD AS OTHERS?



AND BACK THEN, THERE WAS ONLY A SMALL GROUP TO COMPARE TO!



NOW IT'S GLOBAL!



FOR AN AMBITIOUS ANCESTOR THE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS WAS MORE = BETTER



WELL THAT SURE HASN'T CHANGED!



AND IT SEEMS THAT NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE GET, WE STILL WANT MORE!



YES! OUR MODERN MINDS TEND TO FOCUS ON LACK & CREATE DISSATISFACTION!



SO WHAT IS THIS
HAPPINESS THAT WE
KEEP CHASING AFTER?



*"The very purpose of life
is to seek Happiness."*

Dalai Lama

"HAPPINESS"
HAS TWO VERY
DIFFERENT
MEANINGS ...



1.

A GOOD FEELING



Because happiness feels **GOOD**,
we **CHASE** it, but we find that it
doesn't **LAST**.

And, as we shall see, a life spent
chasing after this feeling is not only
UNSATISFACTORY but also the harder
we try to experience only pleasurable
feelings, the more we feel **ANXIOUS** or
DEPRESSED when they elude us.



2. AN ACTIVE PHILOSOPHY

THIS SECOND DEFINITION
INSTEAD FOCUSES ON CREATING A
RICH, FULL & MEANINGFUL LIFE!

This involves ...



TAKING ACTION
ON THE THINGS
THAT MATTER
TO US



MOVING IN THE
DIRECTION OF
WHAT WE SEE
AS VALUABLE OR
WORTHY



ENGAGING FULLY
IN WHAT WE DO



IN DOING SO, WE
EMBRACE LIFE IN
ALL ITS COLORS!

But a full human life comes
with the **FULL RANGE** of
human emotions.



OF COURSE WE ALL LIKE TO FEEL GOOD, BUT DESPERATELY TRYING TO AVOID PAINFUL FEELINGS DOOMS US TO FAILURE.



The fact is — life involves PAIN:



LOSS



SEPARATION
OR DIVORCE



REJECTION



ILLNESS OR
INFIRMITY

**THE
GOOD
NEWS
IS ...**

You can learn to handle painful feelings by:

- ▶ MAKING ROOM FOR THEM
- ▶ RISING ABOVE THEM
- ▶ CREATING A LIFE WORTH LIVING.



AND WE'LL SHOW YOU HOW,
USING THE PRINCIPLES
OF ACT: ACCEPTANCE AND
COMMITMENT THERAPY.

Chapter 1

Fairytales



HAPPY ENDINGS ... we believe that's how life should be, don't we? Is this **REALISTIC**? Does this fit with your own experience of life?



An expectation that life should turn out "happily ever after" is one of the ways that we find ourselves caught in the **HAPPINESS TRAP**.



LET'S EXPLORE THE FOUR MYTHS WHICH MAKE UP THE *HAPPINESS TRAP* ...

MYTH 1: HAPPINESS IS THE NATURAL STATE FOR HUMAN BEINGS

Our culture insists that humans are naturally happy. Yet, the scary statistics regarding mental illness in the introduction to this book tell another story.

And aside from diagnosed psychiatric disorders, there are things like:

LONELINESS



SEXUAL
PROBLEMS



ILLNESS



WORK
STRESS



BULLYING



PREJUDICE



LOW SELF-
ESTEEM



CHRONIC
ANGER



LACK OF
MEANING



MID-LIFE
CRISIS



SOCIAL
ISOLATION



SO LASTING
HAPPINESS IS
ACTUALLY QUITE
RARE, YET MANY OF US
HAVE A BELIEF THAT ...

EVERYONE IS
HAPPY EXCEPT
ME!

... A BELIEF THAT
CREATES EVEN *GREATER*
UNHAPPINESS!



**MYTH 2:
IF YOU'RE NOT HAPPY, YOU'RE
DEFECTIVE**

I MUST
BE REALLY
MESSED UP!



Our society tends to assume that psychological suffering is **ABNORMAL**: a sign of a **WEAKNESS** or **ILLNESS** and a mind that is **FAULTY** or **DEFECTIVE**.

YOU SHOULDN'T
BE FEELING SO
ANXIOUS.



OH NO! I MUST BE
MENTALLY ILL!



This means that, when we inevitably experience painful thoughts and feelings, we **BEAT UP** on ourselves for doing so.

I'M WEAK!



I'M STUPID!



BUT AS YOU WILL SEE,
YOUR MIND IS JUST
DOING THE JOB IT
HAS *EVOLVED* TO DO!



ACT PRINCIPLE:
THE **NORMAL**
THINKING PROCESSES
OF A **HEALTHY** MIND
NATURALLY CREATE
PSYCHOLOGICAL
SUFFERING!

**MYTH 3:
TO CREATE A BETTER LIFE, WE MUST
GET RID OF NEGATIVE FEELINGS**

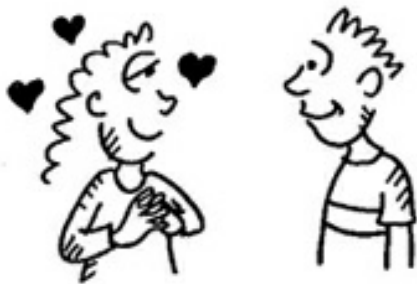
The current trend of a “feel-good” society tells us to ELIMINATE “negative” feelings and ACCUMULATE the “positive.”



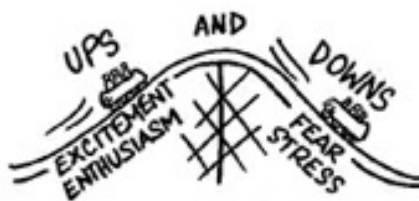
But in reality, the things we value most in life give rise to a whole RANGE of feelings – PLEASANT and UNPLEASANT.

For instance, in a long-term relationship, there may be JOY ...

... but also FRUSTRATION.



Anything that’s MEANINGFUL in our lives will bring with it ... both pleasure *and* pain!



Living life to the full means experiencing UNCOMFORTABLE FEELINGS along the way. Learning how to HANDLE these feelings is essential.



**MYTH 4:
YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CONTROL
WHAT YOU THINK AND FEEL**

Many current self-help programs subscribe to this myth by:

REPLACING "NEGATIVE" THOUGHTS
WITH "POSITIVE" ONES



DOING AFFIRMATIONS ...

... OR VISUALIZATIONS



EVERYTHING IS
HUNKY-DORY!



The basic theme behind these approaches is:

“THINK HAPPY THOUGHTS AND YOU’LL BE HAPPY.”

If only life was that SIMPLE! Over one hundred thousand years of evolution tend to override a few affirmations!

Even though you might be able to master positive thinking when you are relatively CALM, negative thoughts will start to creep in again when you feel STRESSED.

ANGER
SADNESS
INSECURITY
GUILT

LA LA LA
HAPPY
HAPPY



They go away, then they're back. They go away, then they're back – and the battle to keep them at bay can be STRESSFUL in itself!



AARGH!
CAN'T BE
SAD/
ANGRY/
UPSET!

These four basic myths set us up for a battle we can NEVER WIN.

SO ARE YOU SAYING THAT NEGATIVE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS ARE *NORMAL*?



YES. LIFE INVOLVES *PAIN*.



THEN HOW DID THESE MYTHS BECOME SO *ENTRENCHED* IN OUR CULTURE?



BECAUSE WE HAVE SO MUCH *CONTROL* OVER THE MATERIAL WORLD WE EXPECT TO HAVE *CONTROL* OVER OUR INTERNAL WORLD, BUT THIS IS *UNREALISTIC*.



TRY THESE EXPERIMENTS AND YOU'LL *SEE!*



1. DON'T THINK ABOUT ICE CREAM FOR 30 SECONDS. DON'T THINK ABOUT ITS COLOR, TEXTURE OR TASTE.



DON'T THINK ABOUT IT! *DAMN!*

2. LOOK AT THIS STAR FOR ONE MINUTE, BUT AS YOU DO, DON'T THINK ABOUT IT!



DAMN!

3. IMAGINE SOMEONE POINTS A GUN AT YOUR HEAD, AND SAYS "YOU MUST FEEL NO ANXIETY — OR I WILL SHOOT YOU!"



4. CONJURE UP A MEMORY. NOW FORGET IT.



5. FEEL THE INSIDE OF YOUR MOUTH. NOW MAKE IT NUMB.



From an early age, we are taught that we should be able to CONTROL OUR FEELINGS:

DON'T CRY



STOP FROWNING



STOP FEELING SORRY FOR YOURSELF



THERE'S NO NEED TO BE SCARED



And this is REINFORCED as we get older.

YOU BIG SISSY!



CHILL OUT!



SNAP OUT OF IT!



DON'T BE SUCH A CHICKEN!



The implication is that you should be able to flick a switch and turn your feelings on or off at WILL.

BUT WHY IS THIS MYTH SO COMPELLING?



BECAUSE OTHERS SEEM TO BE IN CONTROL OF THEIR FEELINGS.



The reality is that most people hide their inner struggles behind a MASK OF COPING ...

WORRY
WORRY
WORRY



NO WORRIES MATE!



... and this false front adds to the ILLUSION of CONTROL.



Chapter 2

Vicious cycles

What's happening in your life?

I HAVE
RELATIONSHIP
PROBLEMS!



I HATE
MY JOB!



I'M
LONELY.



I HAVE HEALTH
ISSUES.



I FEEL
REJECTED.



I'VE LOST
CONFIDENCE!



I'M AN
ADDICT!



I'M IN FINANCIAL
CRISIS!



I'M JUST
STUCK!



I'M
ANXIOUS!



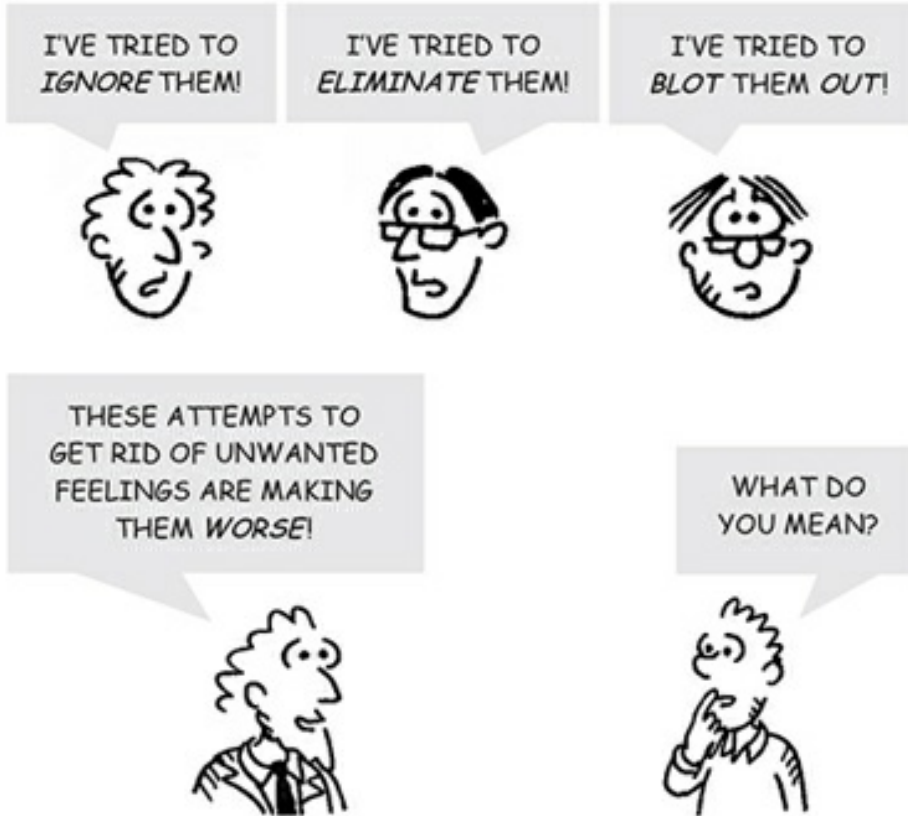
I'M
DEPRESSED!



WELL I HAVE
EVERYTHING
I NEED BUT
I'M UNHAPPY.



Whatever the problem is, it gives rise to UNPLEASANT THOUGHTS and FEELINGS which you try to GET RID OF.



The more you try to GET RID OF, AVOID, or ESCAPE feelings, the BIGGER they become.



ALCOHOL
HELPS ME
COPE WITH
MY SOCIAL
ANXIETY!



OH NO!
DID I
REALLY
DO THAT
LAST
NIGHT?



AND I
SPENT
ALL THAT
MONEY!



I'M TOO
ASHAMED
TO FACE
ANYONE!



CHOCOLATE
CHEERS ME UP!



TEMPORARILY!



YOU'RE
ALWAYS
WORKING!
WHY DON'T
YOU STAY
HOME
WITH ME?



IT'S SO
TENSE AT
HOME!



WHERE
ARE YOU?!



I HAD
TO DO
OVERTIME
AGAIN!



We have two main ways of trying to avoid painful thoughts and feelings: FIGHT or FLIGHT.

FIGHT

Trying to fight against unwanted thoughts/feelings by:

SUPPRESSION



You forcefully push away unwanted thoughts or unwanted feelings deep inside.

ARGUING WITH YOURSELF



You attempt to challenge and disprove negative thoughts.

FLIGHT

Running away or hiding from unwanted thoughts/feelings by:

HIDING/ESCAPING



You avoid situations in which you feel uncomfortable.

DISTRACTION



You focus on something else to avoid unwanted thoughts and feelings.

TAKING CHARGE

SNAP OUT OF IT!
STAY CALM!
CHEER UP!



You try to force yourself to feel better.

SELF-BULLYING

IDIOT!
DON'T BE SO
PATHETIC!



You beat yourself up for having these thoughts/feelings.

ZONING OUT/ NUMBING



You make yourself "unconscious" to the thoughts/feelings.

PILLS AND DRUGS



You use medication, alcohol, or drugs to escape the pain.

BUT WHAT'S
WRONG WITH
THESE THINGS
IF THEY HELP
YOU TO *COPE*?



NOTHING —
IF YOU USE
THEM ...



- ▶ IN MODERATION
- ▶ WHEN THEY CAN ACTUALLY WORK
- ▶ IF THEY DON'T STOP YOU DOING THE THINGS YOU VALUE.

For example,
DISTRACTING YOURSELF
after an argument or a
tough day can be helpful ...



I NEED SOME
TIME OUT!

... but if you spend ALL
NIGHT distracting yourself
you'll miss out on LIFE!



Any method to avoid pain, if used excessively will create
GREATER PROBLEMS:



AAH!
CHOCOLATE!

OOH AH!
DIABETES!



I'LL TAKE MY MIND
OFF THIS EXAM
STRESS!



Trying to BURY deep pain doesn't make it DISAPPEAR!



Avoiding painful feelings can stop you doing what you VALUE:



SO HOW MUCH CONTROL DO WE REALLY HAVE OVER OUR FEELINGS?

IT DEPENDS ON THEIR INTENSITY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SITUATION.



A simple RELAXATION TECHNIQUE may be enough to ease a stressful day at WORK ...



RELAX AND BREATHE ...

... but it won't do much for OUTRIGHT TERROR!



RELAX?! ARE YOU KIDDING?!

AND WHILE YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO SIMPLY IGNORE A MESSY ROOM ...



... IT'S HARD TO IGNORE A SINISTER LUMP!



SO HOW DOES THAT FIT WITH THE HAPPINESS TRAP?



THE TRAP IS THAT TRYING TO AVOID PAINFUL FEELINGS IS MOSTLY INEFFECTIVE ...



- ▶ IT TAKES A LOT OF TIME AND ENERGY
- ▶ WE FEEL INADEQUATE WHEN THE UNWANTED THOUGHTS/FEELINGS COME BACK
- ▶ IT OFTEN HAS LONG-TERM COSTS TO WELLBEING.



... AND YOU END UP IN A LOOP WHERE THE MORE YOU TRY TO AVOID PAIN THE WORSE YOU FEEL!



THIS IS KNOWN AS "EXPERIENTIAL AVOIDANCE."



WHAT'S THAT MEAN?



THE ONGOING ATTEMPT TO AVOID OR GET RID OF UNWANTED THOUGHTS/FEELINGS ...



... NO MATTER THE COST!



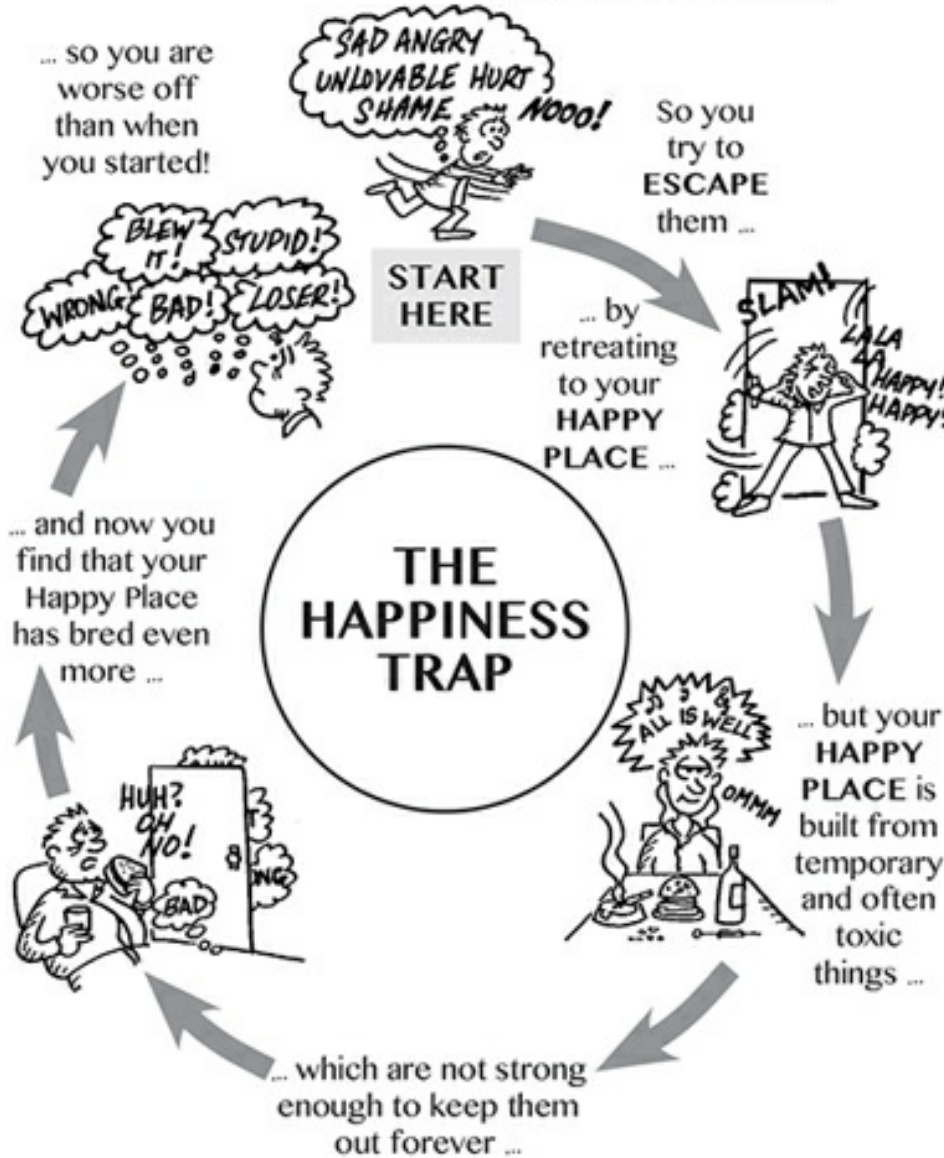
BUT THE HARDER YOU TRY THE WORSE YOU FEEL, SO ROUND AND ROUND IT GOES!



AND VOILA!
YOU'RE TRAPPED!



You find unwanted thoughts
and feelings unpleasant ...



EXERCISE

List the thoughts & feelings you'd like to get rid of. Now list every method you've used so far to avoid or get rid of them (e.g. drugs, alcohol, food, procrastination, avoiding difficult situations, etc). Did these strategies work in the long term? What was the cost?

WHAT ABOUT DOING
GOOD WORKS AND
GIVING TO OTHERS?
DOESNT THAT BRING
HAPPINESS?

IT CAN – BUT IT WON'T
BE *SATISFYING* IF
YOUR MAIN AIM IS TO
AVOID THOUGHTS AND
FEELINGS SUCH AS



I'M A
BAD
FATHER!

I'M
SELFISH!

NOBODY
LIKES ME.

I'M NOT
APPRECIATED
FOR WHAT I DO!

IF I GIVE
THEY'LL
LIKE ME!



NEGATIVE
THOUGHTS



FEELING
INADEQUATE



FEARING
REJECTION



DOING SOMETHING TO AVOID PAIN
IS *UNFULFILLING*. MUCH BETTER TO
DO IT BECAUSE IT'S *MEANINGFUL*!

Consider running through a forest. You can run through a forest to MEET YOUR LOVER.



You can run through a forest to ESCAPE A BEAR.



When we do any activity primarily to escape or avoid something unwanted, it is usually unfulfilling, because it feels like we are on the run from something, rather than doing something meaningful. Of course, we are not usually on the run from wild animals, but rather from painful thoughts and feelings.

Likewise you can go to the gym to look after and TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY.

Or you can go to the gym to ESCAPE UNPLEASANT THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS.



You'll hear a lot of **ADVICE** on how to **IMPROVE YOUR LIFE**:



But be warned: if you start doing any of these things primarily to **ESCAPE** or **AVOID** unpleasant feelings, it probably won't be rewarding. Better to do things because they are genuinely important and meaningful, rather than to try to avoid pain.

SO HOW DO WE GET OUT OF THIS HAPPINESS TRAP?



WELL YOU'VE TAKEN THE FIRST STEP BY RECOGNIZING IT!



NOW IT'S TIME TO MOVE ON TO APPROPRIATE ACTION!



Chapter 3

The basics of ACT



LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT *ACT*, WHICH PROVIDES THE FRAMEWORK FOR YOUR JOURNEY OUT OF THE TRAP!

ACT – ACCEPTANCE and COMMITMENT THERAPY

– is based on two main principles: “mindfulness” and “values.” These principles work together to help you:

- ▶ **EFFECTIVELY HANDLE PAINFUL THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS**
- ▶ **CREATE A RICH, FULL, AND MEANINGFUL LIFE.**

Mindfulness is a special mental state of **AWARENESS** and **OPENNESS**. Mindfulness involves three skills:

SKILL 1: DEFUSION



When you learn to defuse painful and unpleasant thoughts, self-limiting beliefs, and self-criticism, they have less influence over you.

SKILL 2: EXPANSION



This means making room for painful thoughts and feelings and allowing them to flow through you, without getting swept away by them.

SKILL 3: CONNECTION



This means living fully in the present instead of dwelling on the past or worrying about the future.

DEFUSION, EXPANSION, AND CONNECTION ARE TOGETHER KNOWN AS MINDFULNESS.



Values are your heart's deepest desires for how you want to behave as a human being; what you want to **STAND FOR** in life.

In **ACT**, you use values to give life **MEANING, PURPOSE,** and **DIRECTION.**



And you translate values into **COMMITTED ACTION:** you do what really matters to you!

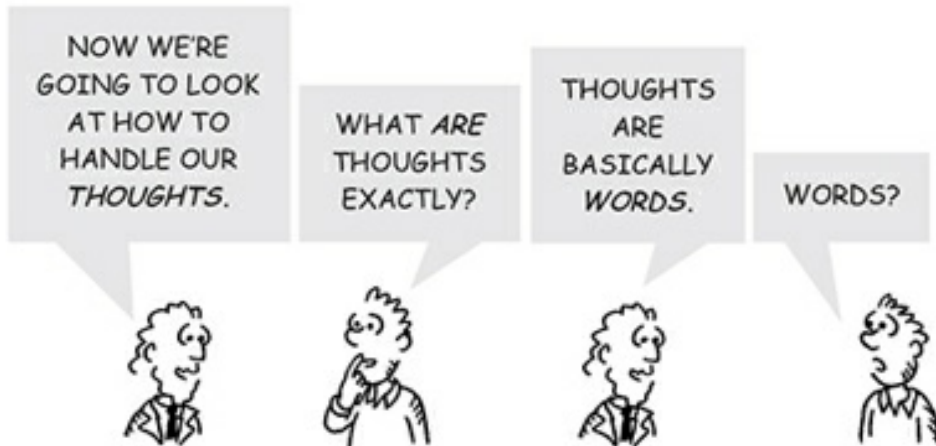
ACT is a scientifically proven method to help you build a **RICHER, FULLER,** and more **MEANINGFUL** life.

Are you ready to **GET MOVING?** Let's go!



Chapter 4

The great storyteller



We use words in different settings ...

WORDS ON A PAGE
ARE CALLED
TEXT:

*The quick
brown fox
jumps over
the lazy dog.*

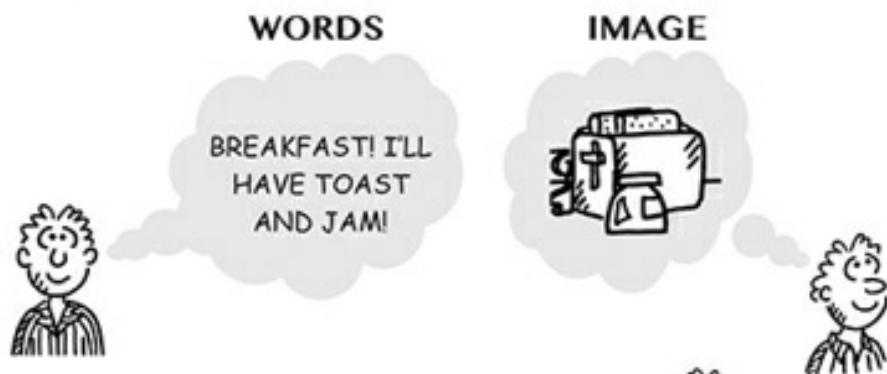
WORDS SPOKEN
OUT LOUD ARE
CALLED
SPEECH:

YAKKITY
YAK

AND WORDS
INSIDE OUR HEAD
ARE CALLED
THOUGHTS:

BLAH BLAH
BLAH

Thoughts can also be IMAGES:



But please don't confuse **THOUGHTS**
with **FEELINGS** or **SENSATIONS** —
which we feel in the **BODY**.



We'll explore FEELINGS and SENSATIONS later. Let's stick with THOUGHTS for now.

THOUGHTS — TELL US ABOUT LIFE & HOW TO LIVE IT ...

... HOW WE ARE OR SHOULD BE AND WHAT TO AVOID.

DO THIS
DO THAT



LIKE THIS
DON'T LIKE THAT



What we tend to forget is that thoughts are just words which constitute our stories.

These can be TRUE stories called **FACTS** ...

... or FALSE stories.

IT'S MY
DAY OFF!



NO-ONE
EVER
LIKES ME!!!



But most stories are based on how we see life according to our ...

or what we want to do with our lives:

OPINIONS
ATTITUDES
JUDGMENTS
IDEALS
BELIEFS
MORALS



PLANS
STRATEGIES
GOALS
WISHES
VALUES





THE HUMAN MIND IS LIKE A STORYTELLING MACHINE. ALL IT WANTS IS OUR *ATTENTION!*



BLAH, BLAH, BLAH, STORY, STORY, STORY, GIVE ME YOUR ATTENTION!



BUT IF WE GET TOO *CAUGHT UP* IN THESE STORIES, IT CREATES PROBLEMS:

BAD THINGS WILL HAPPEN!

I'M NOT *GOOD ENOUGH.*

HOW *DARE* THEY?!

I *CAN'T* DO IT!





WHEN A STORY *DOMINATES* US
– WHEN IT CAPTURES OUR FULL
ATTENTION OR DICTATES HOW
WE BEHAVE – WE REFER TO THIS
AS *FUSION*.

NOW HERE'S AN *AMAZING FACT* ...

NEWS FLASH!

NO THOUGHT IS PROBLEMATIC IN
AND OF ITSELF. OUR THOUGHTS
ONLY BECOME PROBLEMATIC IF
WE “FUSE” WITH THEM!

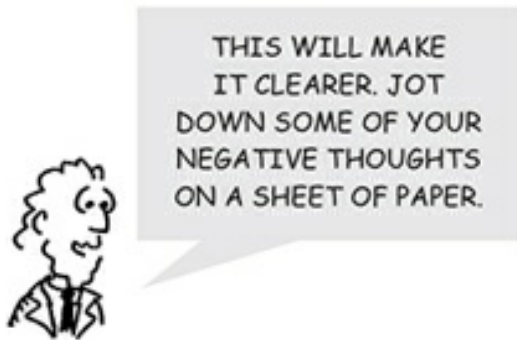


REALLY?

SURE! IN A MOMENT YOU'LL SEE
THAT NO MATTER HOW *NEGATIVE*
A THOUGHT IS, IT'S ONLY
PROBLEMATIC IF YOU *FUSE* WITH IT!



I DONT
UNDERSTAND!





AND WHILE YOU'RE HOLDING ON TIGHTLY TO THESE THOUGHTS, IT'S HARD TO DO THE THINGS THAT MAKE YOUR LIFE WORK!

IMAGINE TRYING TO COOK DINNER, DRIVE A CAR, CUDDLE A BABY, OR WATCH A MOVIE WHEN YOU'RE DOING THIS!



WHEN WE *FUSE* WITH OUR THOUGHTS THEY SEEM TO BE ...

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| ▶ THE TRUTH | You should BELIEVE THEM! |
| ▶ IMPORTANT | You should give them your FULL ATTENTION! |
| ▶ ORDERS | You must OBEY them! |
| ▶ GREAT ADVICE | You should do what they SUGGEST! |
| ▶ THREATS | They are DANGEROUS or FRIGHTENING. |



NOW TUCK THAT SHEET OF PAPER UNDER YOUR ARM ...



... AND NOTICE THAT NOW YOU CAN CONNECT AND ENGAGE WITH THE THINGS THAT MAKE LIFE MEANINGFUL!



WHEN YOU DO THIS WITH YOUR THOUGHTS WE CALL IT DEFUSION.

CAN YOU SHOW ME HOW?



SURE. FIRST, BRING TO MIND A NEGATIVE SELF-JUDGMENT ...

I'M USELESS!



... NOW FUSE WITH IT - BELIEVE IT AS MUCH AS YOU CAN.

I'M USELESS!



NOW INSERT THIS PHRASE IN FRONT OF IT – "I'M HAVING THE THOUGHT THAT ..."



I'M HAVING THE THOUGHT THAT I'M USELESS!



EXERCISE

Pick an upsetting thought, and silently repeat it, putting these words in front of it: "I'm having the thought that ..."

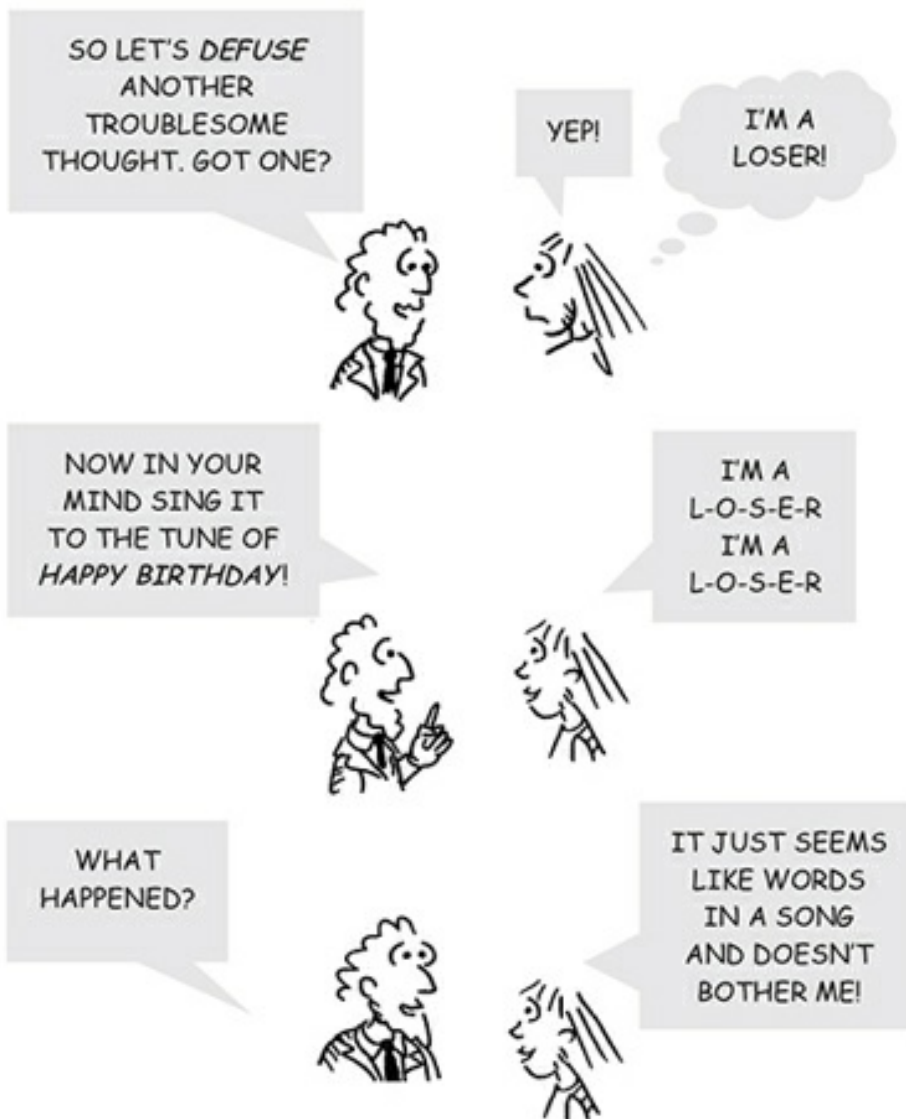
Now try it again with this phrase: "*I notice I'm having the thought that ...*"

Can you feel the thought lose some of its impact?

You can use this simple defusion technique to unhook yourself from any thought, whether true or false – so please play around it.

When we defuse from our thoughts we realize they:

- ▶ are nothing more or less than WORDS and PICTURES
- ▶ may or may not be TRUE (we don't have to BELIEVE them)
- ▶ may or may not be IMPORTANT (we pay attention only if they're helpful)
- ▶ are not ORDERS (we don't have to obey!)
- ▶ may or may not be WISE – we don't have to follow the advice
- ▶ are never actual THREATS, no matter how negative.



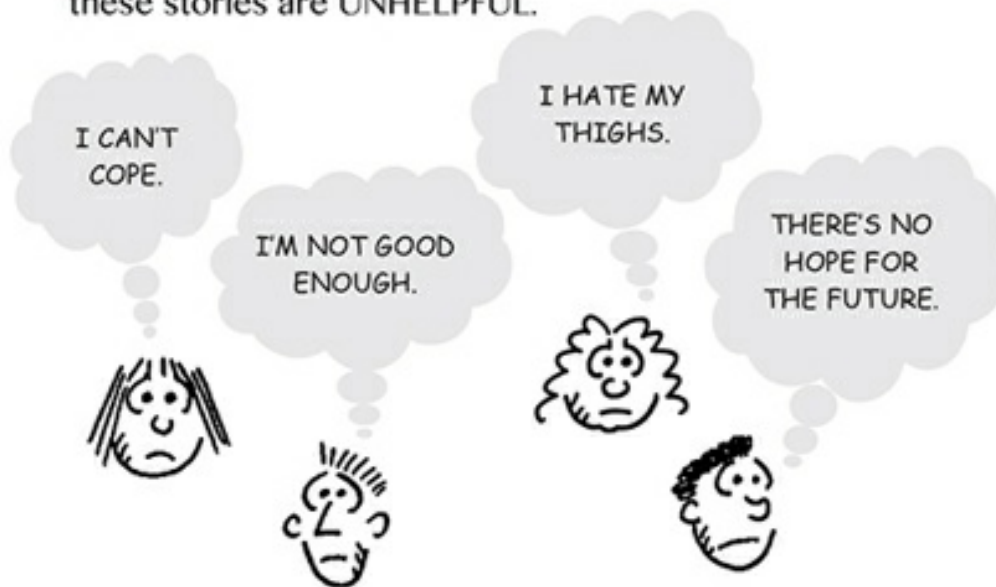
EXERCISE

Pick a thought that bothers you, and silently sing it to the tune "Happy Birthday."

What happens when you do that?

Notice that you haven't tried to challenge it, avoid it, or get rid of it. But hopefully you can now see it for what it is: nothing more or less than a string of words.

The mind LOVES its STORIES! Unfortunately many of these stories are UNHELPFUL.



It's normal for about 80 percent of our thoughts to have some negative content. The trouble arises only when we FUSE with these thoughts and when we let them DOMINATE us. This feeds:

INSECURITY ANXIETY DEPRESSION
ANGER LOW SELF-ESTEEM SELF-DOUBT

Some psychological approaches advise you to:

- ▶ check the **FACTS** and correct **MENTAL ERRORS**
- ▶ make the story more **POSITIVE**
- ▶ tell yourself a better **STORY**
- ▶ **DISTRACT** yourself
- ▶ **PUSH** the story away
- ▶ **DEBATE** the truth of the story.



But these strategies rarely work in the long run.

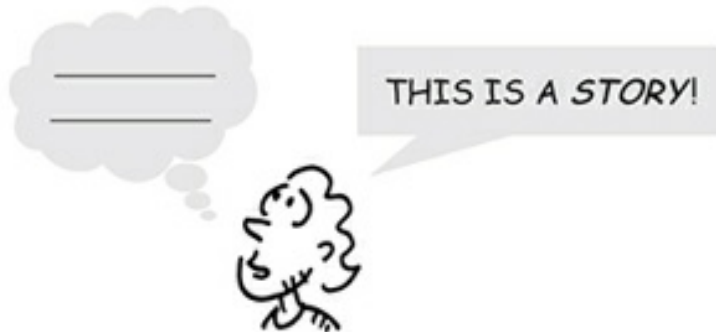


NEGATIVE STORIES AREN'T THE PROBLEM! THE PROBLEM IS GETTING *CAUGHT UP IN THEM* OR LETTING THEM *Dictate your actions*.

Just like those tabloid stories — you can **BUY INTO** them ...



Trying to **CHANGE, AVOID, or GET RID OF** a story is often **INEFFECTIVE**. Instead, simply name it for what it **IS!**



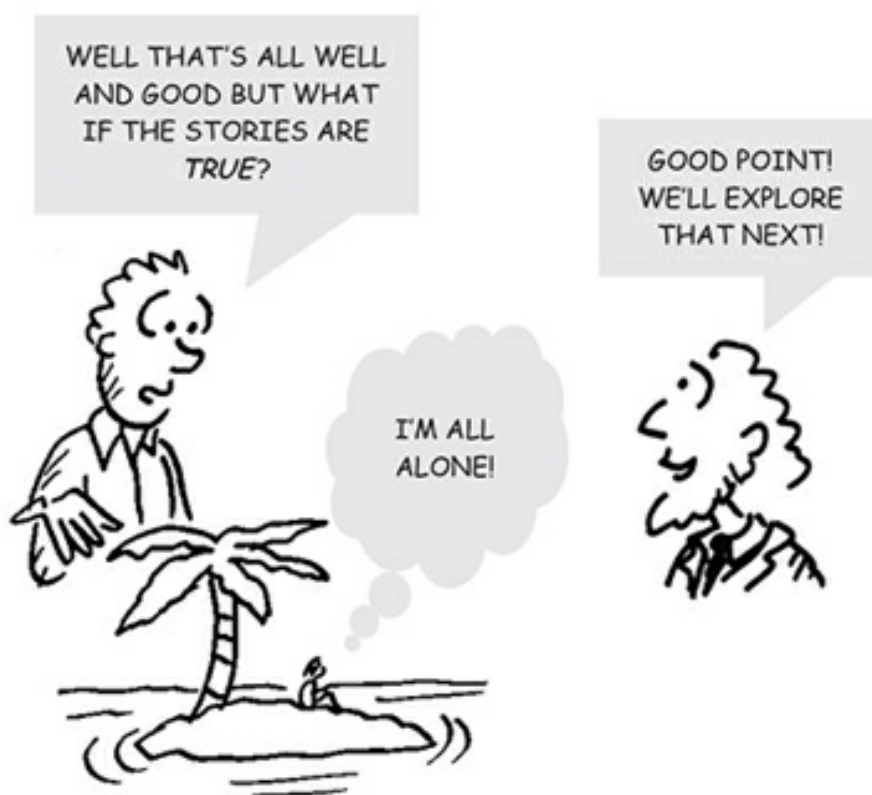
Try naming your own stories and see they are nothing more than **WORDS**.



Please try these defusion techniques with your own thoughts.

For example, if you have lots of thoughts about being “not good enough” then whenever they show up, say to yourself, “Aha! There it is again! The ‘Not Good Enough’ story.”

If you like, you can also add, with a sense of humor, “Thanks, mind!”



Chapter 5

True blues

**ACT: WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS NOT
WHETHER OR NOT A THOUGHT IS TRUE
BUT
WHETHER OR NOT IT HELPS YOU
TO HOLD ON TO IT!**

EXAMPLE 1

UNHELPFUL

I'M
INCOMPETENT!



**Belittling/
Unsettling**

Does holding on
to that thought
when it appears
IMPROVE your
performance?

HELPFUL

I COULD ASK
FOR HELP.



**Expanding skills
and knowledge**

EXAMPLE 2

UNHELPFUL

I'M A LUMP
OF LARD!



**Blaming,
demoralizing**

Does holding on
to that thought
when it appears
make you want
to **LOOK AFTER**
yourself?

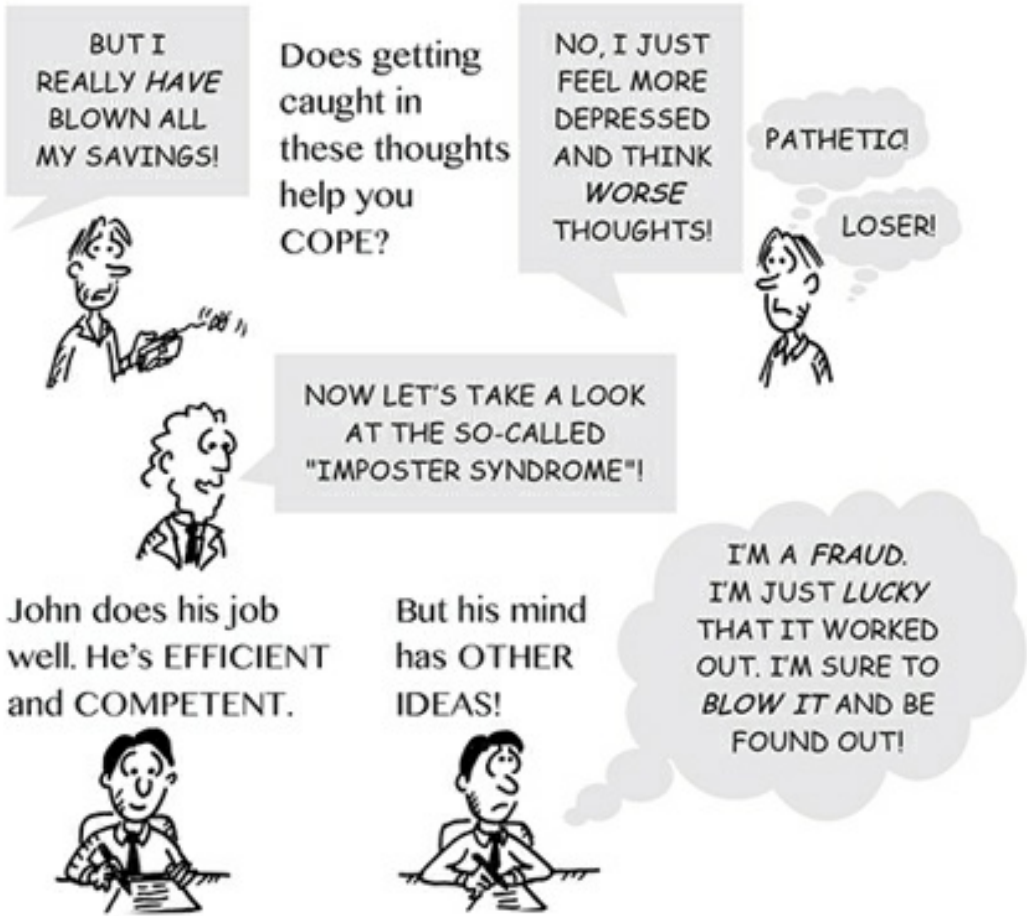
HELPFUL

I'LL GO FOR
A WALK!



**Making healthier
choices!**

EVEN IF IT'S TRUE!



With the IMPOSTER SYNDROME, John is paying more attention to his overcritical thoughts ...

... than the direct experience.



John has been "hooked" by the "I'm Incompetent" story. He needs to unhook himself and turn his attention to what's REALLY happening.

EXERCISES

1. NOT TAKING A THOUGHT SERIOUSLY

Imagine the thought on a computer screen.



Play around with the font and the color.

2. THANKING YOUR MIND

When the same old stories come up,

MY LIFE'S
HOPELESS.



OR simply —

say them to yourself with a sense of humor!

IS THAT
RIGHT?
THANKS FOR
SHARING!

THANKS
MIND!

AHA! HERE
IT IS
AGAIN! THE
"MY LIFE'S
HOPELESS"
STORY!



3. SILLY VOICES

Pick a recurring self-judgment.

I'M
STUPID!



Silently say it to yourself in the voice of a cartoon or movie character.

I'M
STHTOOPIDI!



4. KIDS COMIC BOOK

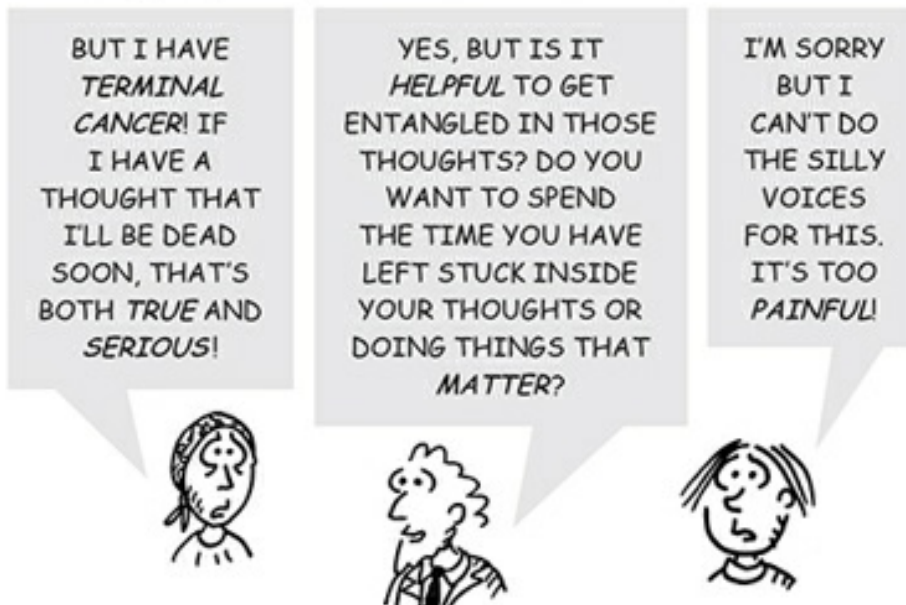
I CAN'T
DO IT!



Imagine your thought inside a thought bubble in a comic book.



Again, notice that you have not tried to avoid or change the thought, you've just seen it for what it is – WORDS.



That's fine; pick another technique that works for you.



HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO DO THESE?

Until you are able to defuse your thoughts quickly.

DEFUSION GUIDELINES

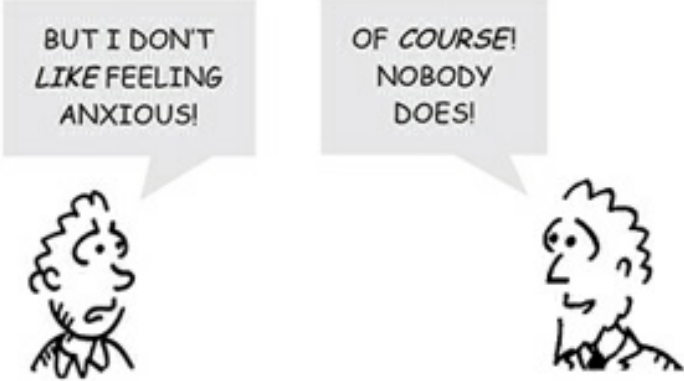
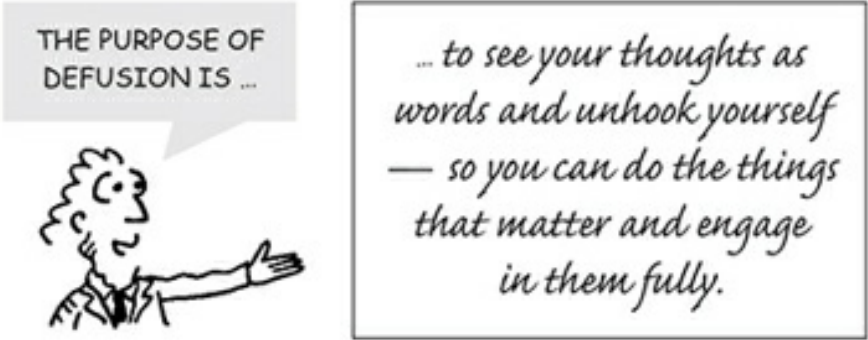
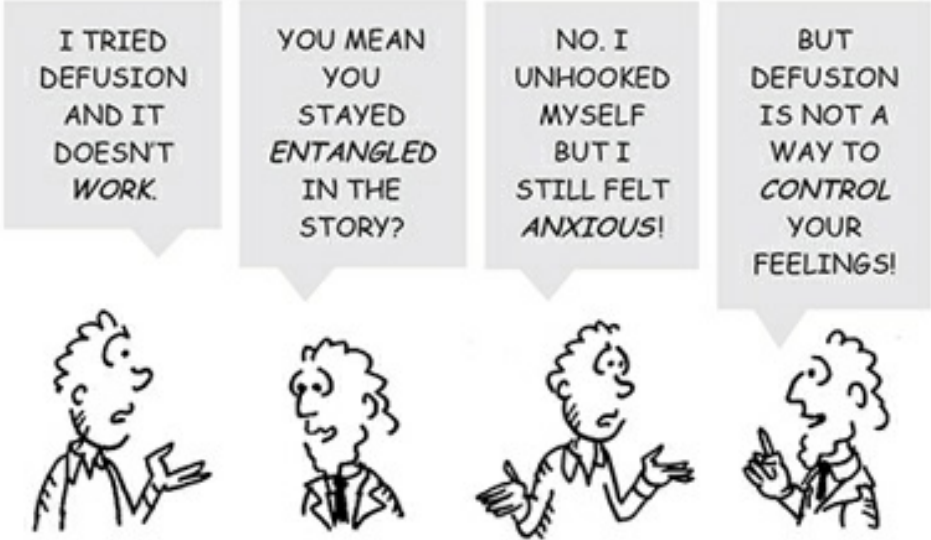
- ▶ See the thoughts for what they are – nothing more or less than WORDS.
- ▶ Don't EXPECT anything. Just observe what happens.
- ▶ The thoughts may go or not. The technique may work sometimes but not at others.
- ▶ You're HUMAN – your thoughts will snare you again. But now you know how you can quickly unhook yourself.
- ▶ Like any skill, the more you practice the better you get.



NO TECHNIQUE IS *FOOLPROOF*. EVEN DEFUSION HAS ITS STICKING POINTS – LET'S EXAMINE AND UNSTICK THEM.

Chapter 6

Troubleshooting diffusion



But the more you struggle with painful feelings, the bigger they get! Later in the book we'll show you a new way to handle them!

HMPH! I DID THAT DEFUSION TECHNIQUE BUT THE THOUGHTS DIDNT GO AWAY.



SOMETIMES THEY GO, SOMETIMES THEY STAY. WE'RE NOT TRYING TO GET RID OF THE THOUGHTS – JUST TO UNHOOK OURSELVES.



BUT SHOULDN'T I TRY TO THINK MORE POSITIVELY?



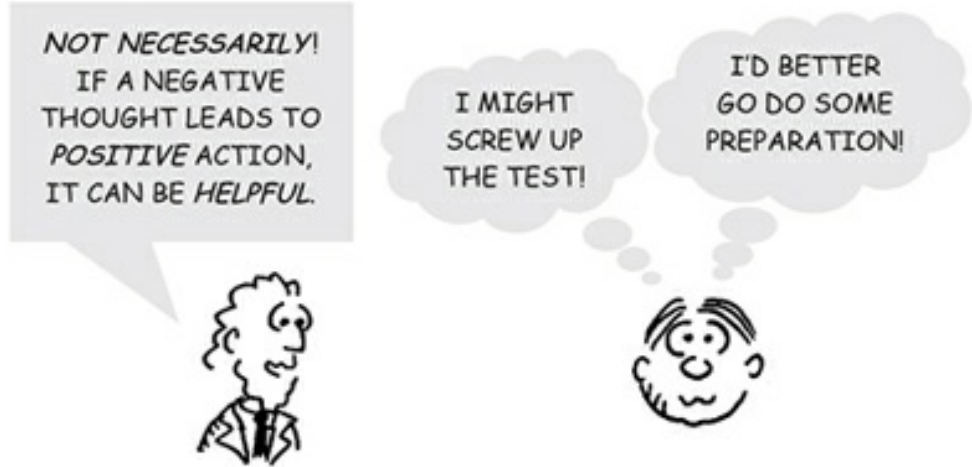
THE ISSUE IS NOT WHETHER YOUR THOUGHTS ARE POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE. THE QUESTION IS THIS ...



IF I LET THIS THOUGHT GUIDE WHAT I DO, WILL IT HELP ME CREATE THE LIFE I WANT?

BUT POSITIVE THOUGHTS ARE ALWAYS HELPFUL, AREN'T THEY?





Negative thoughts are not the ENEMY! They are just WORDS and PICTURES floating through your mind. Fight them and you'll be fighting YOURSELF.



Planning your future, mentally rehearsing your actions, getting lost in a book can all be HELPFUL types of FUSION.

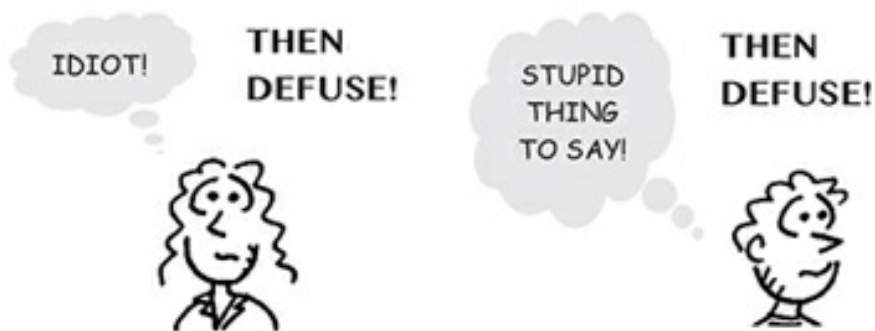


So when a thought appears, if it's helpful, USE it and if not, DEFUSE it.

Increase your AWARENESS of when and where you fuse, and the sorts of thoughts you tend to fuse with. The aim is to get better at catching yourself doing it, so you can then consciously choose how to act on those thoughts.

And like learning any new skill you'll need to PRACTICE till it becomes more natural to you. Pick ONE or TWO defusion techniques and practice them at every opportunity. AT LEAST 10 times a day but the more the better!

So if at this point your mind says:



And if you're now thinking ...



There are TWO PARTS to your MIND:

THE THINKING SELF

is responsible for:

- THINKING
- PLANNING
- JUDGING
- COMPARING
- CREATING
- VISUALIZING
- IMAGINING
- ANALYZING

THE OBSERVING SELF

is responsible for:

- ATTENTION
- AWARENESS
- CONSCIOUSNESS
- NOTICING
- OBSERVING

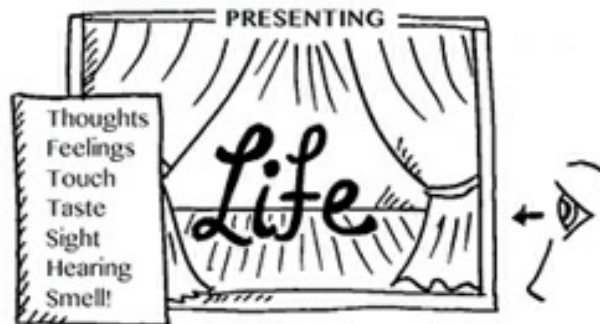


WHEN PEOPLE USE THE WORD "MIND" THEY USUALLY MEAN THE *THINKING SELF*.

Life is like a STAGE SHOW and on that stage are all your THOUGHTS and FEELINGS and everything you can SEE, HEAR, TOUCH, TASTE, and SMELL.

The OBSERVING SELF is the part of you that can step back and watch the show.

The OBSERVING SELF can zoom in and take in the DETAILS or zoom out and take in the WHOLE SHOW – and the show CONTINUALLY CHANGES.



EXERCISE

For 60 SECONDS close your eyes and notice what THOUGHTS appear ...

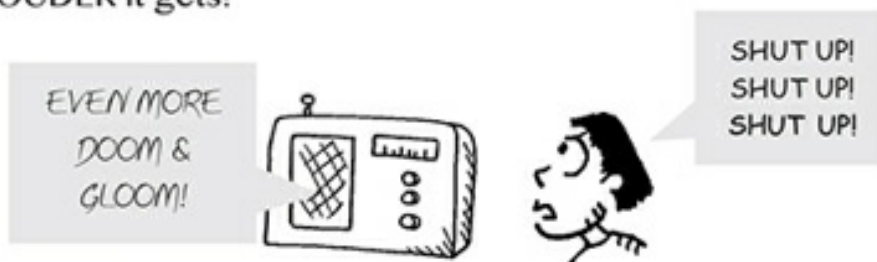


The THINKING SELF creates the thoughts. The OBSERVING SELF notices the thoughts.

Remember – because of the way it evolved, our mind is a bit like RADIO DOOM AND GLOOM:



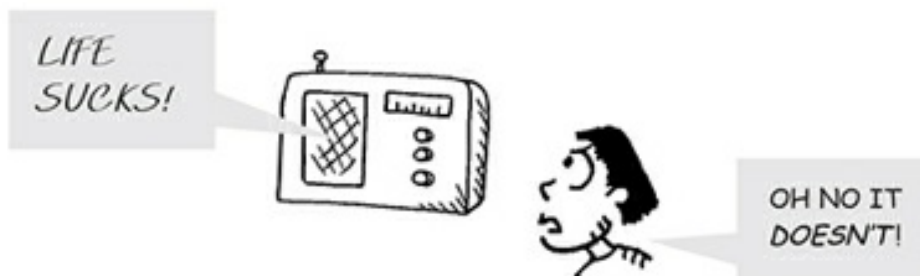
And you can't turn it off! In fact, the HARDER you try, the LOUDER it gets!



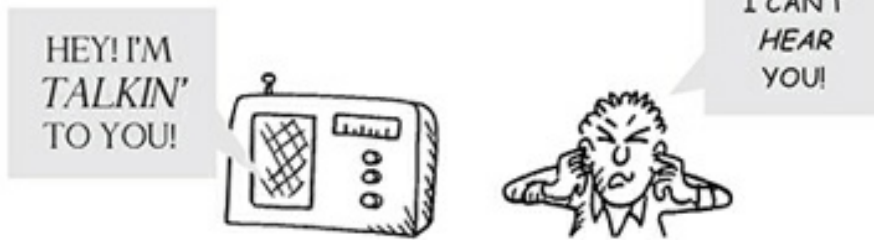
So if it's broadcasting a HELPFUL story, tune in, and let it guide your actions.

But if it's broadcasting something unhelpful, just let it chatter away in the BACKGROUND.

This doesn't mean you get into a debate with the radio ...



... or try to IGNORE it ...



... you just let it chatter away and ENGAGE in what you're doing.



EXERCISE

Take 10 SLOW, DEEP BREATHS.
Focus fully on the BREATH
and the sensations of BREATHING.



Now let your thoughts
come and go like
PASSING CARS.
Acknowledge them but
stay focused on your
BREATHING.



HMM ...THERE
GO MY
THOUGHTS.

If a thought SNAGS you, gently UNHOOK yourself and REFOCUS on your breathing.

BY PRACTICING THIS TECHNIQUE YOU LEARN HOW TO:

- ▶ let thoughts come and go
- ▶ recognize when you've become hooked on a thought
- ▶ unhook and refocus.

- ▶ Take what comes – let go of any expectations. If it relaxes you, great but that’s a bonus, not the aim.
- ▶ It doesn’t matter how often you get “hooked.” Regular unhooking improves your skills.
- ▶ It’s best to practice this for 5–10 minutes, two to three times a day.



NOW REMEMBER, THOUGHTS CAN BE *WORDS* OR *IMAGES*.



We’ve all conjured up **FRIGHTENING IMAGES** in our heads ...

and fusing with these images can stop us doing what we **VALUE**.

NO WAY I’M GETTING ON A *PLANE*!



When we **FUSE** with these images they seem very **REAL** or **IMPORTANT** or **SCARY** but we can **DEFUSE** from images, too. Try the following exercises:

EXERCISES

Bring to mind an unpleasant image. Notice how it affects you.

Imagine the image on a TV SCREEN.

Now play around with it – SLOW MOTION, BACKWARDS or change to BLACK AND WHITE.



See? It's just a PICTURE!

Now add a HUMOROUS TITLE or a SILLY VOICEOVER, or ODD MUSIC.

**TERROR
IN SUBURBIA**

(IN 3D)



And here in her natural habitat, we see Jenny ...



DUM DUM DA DA!

(Tchaikovsky's 1812 overture)

Or try shifting the LOCATION of the troublesome image. Mentally picture it on a ...

T SHIRT



CANVAS



COMIC



**POSTAGE
STAMP**



If the mental image is still pushing you around, run through these exercises every day till it loosens its grip. You can also adapt previous defusion techniques:

AHA! THE
"SCREWED IT
UP" STORY!



**NAMING
THE STORY**

I'M HAVING
AN IMAGE
OF ...



**NAMING
THE PICTURE**

I'M HAVING
A MEMORY
OF ...


or use ...







THANKS
MIND!

Here's one final technique (great for moving images).

Change your video clip ...




... to a different GENRE!

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| CARTOON | WESTERN | SCI FI | SOAP OPERA |
|  |  |  |  |


THE AIM IS TO UNHOOK — NOT TO GET RID OF THEM!

WHY?

BECAUSE THEY WILL COME BACK AGAIN AND AGAIN AND FIGHTING THEM IS HARD WORK!



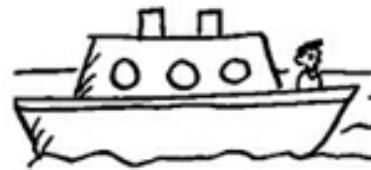
REMEMBER — SOMETIMES THESE TECHNIQUES WILL UNHOOK YOU AND SOMETIMES NOT. TAKE WHAT COMES.



Chapter 7

Demons in the boat

Imagine you are in a boat far out to SEA ...



... and below deck are a bunch of demons which are EMOTIONS, THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, and URGES.



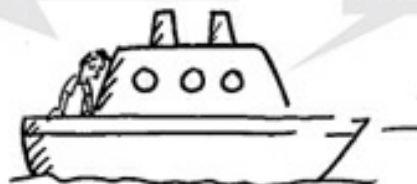
If you keep DRIFTING AIMLESSLY they stay below, but as you near land they clamber on deck and OVERWHELM you.



I'LL KEEP DRIFTING IF YOU STAY BELOW.

OKAY.

So you make a DEAL.



But drifting is not FUN.

ANXIOUS BORED LONELY

I HATE THIS!

Besides, other ships are happily landing. Why not YOURS?



But if you try to land, the demons will RESURFACE! WHAT TO DO?

You could try to throw the demons OVERBOARD ...



... but then no one would be steering and you might SINK.

And besides, there are TOO MANY to fight off.

But take a GOOD LOOK at those demons in BROAD DAYLIGHT and you'll discover that they're noisy and ugly but they can't actually HARM you.



And once you get used to them they're not really THAT scary.

And you'll see they're much SMALLER than you thought!

They may never be cute and cuddly but they no longer have POWER over you.



So now you can head to shore and do the things you LIKE!



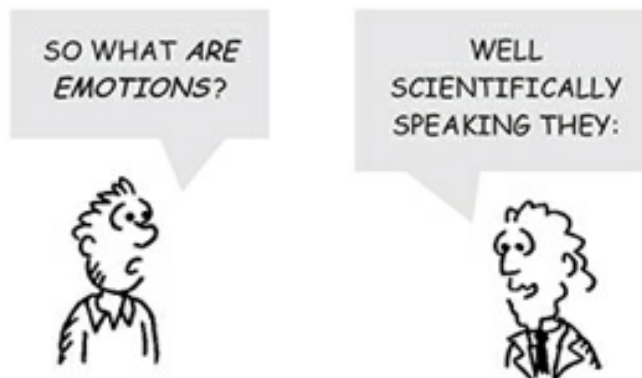
Your demons love to pop up when you try new things but they can't STOP you!

Ask yourself:

- ▶ How would I act differently if my demons were no longer a problem?
- ▶ What activities would I start (or continue)?
- ▶ What would I do, if fear wasn't a barrier?
- ▶ What would I stand for, if fear couldn't stop me?

(Are troublesome thoughts or images popping up for you? If so, you know how to defuse!)

Now let's explore the scariest demons of all – **PAINFUL EMOTIONS.**



- ▶ originate in the mid-brain
- ▶ involve complex changes in your body.

These changes prepare us for action and lead to a TENDENCY to act in a certain way.



HERE'S SOMEONE EXPERIENCING A STRONG EMOTION – LIKE ANXIETY.

PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

- Fast, shallow breathing
- Increased heart rate
- Sweating
- Churning stomach
- Urge to run



ACTION TENDENCY

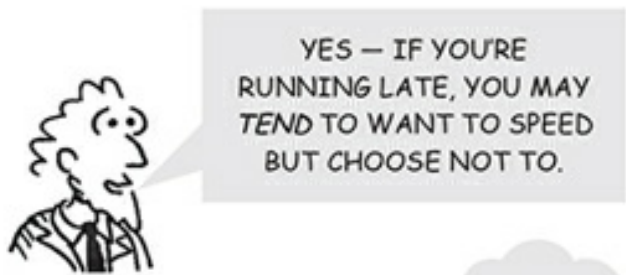
- Talk rapidly
- Fidget
- Pace up and down



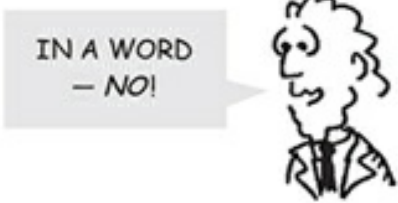
NOTICE THE USE OF THE WORD *TENDENCY* WHICH MEANS AN *INCLINATION*!

SO WE *TEND* TO BUT WE DON'T *HAVE* TO?





Emotions are made up of: WORDS and IMAGES in your head and SENSATIONS and FEELINGS in your body.



You can feel
ANGRY but act
CALM.



You may have a
TENDENCY to
shout or lash out.



But you don't
HAVE TO. You
can choose
OTHERWISE.



You may have
felt fear ... and
a TENDENCY
to run ...



... but you
chose NOT
TO.



But though you may not
have direct control over
your FEELINGS ...

... you can directly
control your
ACTIONS.



DONT
RUN! BACK
AWAY
SLOWLY!



THE IDEA THAT EMOTIONS
CONTROL ACTIONS IS A
POWERFUL ILLUSION!



When you feel
strong emotions it
may SEEM as though
the emotion is
causing your actions.



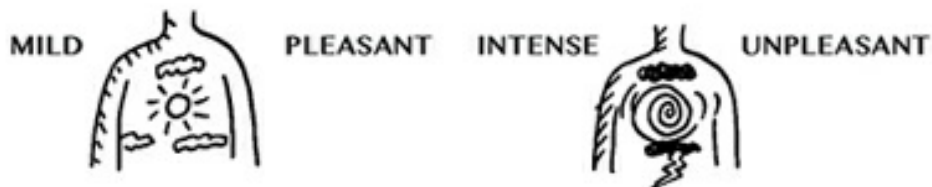
But with practice, you can control how you act, even when feeling very strong emotions.

Even when you're FURIOUS you can still ...



- ▶ stand still
- ▶ speak softly
- ▶ drink water
- ▶ go to the toilet.

Emotions are like the weather – ever changing and always present.



PREDICTABLE

Some people are very in touch with and can express their feelings ...



I FEEL ANXIOUS AND AGITATED.

UNEXPECTED

... while others are more disconnected and have difficulty accessing their feelings.



I DUNNO, I FEEL OKAY I GUESS.

There are THREE PHASES in the creation of an emotion:

- 1** A significant event occurs either **INTERNALLY** (e.g. a thought)



and your brain registers this as IMPORTANT ...

- 2** ... and does an EVALUATION ? GOOD? BAD?



... and prepares you for APPROPRIATE ACTION.



STAY? GO?

- 3** The mind then tells a STORY about the experience ...

FRUSTRATING?
JOYOUS?
SAD?
EXCITING?
GUILTY?



THIS IS FUN!

THIS IS AWFUL!



... which others may or may not SHARE.

NOTE THAT AT PHASE 2 YOU MIGHT EXPERIENCE A FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE!



WHAT'S THAT?





IT'S THE SAME ANCESTRAL
"DON'T GET KILLED" MESSAGE ...

To save yourself
you either stand
and FIGHT the
woolly mammoth ...



... or take FLIGHT!



Our minds have evolved to look for danger
EVERYWHERE ...

A MOODY
SPOUSE



A BIG
MORTGAGE



A
CONTROLLING
BOSS



OR EVEN A
FRIGHTENING
THOUGHT!



The fight or flight response triggers unpleasant or negative
feelings.

GUILT
FEAR



However, if our brain registers the event as good then
pleasant positive feelings are triggered.

JOY
PLEASURE
DELIGHT



But NEGATIVE and
POSITIVE are just
LABELS for what are
simply FEELINGS.

WELL I'D STILL PREFER
THE *POSITIVE* ONES!



OF *COURSE!* BUT MAKING
THAT PREFERENCE INTO
AN "ABSOLUTE MUST"
CREATES PROBLEMS.



SO LET'S LOOK AT A
NEW WAY TO HANDLE
PAINFUL FEELINGS.



Chapter 8

Drop the struggle

Most of us readily buy into **STORIES** about painful emotions such as:

ANGER
GUILT
SHAME
FEAR
EMBARRASSMENT
AND ANXIETY
ARE NEGATIVE
EMOTIONS.



WHICH
ARE *BAD*
DANGEROUS
IRRATIONAL
AND A SIGN OF
WEAKNESS.

AND SHOW
I *HAVE*
PSYCHOLOGICAL
DEFECTS.



THEY'LL
DAMAGE MY
HEALTH.



PEOPLE SHOULD
HIDE THEIR
FEELINGS.



THEY SHOW
A LACK OF
CONTROL.

WOMEN
SHOULDN'T
GET *ANGRY*.



MEN
SHOULDN'T
FEEL *AFRAID*.



I MUST
KEEP MY
EMOTIONS
UNDER
CONTROL.

IF I DONT
CONTROL MY
FEELINGS
SOMETHING
BAD WILL
HAPPEN!

NEGATIVE
EMOTION
MEANS THERE'S
SOMETHING
WRONG WITH
MY LIFE.



Your outlook on expressing emotion is heavily influenced by your **CHILDHOOD PROGRAMMING**. Negative emotions may have been ...

SUPPRESSED

CHEER UP!
ITS ONLY
A DOLL!

FOR
GOODNESS
SAKE "BE
A MAN!"



**IF ALLOWED, COULD HAVE
BEEN FRIGHTENING**

GET IT
OFF YOUR
CHEST!



EXERCISE

Take note of your childhood programming about EMOTIONS.

1. What messages were you given?
2. Which emotions were you told were desirable or undesirable?
3. What were you told about the best way to handle emotions?
4. What emotions did your family freely express? Suppress? Frown upon? Hide?
5. With which emotions were your family comfortable? Uncomfortable?
6. How did the adults handle their own emotions?
7. How did they react to your emotions?
8. What did you learn from observing this as you grew?
9. What ideas do you still retain from your programming?

JUDGING OUR EMOTIONS

We tend to judge emotions according to how they FEEL.



ACT – let go of judging and see them as what they are:

- ▶ Constantly changing SENSATIONS moving through your body.
- ▶ No emotion is “GOOD” or “BAD.”
- ▶ An emotion may be PAINFUL or PLEASANT but if we FUSE with the thought that it’s BAD, we will struggle with it and make it WORSE.

MY FAMILY DIDN'T OPENLY EXPRESS LOVE AND AFFECTION. I FEEL *UNCOMFORTABLE* DOING SO.



BUT DOES THAT MAKE THESE FEELINGS *BAD*?



WELL I *HATE* FEELING ANXIOUS!



OF *COURSE!* IT'S UNPLEASANT! *NO ONE* ENJOYS IT!



Your mind **WILL** judge your feelings but you can **DEFUSE** from these judgments. Here are some examples of **DEFUSION TECHNIQUES** you can use:

I CAN'T STAND THIS FEELING!

I'M HAVING A THOUGHT THAT I CAN'T STAND THIS FEELING.



THIS IS AWFUL!

I'M NOTICING THE JUDGMENT THAT THIS ANXIETY IS AWFUL.

Judging ADDS to emotional discomfort and so does ...

REVIEWING

WHY AM I
FEELING LIKE
THIS?



Reviewing all your PROBLEMS creates the illusion that your life is nothing BUT problems.

REHASHING

WHAT HAVE
I DONE TO
DESERVE THIS?



Rehashing all your "CRIMES" to explain this "PUNISHMENT" leads to SELF-BLAME.

SEARCHING

WHY AM I
LIKE THIS?



Searching your life history for someone to BLAME can lead to anger, resentment, and hopelessness.

WHAT'S
WRONG
WITH ME?



This is another review of all your FAULTS and FLAWS.

I CAN'T
HANDLE
IT.



Your mind is feeding you a DISEMPowering STORY.

I
SHOULDN'T
FEEL LIKE
THIS!



This is the mind ARGUING with itself.

I WISH
I DIDN'T
FEEL LIKE
THIS.



Wishing it wasn't like this doesn't change the REALITY.

ASK YOURSELF: IF I HOLD ON TO THESE THOUGHTS, IS THAT HELPFUL? DO THEY MAKE IT EASIER OR HARDER TO HANDLE THE PAIN?



When we feel painful feelings we naturally do what we can to AVOID or GET RID OF them.

But often the things that give us RELIEF in the SHORT TERM ...



... make our life WORSE in the LONG TERM.

SO HOW DO WE COPE WITH PAINFUL FEELINGS?



WE LEARN A SKILL CALLED "EXPANSION."



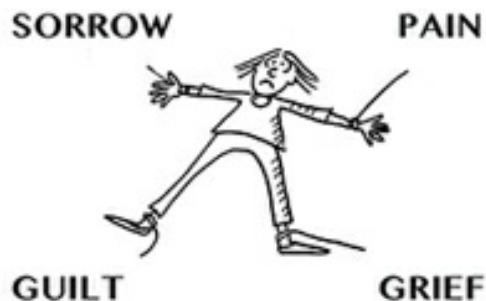
In order to understand EXPANSION look at some words that describe FEELING BAD:

TENSION – being stretched or stressed

STRESS – subject to strain or pressure

STRAIN – to shock beyond proper limits.

In other words – these terms describe being pulled apart or STRETCHED BEYOND OUR LIMITS.



These words imply that the emotions are simply too BIG for us to accommodate – that we don't have “enough room” for them.



NOW LET'S LOOK AT WHAT WE MEAN BY EXPANSION:

EXPAND: spread
unfold
develop.



BUT IF I OPEN UP TO MY FEELINGS THEY'LL TAKE OVER AND I'LL LOSE CONTROL!



THAT'S JUST YOUR MIND TELLING YOU SCARY STORIES! THANK IT AND MAKE ROOM FOR OTHER POSSIBILITIES.

BEFORE WE GO ANY FURTHER, LET'S REVISIT A VERY HELPFUL IDEA.



OH?
WHAT IS IT?



The **THINKING SELF** is
THOUGHTS
MOVEMENTS
IMAGES
MEMORIES

The **OBSERVING SELF** is
AWARENESS
ATTENTION
FOCUS

EXERCISE

Use your **OBSERVING SELF** to notice what is happening in your body and let your **THOUGHTS** come and go like a radio in the background.

Is your **BREATHING** SHALLOW? DEEP? FAST? SLOW?

How does your **MOUTH** feel? WARM? COOL? WET? DRY?

Position of **ARMS**?

Is there any tension in your **NECK** or **SHOULDERS**?

Do you feel **HOT** or **COLD**? **WHERE** do you feel this?

Is your **SPINE** STRAIGHT or BENT?

Position of **LEGS**?

How are your **FEET** placed?

Scan your whole body and notice any TENSION, PAIN, or DISCOMFORT.

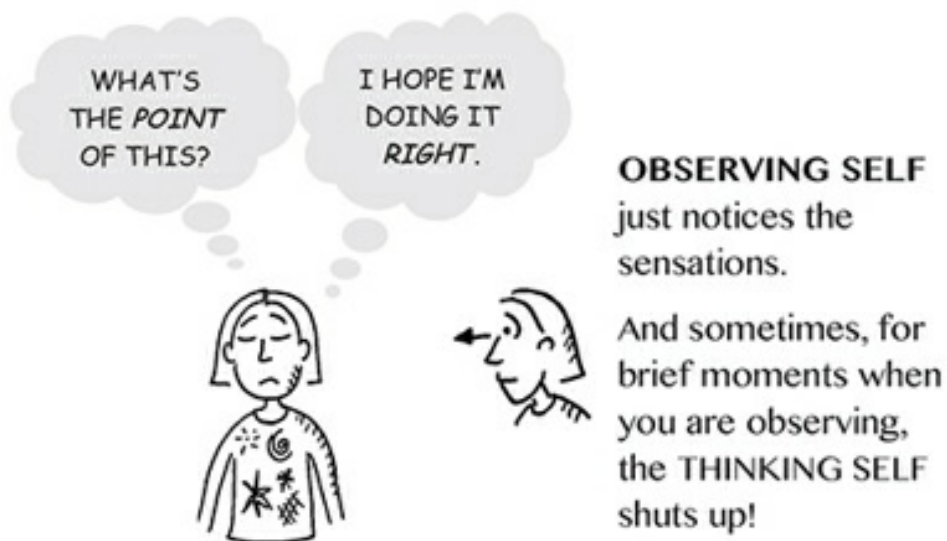
Now notice any PLEASANT or COMFORTABLE sensations.

Do you feel like SHIFTING? Shift and notice how it feels.

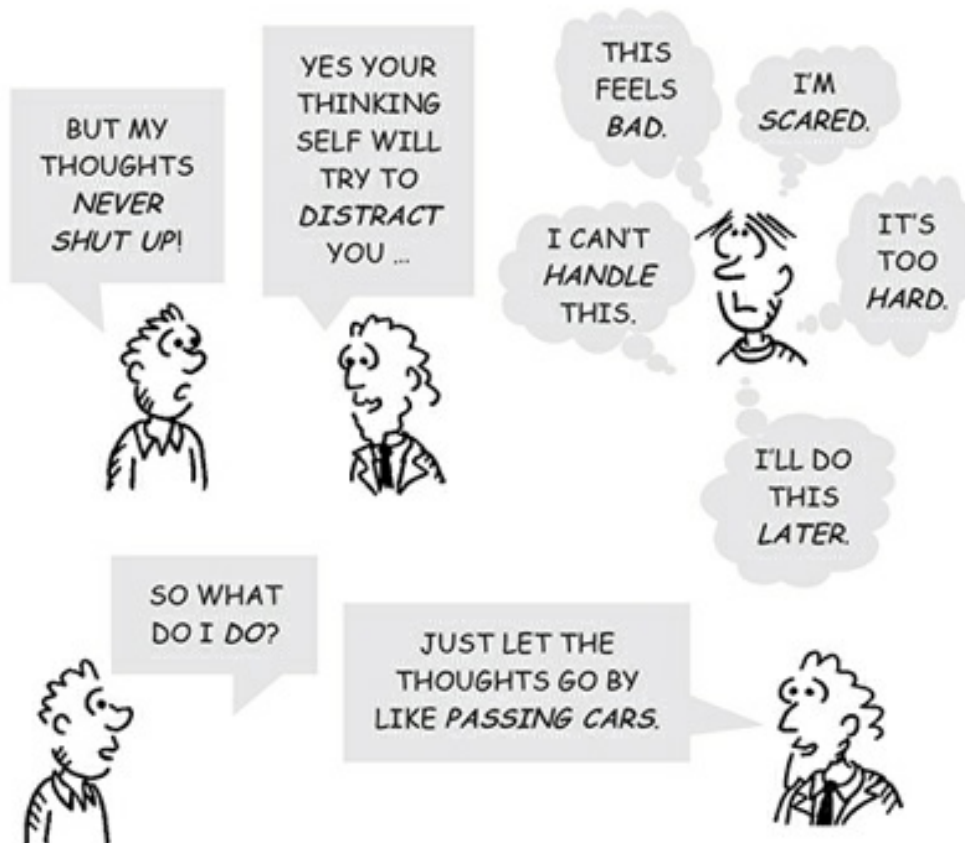
Do you feel any urge to EAT, SLEEP, SCRATCH, STRETCH?

NOTICING your body is different to THINKING about it.

THINKING SELF gives the “commentary.”



In EXPANSION we sidestep our thoughts and connect with our emotions through the OBSERVING SELF. In doing so, we experience emotions as they are rather than as the THINKING SELF says they are i.e. we NOTICE rather than THINK.



When there is traffic outside your window you don't leap up to check every car! Likewise you don't have to respond to every THOUGHT!



But if a screeching tire distracts you, simply REFOCUS.

IN EXPANSION YOU LET THOUGHTS COME AND GO IN THE BACKGROUND AND KEEP YOUR ATTENTION ON THE SENSATIONS IN YOUR BODY.



REMEMBER:

- ▶ Emotions arise from PHYSICAL CHANGES in the body.
- ▶ Focus on their PHYSICAL SENSATIONS.

EXPANSION WITH PAINFUL EMOTIONS: 3 steps

1 OBSERVE Scan your body for uncomfortable feelings.

Are they STILL
or MOVING?

How DEEP
do they go?

Where are they
STRONGEST?
WEAKEST?



Where do they
START and END?

Find the sensation
that bothers you
most and observe
it with CURIOSITY
and OPENNESS.

2 BREATHE

SLOW, DEEP
BREATHS



Breathe directly
INTO and AROUND
sensations and make
ROOM for them.

It's as if you open
up and expand
AROUND the feelings.

3 ALLOW

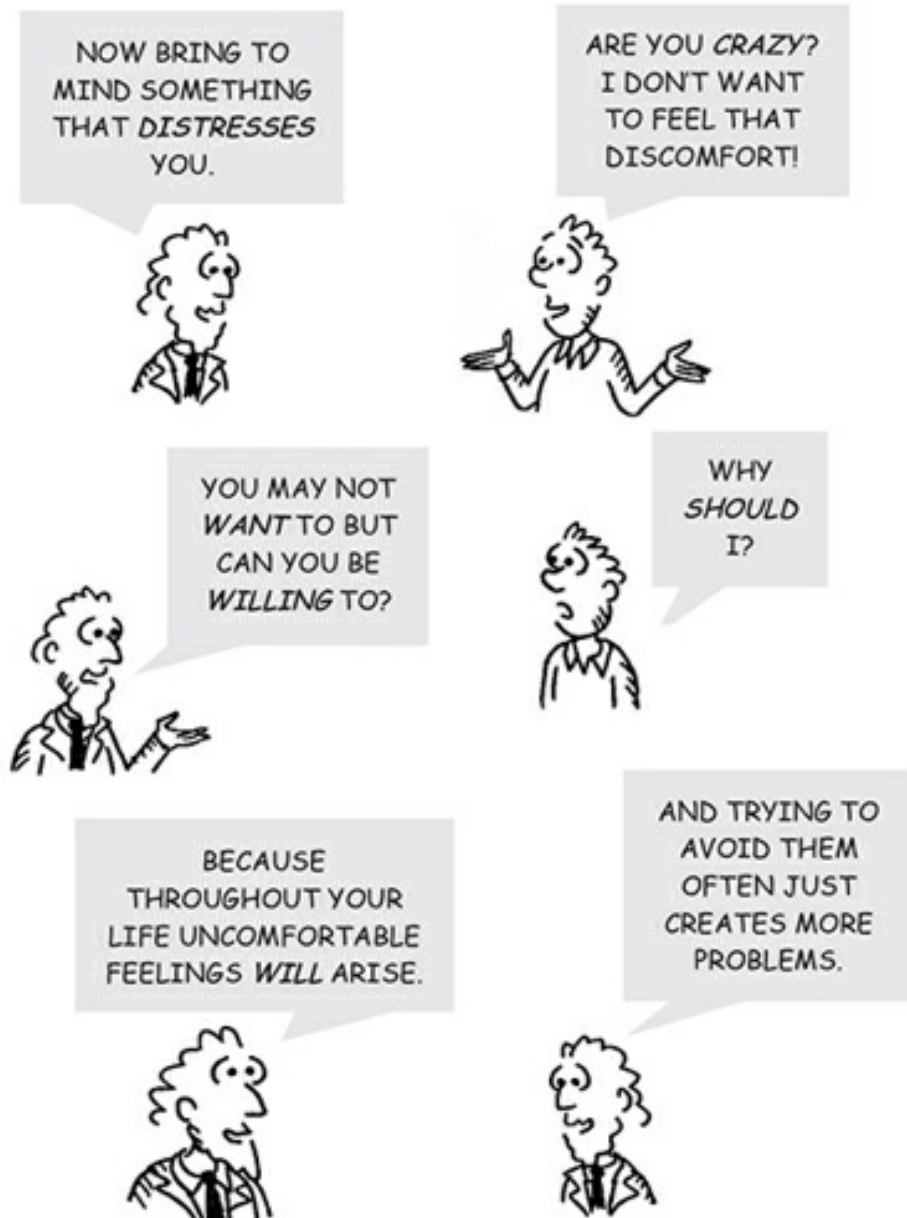
Simply
acknowledge
any unhelpful
thoughts.



ALLOW the
sensations to be
there even if you
don't LIKE them.

Say "Thanks
mind" to any
RESISTANCE.

Don't try to GET RID OF the sensation or ALTER it. The goal is to see it as it is, and make PEACE with it. Focus on the sensation until you DROP THE STRUGGLE WITH IT. Then move onto another sensation until you are no longer fighting them.



By being **WILLING** to feel them they'll have less impact and influence over you.

BUT ISN'T THAT
MASOCHISTIC?



ONLY IF IT SERVES
NO *GOOD PURPOSE!*



SO WHAT'S
THE *GOOD*
PURPOSE?



IMPROVING
YOUR *HEALTH*
AND TO LEARN
VALUABLE SKILLS
TO *TRANSFORM*
YOUR *LIFE!*



OKAY, I'LL
GIVE IT
A GO!



GOOD! SO BRING TO
MIND SOMETHING THAT
DISTRESSES YOU, GET IN
TOUCH WITH A *PAINFUL*
FEELING, AND PRACTICE THE
3 STEPS OF EXPANSION.



EXERCISE

Please practice the 3-step exercise described above,
for 3 to 5 minutes, two or three times a day.

In the next chapter, we'll look at any difficulties you
may encounter.

Chapter 9

Troubleshooting expansion

The concept of EXPANSION is simple but it's not EASY!
But like any meaningful challenge it's worth the effort.
Let's explore some of the difficulties you may encounter
in the beginning and troubleshoot them.

I TRIED MAKING
ROOM FOR THE
FEELINGS BUT
THEY WERE TOO
OVERWHELMING!



DON'T TRY TO TAKE
ON TOO MUCH.
JUST DO *ONE*
SENSATION FIRST
THEN THE NEXT.



WOW! THE
FEELINGS
DISAPPEARED!



ENJOY THAT WHEN
IT HAPPENS — BUT
REMEMBER, IT'S A *BONUS*,
NOT THE MAIN AIM.



I MADE *ROOM*
BUT THE
FEELINGS WERE
STILL THERE!



THEY WILL COME
AND STAY AND
GO IN THEIR
OWN GOOD TIME.



OKAY, I'VE MADE ROOM FOR MY FEELINGS, NOW WHAT?



NOW IT'S TIME TO TAKE EFFECTIVE ACTION IN LINE WITH YOUR VALUES.



WHY DO YOU KEEP COMING BACK TO ACTION AND VALUES?



TO CREATE A RICH AND FULL LIFE WE NEED TO ACT ON OUR VALUES (AS YOU'LL SEE LATER IN THIS BOOK).



IS SLOW, DEEP BREATHING ESSENTIAL?



NO, BUT IT'S HELPFUL. OBSERVING AND ALLOWING ARE KEY, THOUGH.



BUT WHEN I'M UPSET I JUST GO NUMB!



MAKE ROOM FOR YOUR NUMBNESS FIRST. YOU MAY FIND OTHER FEELINGS FOLLOW.



HOW CAN I DO THIS EXERCISE IF I'M AT WORK OR SOMEWHERE *PUBLIC*?



DO IT *QUICKLY!* TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND MAKE ROOM FOR THE FEELING. THEN ENGAGE IN THE TASK AT HAND.



CAN THE *THINKING SELF* HELP EXPANSION?



YES — WITH *SELF-TALK* AND *IMAGERY*.



EXPANSION SELF-TALK

I DON'T *LIKE* THIS FEELING BUT I HAVE ROOM FOR IT.

IT'S UNPLEASANT BUT I *ACCEPT* IT.

I'M HAVING THE *FEELING* OF ...



I DON'T *LIKE* IT OR *WANT* IT BUT I WON'T *FIGHT* IT.

EXPANSION IMAGERY

Scan for unpleasant feelings. Visualize the sensation as an object.



What size?

Shape?

Color?

Texture?

Fixed?

Shifting?

Now breathe into it and make room for it.

HOW MUCH
PRACTICE DO I
NEED TO DO?



AT LEAST *3 TIMES A DAY*, BUT THE MORE
THE *BETTER!* TRAINING
MAKES YOU SKILLFUL.



BUT ISN'T IT
UNHEALTHY TO
KEEP FOCUSING
ON UNPLEASANT
FEELINGS?



YES, IF YOU ARE
CONSTANTLY DWELLING
ON THEM BUT NOT IF
YOU ARE LEARNING
EXPANSION SKILLS.



The aim is to let your feelings come and stay and go without a **STRUGGLE**. Focus on them **ONLY** to practice expansion. Otherwise, focus on doing what you **VALUE**.

Chapter 10

Great connections



We've all "drifted off" at times.

The **THINKING SELF** has one job only: to generate thoughts. But sometimes these thoughts can be **DISTRACTING**.

This is how we habitually go through most of our lives!



How much do you give your **FULL ATTENTION** to:



EATING?



WORKING?

I MUST HAVE READ THIS PAGE SIX TIMES!



READING?

There are times when being absorbed in our thoughts **ASSISTS** what we are doing ...

HMM, HOW CAN I SOLVE THIS?



But too often it **DOESN'T**.

I'VE GOT NOTHING TO SAY! HE THINKS I'M BORING!



MUST DO MY TAXES!

We become DISCONNECTED.
This is where CONNECTION
comes in.

WHAT'S
THAT?



IT'S BEING FULLY
PRESENT AND AWAKE
IN THE *HERE AND NOW*
AND BEING CURIOUS
ABOUT AND OPEN
TO WHATEVER IS
HAPPENING.



WHY IS THIS
IMPORTANT?



SO YOU CAN ENGAGE
FULLY IN LIFE.



TO FULLY APPRECIATE
YOUR LIFE YOU NEED TO
GIVE IT YOUR ATTENTION!



YOU COULD BE
EATING THE MOST
BEAUTIFUL MEAL OF
YOUR LIFE BUT IF
YOU'RE LOST
IN YOUR THOUGHTS
YOU'LL HARDLY
EVEN *TASTE* IT.

PAST

WORK
WAS
HELL
TODAY.

PRESENT

I HOPE
I DON'T
LOOK
GREEDY!

FUTURE

WILL I
GET THAT
REPORT
IN ON
TIME?



As LEO TOLSTOY put it ...



THERE IS ONLY ONE TIME THAT IS IMPORTANT: NOW!

We can only ever take action here and now, and to take effective and valuable action we need to be fully present.

CONNECTION is:

- ▶ waking up
- ▶ noticing what's happening
- ▶ appreciating the fullness of every moment.



This comes **NATURALLY** in life's wonderful moments, but it's hard to do when life is **DIFFICULT** or **PAINFUL!**

Here's a comparison between **FUSION** and **CONNECTION**:

| FUSION | CONNECTION | FUSION | CONNECTION |
|------------|------------|------------|------------------------|
| DISTRACTED | ENGAGED | JUDGMENTAL | DEFUSED FROM JUDGMENTS |
| | | | |
| | | | |

FUSION
EASILY BORED,
KNOWS IT ALL

BEEN THERE,
DONE THAT!



CONNECTION
CURIOUS & PRESENT



FUSION
LIVES IN PAST OR
FUTURE

IF ONLY
WHAT IF?



FUSION
CLOSED OFF

THIS
SUCKS!



CONNECTION
OPEN



**THINKING
SELF**
STRUGGLES
AGAINST
REALITY

THIS CAN'T BE
HAPPENING!



**OBSERVING
SELF**
NOTICES &
OPENS TO
REALITY



OKAY I'M
GAME. WHAT
DO I DO?



TRY THESE EXERCISES.

CONNECTION EXERCISES

GUIDELINES

If thoughts or feelings distract you:

- let them come and go
- bring back your attention when it wanders (and it will!)
- silently say “Thanks Mind.”

1. Connection with ENVIRONMENT – 30 seconds

Put the book down and notice your SURROUNDINGS.

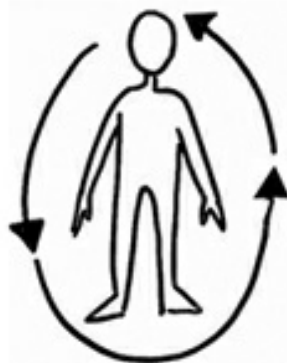


Use all your senses. Notice five things that you can:

HEAR
SEE
FEEL.

2. Awareness of your BODY – 30 seconds

Notice the POSITION of your whole BODY.



Do an internal scan and notice what you feel in EVERY PART.

3. Awareness of BREATH – 30 seconds

Connect with
your BREATHING.



Notice the FLOW
in and out.
Notice what your
body does with
the breath.

4. Awareness of SOUNDS – 30 seconds



What do
you HEAR?



SO, WHAT DID
YOU NOTICE?

I DIDN'T
REALIZE
THERE WAS SO
MUCH GOING
ON THAT I'D
MISSED!



WE ARE
SO EASILY
DISCONNECTED
AREN'T WE?



When we fuse with the stories our mind tells us, it keeps us **DISCONNECTED** from all that life offers.



The more we get caught up in unpleasant **THOUGHTS** and **FEELINGS**, the more we are cut off from what's **ACTUALLY** happening and our chance to engage with what we **DO** want.



We can get hooked by
DOOM and GLOOM
about the FUTURE:



We can get hooked by
DOOM and GLOOM
about the PAST:



It's hard to enjoy what
you're doing if you're not
connected with it, if you're
LOST IN THOUGHTS!



But the REVERSE is
also true!



So CONNECTION is an important skill for getting the
MOST out of life.

EXERCISE: CONNECT WITH PLEASANT ACTIVITIES

Practice connection with at least one pleasant activity
each day.



EXERCISE: CONNECTION WITH A USEFUL CHORE

Pick a chore you don't like and practice connection.

- Have no **EXPECTATIONS**.
- Just **NOTICE** what you do.
- Open your **SENSES** to what's happening.
- If you feel boredom or frustration **MAKE ROOM** for it.
- If your attention wanders, thank your mind and **REFOCUS**.



EXERCISE: CONNECTION WITH A TASK YOU'VE BEEN AVOIDING

Pick a task you've been putting off.

Set aside 20 minutes and make a start on it with connection.

After 20 minutes you are free to stop or continue.

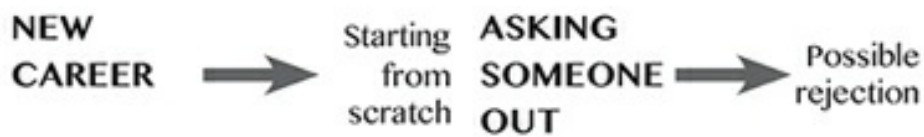
Do 20 minutes a day
till the task is completed.




Practicing connection is like building **MUSCLES** to strengthen your ability to handle change and move on with your life.



And important changes usually involve DISCOMFORT.



| | |
|---|--|
| <p>AVOIDANCE = NO CHANGE/STUCK</p> <p>CONNECTION = MOVEMENT/IMPROVEMENT</p> | <p>AREN'T THE REWARDS WORTH IT?</p>  |
|---|--|

You can **CONNECT**, **DEFUSE**, and **EXPAND** ... or **NOT!**
The choice is yours.

Another word that describes a process of **DEFUSION**, **EXPANSION**, and **CONNECTION** is **MINDFULNESS**.

This is not about having a "FULL MIND"!

The **ACT** definition of **MINDFULNESS** would be:

- ▶ paying attention with openness and curiosity
- ▶ making room for whatever thoughts and feelings arise
- ▶ engaging fully in your here-and-now experience.



| |
|--|
| <p>EXERCISE: MINDFUL BREATHING</p> <p>Take six slow deep breaths. After a full out breath, breathe in gently. (If you're doing it right, your tummy will expand.) Practice connection: notice your breath flowing in and out!</p> |
|--|

MINDFUL BREATHING IS A GOOD WAY TO PRACTICE YOUR MINDFULNESS SKILLS.



What did you notice?

MY TENSION EASED.



MINE DIDN'T!



I STARTED "LETTING GO."



I DIDN'T!



I CONNECTED WITH MY BODY.



I DIDN'T!



MY MIND WENT QUIET.



MINE DIDN'T!



IF YOU DIDN'T FIND THE EXERCISE HELPFUL, PLEASE DO PERSIST. IF YOU PRACTICE IT FIVE TIMES A DAY FOR TWO WEEKS, YOU SHOULD START TO NOTICE THE BENEFITS.



MINDFUL BREATHING can connect you with the HERE and NOW.

THREE EXERCISES

Take 6 breaths again but for the first three focus on the BREATHING itself.



CHEST
ABDOMEN

For the next three expand your focus to include your SURROUNDINGS.



CHEST
ABDOMEN

What did you NOTICE?

Now do 9 breaths

First three: Focus on BREATHING.

Next three: Focus on BREATHING and THOUGHTS.

Last three: Focus on BREATHING and what you FEEL in your BODY.



This variation rapidly increases self-awareness, helps you accept thoughts and feelings, and gather your wits.

Now do 12 breaths

First three: Focus on BREATHING only.

Second three: Focus on BREATHING and THOUGHTS.

Third three: Focus on BREATHING and THOUGHTS and BODY.

Final three: A broad focus on BREATHING and THOUGHTS and BODY and the WORLD AROUND YOU.



NOTE: MINDFUL BREATHING IS NOT A RELAXATION TECHNIQUE OR A WAY TO AVOID FEELINGS. IT'S AN ANCHOR, TO HOLD YOU STEADY IN THE MIDST OF AN EMOTIONAL STORM.



REMEMBER – EVEN ONE SLOW, DEEP BREATH CAN HELP TO ANCHOR YOU UNTIL THE STORM PASSES.

Fancy a CHALLENGE?

EXERCISE

(Allow 10 minutes, once or twice a day.)

Sit or lie comfortably.

Let your thoughts come and go.

Focus on your breath for 6 minutes.

When your attention wanders, refocus.

For the next 3 minutes focus attention on your body, and its feelings and sensations.

For the final minute open your eyes and take in the room around you.



Regular practice will bring noticeable PHYSICAL and PSYCHOLOGICAL benefits.

Chapter 11

You're not
who you think
you are

What do you most DISLIKE about yourself?

I'M TOO
SHY/
ANXIOUS/
NEEDY



STUPID
SILLY
DISORGANIZED



FAT
UGLY
UNFIT
LAZY



SELFISH
CRITICAL
VAIN



BORING
SERIOUS
DULL



JUDGMENTAL
AGGRESSIVE



UNDERACHIEVER
FAILURE, LOSER



WORKAHOLIC
CHOCAMOLIC
ALCOHOLIC



CONTROLLING
OBSESSIVE
FUSSY

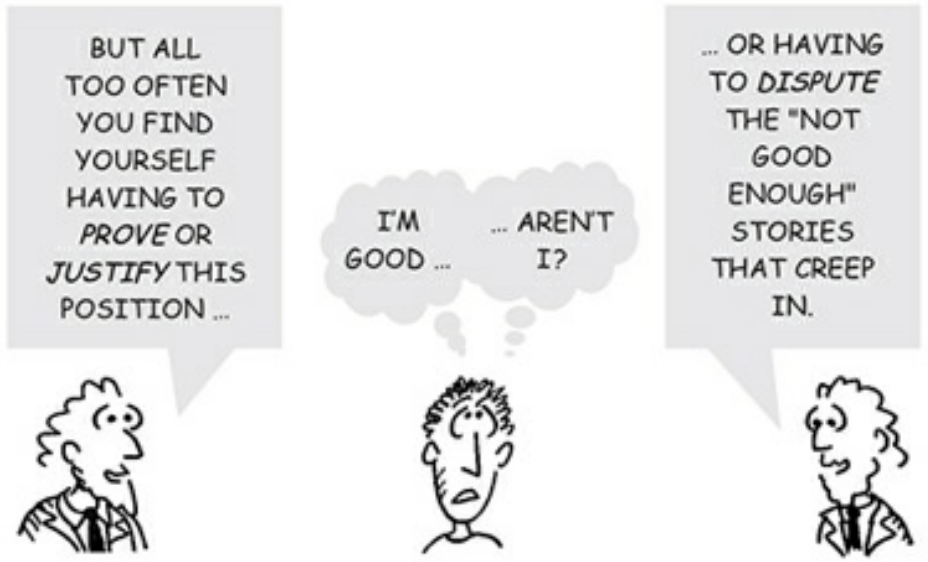


These are only a few of the most common responses. The range is infinite but there is one basic theme:

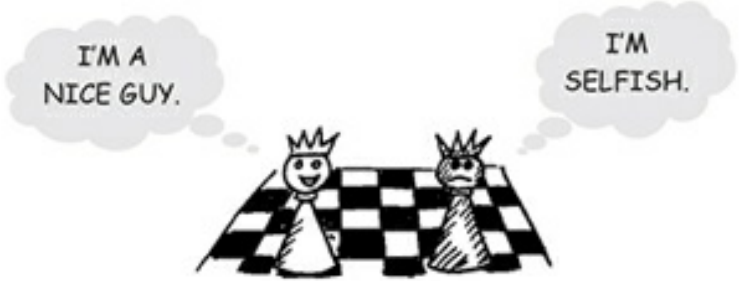
I'M NOT GOOD
ENOUGH AS
I AM!



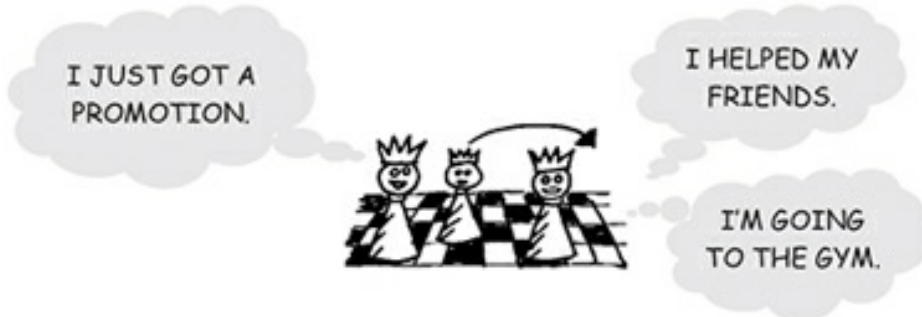
No matter how hard we try or what we achieve, our THINKING SELF always finds FAULT with us.



So like a game of chess, you find yourself constantly caught in a battle between GOOD and BAD thoughts and feelings.



You advance the “Good Guys” across the board ...



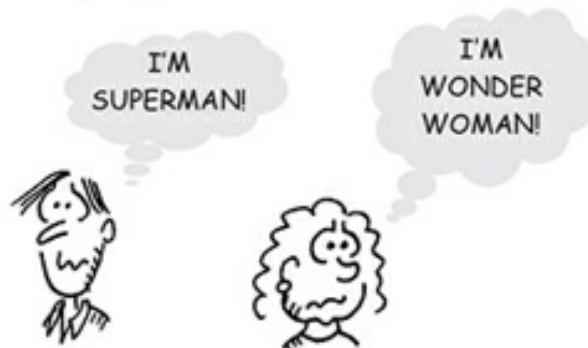
... only to find a whole army of “Bad Guys” waiting to counterattack.



Trying to feel good about yourself through positive AFFIRMATIONS will have LIMITED success ...



Firstly, you are unlikely to BELIEVE it any more than saying ...



... secondly,
even if what
you're saying
rings TRUE ...

I'M A KIND AND
CARING PERSON.

I'M LOYAL AND
TRUSTWORTHY.



your **THINKING
SELF** will still
come up with
negative counter-
argument: this
always happens.

WHAT
ABOUT
THAT
TIME?

YOU DON'T
ALWAYS
KEEP
SECRETS.



EXERCISE

Repeat the following statements to yourself and
notice what thoughts pop into your head in response:

I am a human being.

**I am a worthwhile
human being.**

**I am a lovable,
worthwhile human being.**

**I am a competent, lovable,
worthwhile human being.**

**I am a perfect, competent,
lovable, worthwhile human
being.**



YEAH,
RIGHT!

WHO
ARE YOU
KIDDING?

STOP
TALKING
RUBBISH!

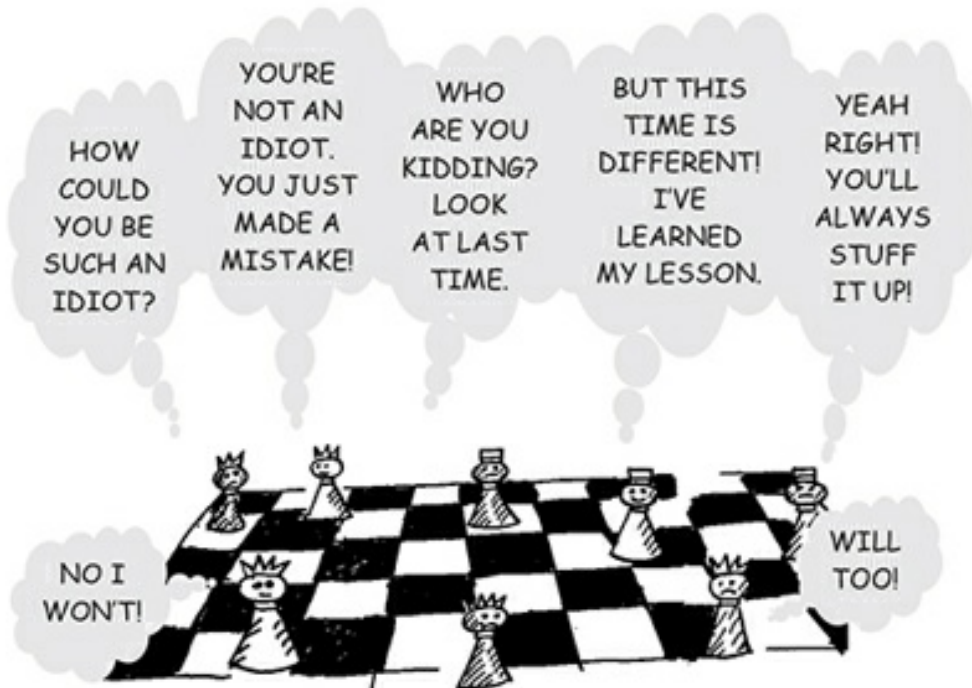
YOU WISH!

WHAT A JOKE!

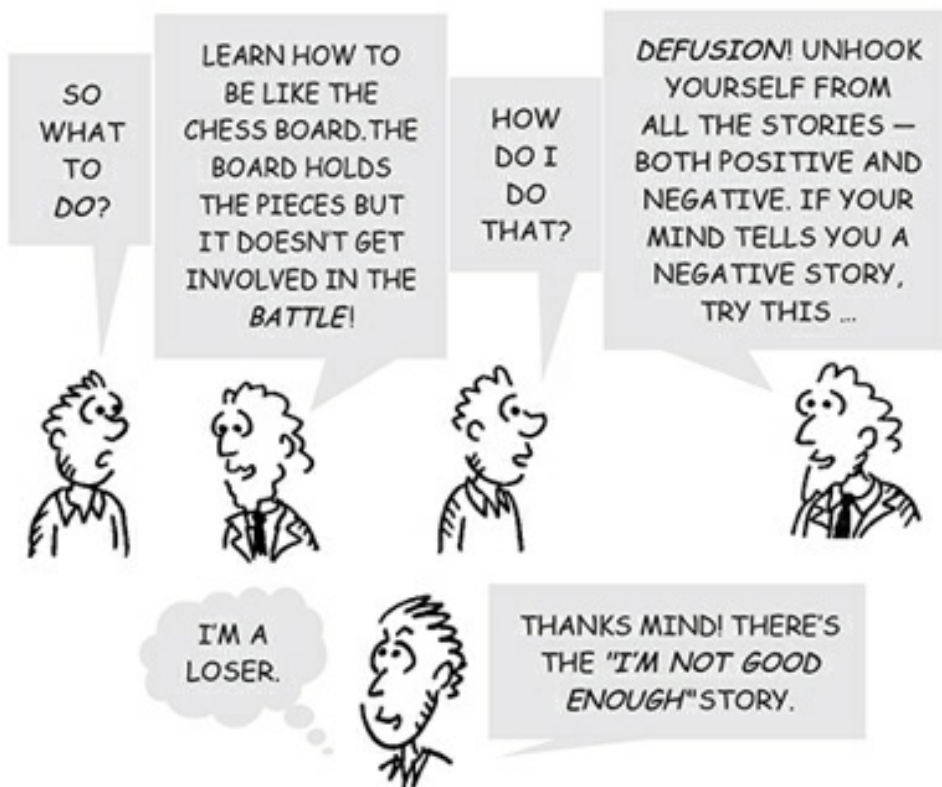
Did you find the more POSITIVE the affirmation, the more NEGATIVELY your mind responded? Now let's REVERSE it and see what happens:



The reality is we can waste a lot of time locked in this never-ending battle, which is often FIERCE.



And while all your attention is on this BATTLE it's hard to connect with anything ELSE. You get lost in your thoughts instead of engaging in LIFE.



And if your mind tells you a POSITIVE story ...



Let your mind chatter away like a radio in the background ...



After all, at your funeral, would you want your loved ones to be thinking something like this ...



... or this?



You are not who you think you are. So unhook from the story, and get PRESENT!



AND REMEMBER: THERE ARE TWO ESSENTIALS FOR MAKING LIFE RICH, FULL, AND MEANINGFUL. ONE: *ENGAGE MINDFULLY* IN WHATEVER YOU ARE DOING. TWO: MAKE SURE WHAT YOU ARE DOING IS *MEANINGFUL!*



I KNOW HOW TO DO THE FIRST ONE, BUT HOW DO I DO THE SECOND?



YOU'LL FIND OUT IN THE NEXT PART OF THE BOOK.

Chapter 12

Follow your
heart



In order to create a rich, full, and meaningful life, it's important to reflect on **WHAT WE'RE DOING** and **WHY WE'RE DOING IT**.

It's time to ask some **BIG QUESTIONS** in order to clarify your **VALUES**.



- ▶ What is deeply important to you?
- ▶ What sort of person do you want to be?
- ▶ What sort of relationships do you want to build?
- ▶ If you weren't struggling with feelings and avoiding fears what would you channel your time and energy into doing?





VALUES are:

- ▶ our heart's deepest desires for how we want to behave, and what we stand for in life
- ▶ how we want to treat ourselves, others, and the world around us.

When we live guided by values, we gain vitality and we experience life as **RICH, FULL, and MEANINGFUL** — yes, even when it **HURTS**.

VALUES are not the same as GOALS.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>VALUE</p>  <p>VALUE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How you want to behave, deep in your heart. ▶ A direction you want to keep moving in. ▶ An ongoing process with no end. | <p>GOAL</p>  <p>GOAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Something you want to get, complete, have, own, or achieve. ▶ Once achieved, it's over and done with; completed; "ticked off the list." |
|---|---|

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>GOAL</p>  | <p>GOAL COMPLETED</p>  | <p>WITH ONGOING VALUES</p>  | <p>WITHOUT ONGOING VALUES</p>  |
|--|--|--|--|



Life can be HARD WORK. Anything meaningful brings CHALLENGES. Often this leads us to give up or quit.



VALUES make the EFFORT worthwhile.

If your values are:

**CONNECTING
WITH NATURE**



... you'll make
the trek.

**BEING A
LOVING PARENT**



... you'll make time
to play with
your kids.

SELF-CARE



... you'll exercise
and eat well.

But what if (like so many, not just those who are depressed) you think:

WHAT'S
THE
POINT?



IS THAT
ALL
THERE IS?



I HAVE
NOTHING
TO OFFER.



SOMETIMES
I DON'T
WANT
TO LIVE
ANYMORE.



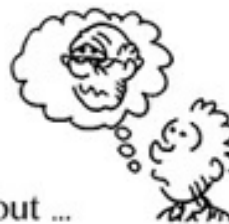
Even THEN, values can give your life PURPOSE and MEANING.

EXERCISE

Imagine that you're 80 years old.

Now finish the following sentences:

- ▶ I spent too much time worrying about ...
- ▶ I spent too little time doing things such as ...
- ▶ If I could go back in time I would ...





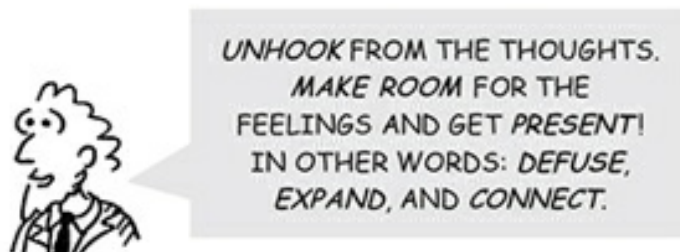
THOUGHT DEMONS

- I'm a hypocrite!
- I'll fail!
- It's too late!
- I can't change!
- I'm too busy!
- I'm too tired!
- I shouldn't have to!



FEELING DEMONS

- Anxiety
- Confusion
- Guilt
- Frustration
- Fear
- Shame
- Regret
- Embarrassment



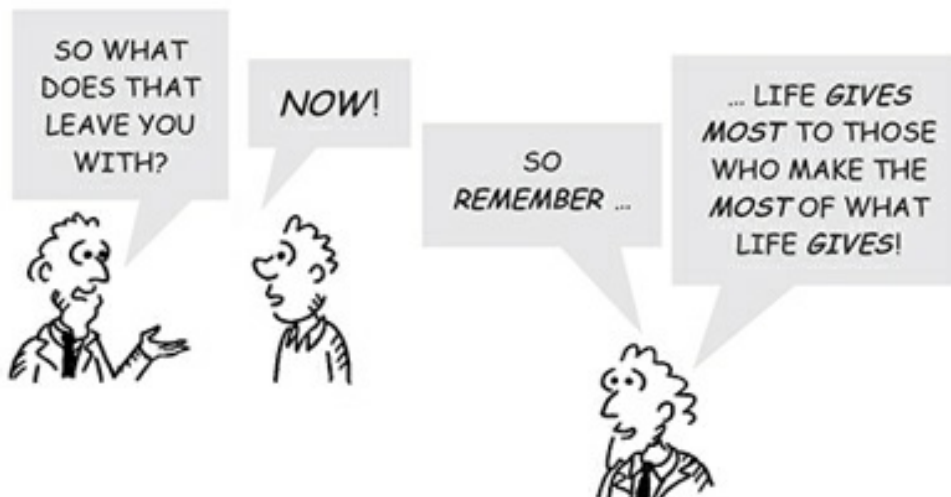
What do you really WANT?



These answers are not VALUES – they are all GOALS. To help you clarify VALUES, please do the exercise in the next chapter.

And remember: the PAST doesn't exist – it's just MEMORIES in the PRESENT ...

... and the FUTURE doesn't exist either – it's just THOUGHTS and IMAGES in the PRESENT.



Chapter 13

The 1000-mile journey

We're going to start this chapter a little differently to all the others: no cartoons, just an exercise on clarifying your values. Please complete it before reading the rest of the book; it's very important for everything that follows later.

EXERCISE: CLARIFY YOUR VALUES

Below are 40 of the most common values. Please read through the list and write a letter next to each value, based on how important it is to you:

V = very important

Q = quite important

N = not important

1. Acceptance/self-acceptance: to be accepting of myself, others, life, etc.
2. Adventure: to be adventurous; to actively explore novel or stimulating experiences
3. Assertiveness: to respectfully stand up for my rights and request what I want
4. Authenticity: to be authentic, genuine, and real; to be true to myself
5. Caring/self-care: to be caring toward myself, others, the environment, etc.
6. Compassion/self-compassion: to act kindly toward myself and others in pain
7. Connection: to engage fully in whatever I'm doing and be fully present with others

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 8. Contribution and generosity: to contribute, give, help, assist, or share | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Cooperation: to be cooperative and collaborative with others | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Courage: to be courageous or brave; to persist in the face of fear, threat, or difficulty | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Creativity: to be creative or innovative | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. Curiosity: to be curious, open-minded, and interested; to explore and discover | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Encouragement: to encourage and reward behavior that I value in myself or others | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. Excitement: to seek, create, and engage in activities that are exciting or stimulating | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. Fairness and justice: to be fair and just to myself or others | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. Fitness: to maintain or improve or look after my physical and mental health | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. Flexibility: to adjust and adapt readily to changing circumstances | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. Freedom and independence: to choose how I live and help others do likewise | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. Friendliness: to be friendly, companionable, or agreeable toward others | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 20. Forgiveness/self-forgiveness: to be forgiving toward myself or others | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. Fun and humor: to be fun loving; to seek, create, and engage in fun-filled activities | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. Gratitude: to be grateful for and appreciative of myself, others, and life | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. Honesty: to be honest, truthful, and sincere with myself and others | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24. Industry: to be industrious, hardworking, and dedicated | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25. Intimacy: to open up, reveal, and share myself, emotionally or physically | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 26. Kindness: to be kind, considerate, nurturing, or caring toward myself or others | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 27. Love: to act lovingly or affectionately toward myself or others | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 28. Mindfulness: to be open to, engaged in, and curious about the present moment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 29. Order: to be orderly and organized | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 30. Persistence and commitment: to continue resolutely, despite problems or difficulties. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31. Respect/self-respect: to treat myself and others with care and consideration | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 32. Responsibility: to be responsible and accountable for my actions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 33. Safety and protection: to secure, protect, or ensure my own safety or that of others | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 34. Sensuality and pleasure: to create or enjoy pleasurable and sensual experiences | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 35. Sexuality: to explore or express my sexuality | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 36. Skilfulness: to continually practice and improve my skills and apply myself fully | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 37. Supportiveness: to be supportive, helpful, and available to myself or others | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 38. Trust: to be trustworthy; to be loyal, faithful, sincere, and reliable | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 39. Other: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 40. Other: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Adapted from <i>The Confidence Gap</i> by Russ Harris (Boston: Trumpeter, 2008). | |

SO I'VE IDENTIFIED
MY VALUES – NOW
WHAT?



NOW YOU NEED TO TAKE
ACTION! A MEANINGFUL
LIFE DOESN'T JUST
HAPPEN – YOU NEED TO
MAKE IT HAPPEN!



LET'S BEGIN BY
DIVIDING YOUR LIFE
INTO FOUR DOMAINS:

1. HEALTH



Includes physical health,
psychological health,
spiritual health.

2. LEISURE



Includes fun and games –
relaxation, sports, hobbies,
creativity.

3. WORK/EDUCATION



Includes unpaid work
(e.g. volunteering) and
apprenticeships and self-
education (e.g. reading
books).

4. RELATIONSHIPS



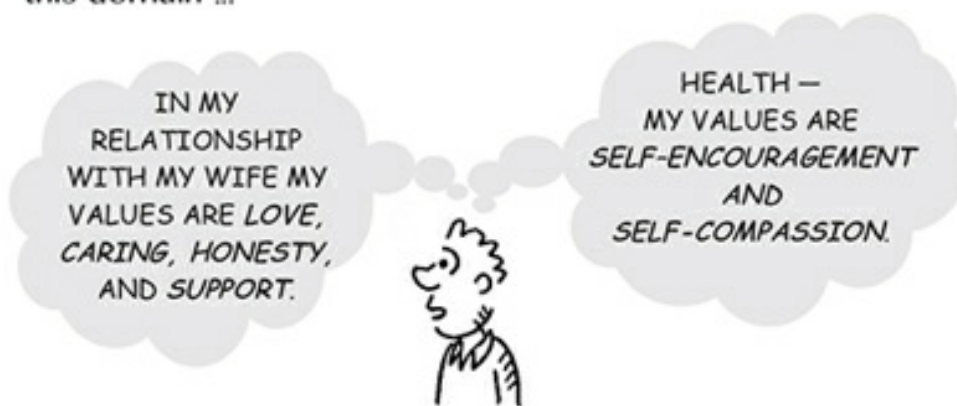
Includes friends, family,
neighbors, co-workers, etc.

NOTE: Start with one domain at a time or you'll get
overwhelmed and give up. Over time, you can work
through all of them.



STEP 1: SUMMARIZE YOUR VALUES

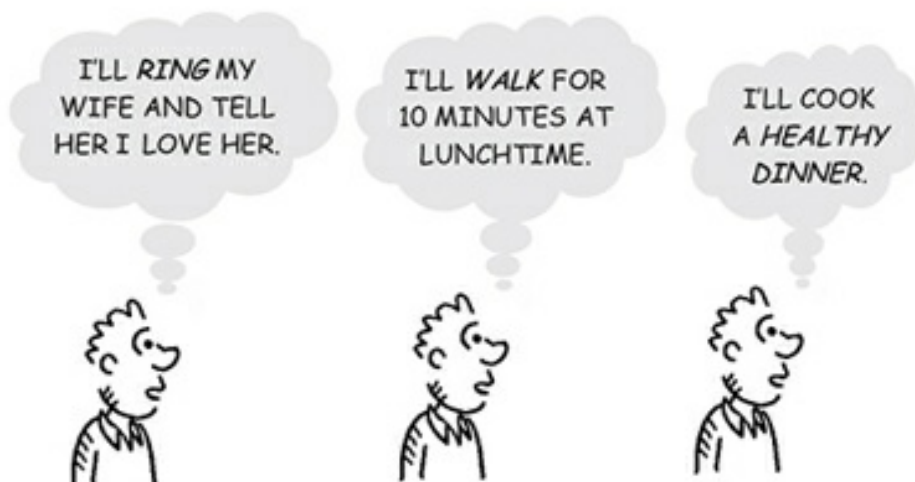
Write down four or five of the most important values in this domain ...



STEP 2: SET AN IMMEDIATE GOAL

Boost your confidence by starting with a SMALL, EASY goal — one that can be accomplished TODAY!

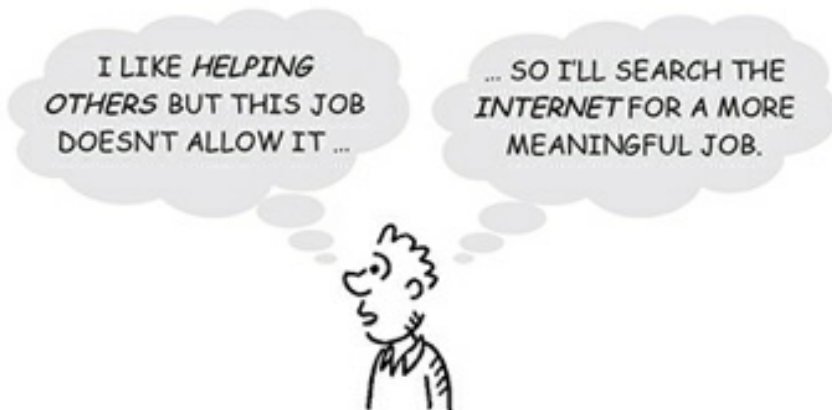
BE SPECIFIC



Remember: the journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step!

STEP 3: SET SOME SHORT-TERM GOALS

What are some small things you can do over the coming days or weeks that are consistent with your values?



Remember: lots of small steps ADD UP.

STEP 4: SET SOME MEDIUM-TERM GOALS

Now stretch yourself a bit further.

Remember: be SPECIFIC.



STEP 5: SET SOME LONG-TERM GOALS

WHAT CHALLENGES WILL TAKE ME IN MY VALUED DIRECTION?



WHAT WOULD I LIKE TO DO IN THE NEXT 6 MONTHS, 1 YEAR, 5 YEARS, ETC?

ACTION PLANS

Now break down your goals into an action plan.

- ▶ What smaller steps are required to complete this?
- ▶ What resources do I need?
- ▶ When, specifically, will I carry out these actions?

If your goal is to go to the gym three times a week your ACTION PLAN might be to:

Join the gym



Get your gear together



Plan the times you'll go



The RESOURCES you might need may be:

Money for membership ...



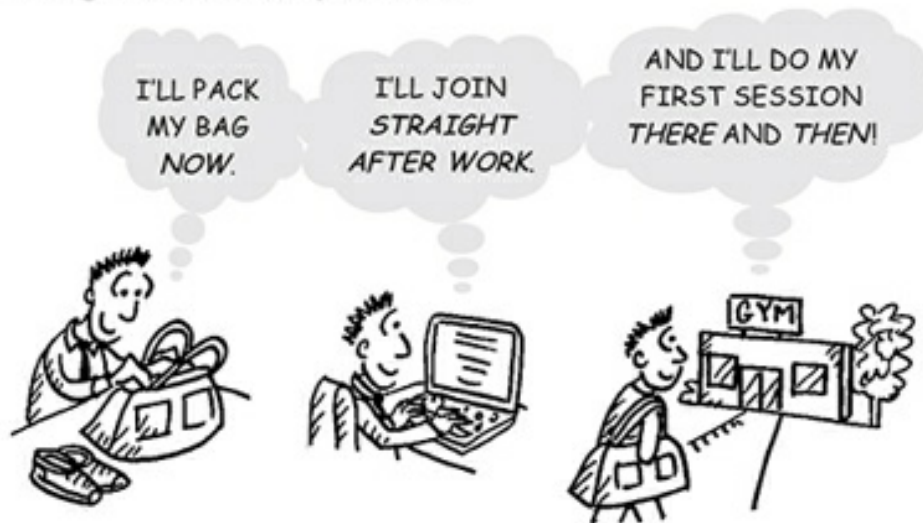
... gym gear



... and a bag to put this in.



Being SPECIFIC may involve:



BUT WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE THE RESOURCES?



You can:

- **change your goal**



I COULD GO RUNNING — IT'S FREE!

- **make an ACTION PLAN to obtain the resources.**



I'LL SAVE UP!

Sometimes a resource is a SKILL:

MY GOAL IS
TO IMPROVE
RELATIONSHIPS
BUT I DONT
KNOW *HOW!*



You can:

- **plan how you will learn the skill**
- **research/read, etc.**
- **take a course.**

EXERCISE

Write down:

- a domain of life to work on
- your values in that domain
- goals (immediate, short, medium, long-term)
- your action plan for the immediate and short-term goals.

The GOOD NEWS is ...

THE MOMENT YOU START STEERING
TOWARD THE SHORE YOU'RE NO LONGER
DRIFTING ALL AT SEA AND YOU CAN
MAKE THE MOST OF THE JOURNEY ALONG
THE WAY, KNOWING YOU'RE FINALLY
HEADING IN THE *RIGHT DIRECTION!*



Chapter 14

Finding fulfillment

IN A *VALUES-FOCUSED* LIFE YOU'RE MORE LIKELY TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS.

WHY?

BECAUSE IF YOUR *GOALS* ARE IN LINE WITH YOUR *VALUES*, YOU'RE MORE *MOTIVATED* TO PURSUE THEM!

PLUS — *CONNECTING WITH AND ACTING ON* YOUR VALUES CAN GIVE YOU FULFILLMENT RIGHT NOW.

IN WHAT WAY?

SAY YOU WANT TO BUY A HOUSE — THAT'S YOUR *GOAL* — BUT YOU CAN'T AFFORD IT YET. WHY WOULD YOU PURSUE THAT GOAL?

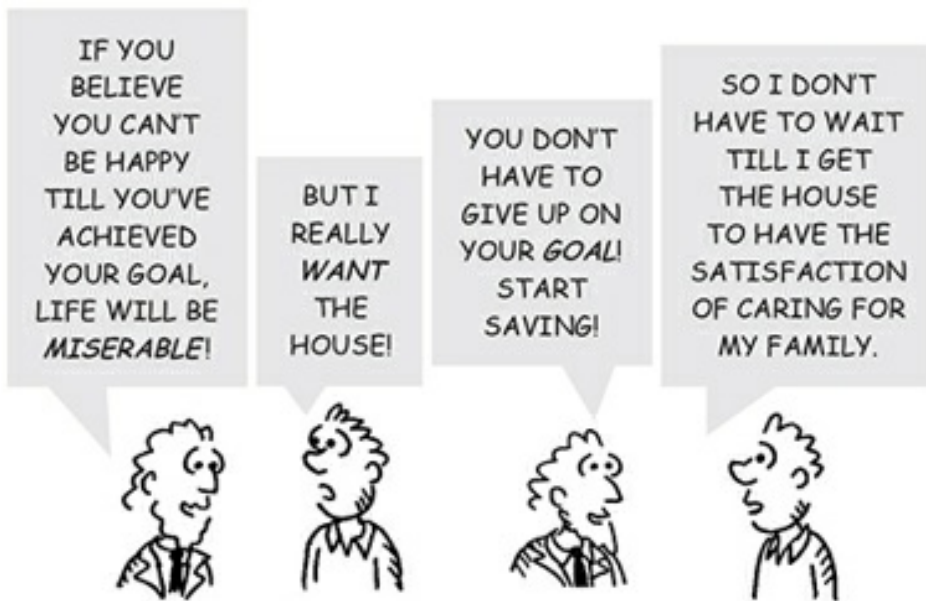
TO PROVIDE *SECURITY* AND TAKE CARE OF MY FAMILY.

SO TAKING CARE OF THE FAMILY IS THE *CORE VALUE* HERE, YES?

YES.

WELL YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF YOUR FAMILY ANYWAY!

I SEE! I CAN STILL LIVE TO MY *VALUES* WHETHER OR NOT I GET THE *HOUSE*!



Let's look at some other examples:

I WANT TO BE A DOCTOR BUT IT'S TEN YEARS OF *HARD SLOG!*

What is the CORE VALUE of that GOAL?

I'LL BE ABLE TO *HELP PEOPLE!*

There are many ways you can do that *RIGHT NOW!*

A common GOAL is to find a PARTNER ...

SIGH, I'M *LONELY!*

... and to be MISERABLE if you *HAVEN'T!*

So what is the
CORE VALUE here?



TO BE LOVING,
CARING,
SENSUAL, AND
FUN!

You can still act on
those values with
FAMILY, FRIENDS —
and YOURSELF.



BUT THAT'S
NOT THE
SAME!

No it's not, but you have a CHOICE ...

- ▶ to find meaning, here and now, in living by your values
or
- ▶ to be miserable by focusing on a goal you haven't
achieved yet.

WHAT IF
I *ACHIEVE*
MY GOAL?



THERE'LL ALWAYS
BE *SOMETHING*
ELSE YOU WANT!



If you're always FOCUSED on GOALS, you will NEVER be
content. However, your VALUES are ALWAYS available.

Chapter 15

A life of
plenty

A beneficial by-product of creating a meaningful life is that **POSITIVE EXPERIENCES** will happen.



ISN'T THAT A **GOOD** THING?

OF COURSE — AND IT MAKES SENSE TO APPRECIATE THESE THINGS TO THE FULLEST WHILE YOU'RE EXPERIENCING THEM ...

... BUT MAKING THEM THE **MAIN GOAL** IN LIFE IS NOT HELPFUL.

HOW COME?



Because you'll end up back in the **HAPPINESS TRAP!**

The more you focus on having only **PLEASANT FEELINGS** ...



... the more you'll **STRUGGLE** against the **UNPLEASANT** ones.



THEN WHAT SHOULD I DO ABOUT PLEASANT FEELINGS?

BRING MINDFULNESS TO THEM!

EVERY DAY IS FULL OF OPPORTUNITIES TO APPRECIATE YOUR LIFE, EVEN WHILE YOU'RE IMPROVING IT!



BUT WE USUALLY DON'T EVEN NOTICE THESE THINGS.



WITH MINDFULNESS YOU CAN WAKE UP & EXPERIENCE ALL AROUND YOU!

HOW DO I DO THAT?



HERE ARE SOME WAYS ...



When you EAT,
slow down and
SAVOR it.



TASTE it. Feel the
SENSATIONS in
your mouth.

If it RAINS, pay
ATTENTION to it.



Hear the PITCH
and VOLUME.
Watch the
PATTERNS it
makes. SMELL
the air.

When it's SUNNY,
APPRECIATE it.



FEEL its WARMTH
on your skin. See
how everything
BRIGHTENS.



When you
hug, kiss, or
shake hands
with someone,
ENGAGE in it.



Notice how
it feels. Let
WARMTH and
OPENNESS flow
through you.

When you feel
good, SAVOR it.



Notice how it
feels in your
BODY. Notice all
the SENSATIONS,
THOUGHTS,
and IMAGES.
APPRECIATE it.

Look into the
eyes of a person
you care about as
if for the FIRST
TIME.



OBSERVE
everything
about them
— GESTURES,
MOVEMENT,
FEATURES.

Observe
an ANIMAL
with childlike
CURIOSITY.



See its COLORS,
MOVEMENTS,
CONTOURS.

Take a familiar
object and STUDY
it as if you'd never
seen such a thing
before.



Use all your
SENSES,
appreciate its
FUNCTION.

Before you
get out of bed
take TEN DEEP
BREATHS.



Notice the
MOVEMENT of
your lungs and
feel wonder at
how they give you
LIFE.

As you connect with your values and act in accordance
with them you may notice changes in OTHERS, too.

The more you act
like the person
you WANT TO
BE ...



When you act with
OPENNESS, KINDNESS,
and ACCEPTANCE
you'll probably receive
the same ...

... the more you'll
notice POSITIVE
RESPONSES
toward you.



ENJOY these
responses. Be
MINDFUL. Notice
what is happening
and APPRECIATE
it.



... MOST of
the time!
(If not, go
elsewhere!)

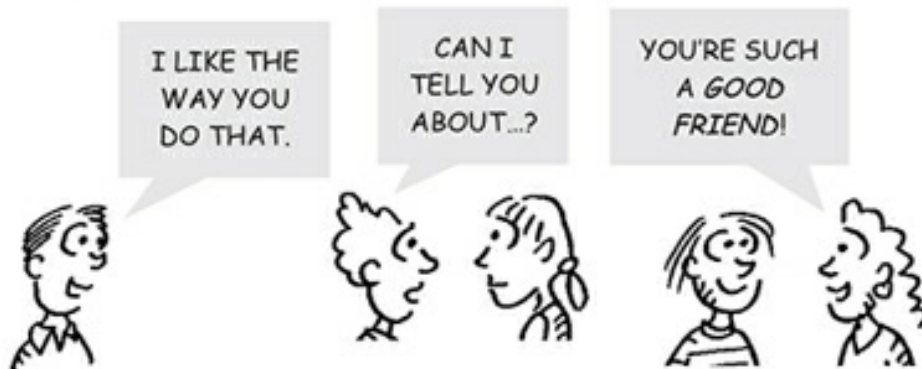
Savor **POSITIVE INTERACTIONS** and notice the **ABUNDANCE** in your life.

Build the **CONNECTIONS** by:

EXPRESSING what you appreciate about others, life, and yourself;

SHARING your difficulties and rewards;

LETTING OTHERS KNOW what they mean to you.



When you achieve goals that are in line with your values, there's often a pleasant emotion. Notice how it feels and **ENJOY** it – even the simple things.



It's all too easy to miss these things when the **THINKING SELF** tries to distract you with **STORIES**.



MINDFULNESS

- ▶ awakens you to good things you may have taken for granted
- ▶ cultivates an attitude of openness and curiosity
- ▶ helps you to notice more opportunities
- ▶ provides stimulation and interest
- ▶ improves relationships
- ▶ increases fulfillment
- ▶ enables effective action.

NATURALLY IT'S
EASIER TO BE
MINDFUL WHEN
LIFE IS GOING
SMOOTHLY.

IN THE *TOUGH*
TIMES, YOUR
THOUGHTS WILL
KEEP TRYING TO PULL
YOU *OFF COURSE*.



THE
IMPORTANT
THING IS TO
REMEMBER TO
PRACTICE IT!

AND KEEP
CATCHING
MYSELF WHEN I
GO OFF TRACK!



Chapter 16

Willingness



Say you've decided to climb a mountain because of the **SPECTACULAR VIEW** at the top.

Halfway up it's **STEEP, NARROW, and ROCKY.**
You're **COLD, TIRED, and WET ...**



... and you know it will only get **WORSE.**

I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD BE **THIS HARD!**



But you're **WILLING** to endure this discomfort not because you **WANT** it or **ENJOY** it but because it's on the way to where you **WANT** to GO.



I'LL HAVE THE **SATISFACTION** OF MAKING IT AND SEEING THOSE **GREAT VIEWS!**

And say you want to write a book — you'll encounter many **OBSTACLES ...**

FUSION WITH UNPLEASANT THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

I'LL NEVER SUCCEED.

I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH.

WHAT IF I FAIL?

I FEEL SCARED.



PROCRASTINATION AND PUTTING OFF

OR

AVOIDANCE AND DISTRACTION

THERE'S NO HURRY.

DEADLINE 1 WEEK!



I CAN'T THINK ABOUT IT NOW.

I NEED A DRINK.



You might finally
TAKE ACTION

OKAY —
I'LL SET A
MANAGEABLE
GOAL.



... and give it
MEANING ...

WHAT ARE MY
VALUES BEHIND
THIS GOAL?



... and acknowledge
that no matter
the outcome the
effort will be
WORTHWHILE.

JUST DOING THIS
WILL EXPAND MY
SKILLS.



But now you're
down to the NITTY
GRITTY and it's
getting HARDER.

I'M
BLOCKED.



You may be
tempted to BAIL
OUT ...

I'M REALLY NOT
ENJOYING THIS!



... that's where
WILLINGNESS
comes in.

BUT I'LL
KEEP GOING!



WILLINGNESS MEANS

- ▶ making room for unpleasant thoughts and feelings in order to do something meaningful
- ▶ getting out of your comfort zone to do something you value.



WILLINGNESS DOESN'T MEAN YOU LIKE, WANT, OR APPROVE OF UNPLEASANT THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS. IT MEANS YOU ALLOW THEM, SO YOU CAN DO WHAT MATTERS.

Willingness is something we practice in small ways every day ...

WHAT THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, SENSATIONS, AND URGES AM I WILLING TO HAVE IN ORDER TO DO WHAT I VALUE?



To enjoy a movie you're willing to **PAY** for the ticket.



To go on holiday you are willing to **PACK**.



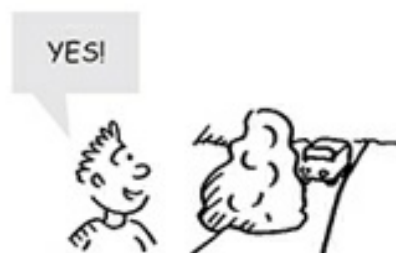
To pass an exam you're willing to **STUDY**.

Willingness is the only way to deal with OBSTACLES. When an obstacle presents itself you can say:



and your life stays stuck or gets smaller ...

OR



in which case there's no guarantee that life will get easier ...

or that there won't be another tougher or bigger obstacle down the road!



But by saying YES your life will get BIGGER.



If FINDING A PARTNER is important to you, along the way you'll experience:



And you might have some real DISAPPOINTMENTS!

Either you're WILLING to go through this or you're NOT.



HE WAS WORTH IT.

.....
You might want to change to a more MEANINGFUL JOB ...

I WANTED *STATUS* AND *MONEY*. NOW I WANT TO *HELP* PEOPLE.



which might mean:

- less pay
- years of extra study
- parental disapproval.

But if you're WILLING you might reach your goal.



EXERCISE

Make a list of what you are willing to experience in order to reach your goal.

Now ask yourself:



ARE THERE
ANY OF
THESE
I CAN'T
HANDLE?

NO!



(provided you practice EXPANSION,
DEFUSION, and CONNECTION)

WHAT
WOULD BE
USEFUL
REMINDERS?

FAMOUS
QUOTES



WHAT'S THE
SMALLEST,
EASIEST STEP I
CAN BEGIN WITH?

SEARCH
NET



AND
WHEN
WILL I
BEGIN?

NOW!



Chapter 17

A meaningful life

You can apply the **ACT** principles to ANY area of your life you'd like to improve:



HEALTH



LEISURE



**WORK/
EDUCATION**



RELATIONSHIPS



Whatever you're
doing, **ENGAGE**
FULLY with it.



Whoever you're
with be **FULLY**
PRESENT for them.



When unhelpful
thoughts arise
DEFUSE them.



Whenever
unpleasant feelings
arise **MAKE**
ROOM for them.



And whatever
your values are
be **FAITHFUL**
to them.

THE ACT SERENITY CHALLENGE

*Develop the courage to solve those problems
that can be solved, the serenity to accept
those problems that can't be solved, and the
wisdom to know the difference.*

Adapted from the "Serenity Prayer"

If your problems
CAN be solved ...

SHORT
OF CASH



... take **EFFECTIVE
ACTION** in line
with your values.

If they **CAN'T** be
solved ...

DISABILITY



... use **DEFUSION,
EXPANSION,** and
CONNECTION to
help you **ACCEPT**
this.

And be sure
to practice
CONNECTION.

FOCUS **HERE
AND NOW**



You can either **ACCEPT** *or take* **EFFECTIVE ACTION**
or do both simultaneously.

And as you take action, **ENGAGE FULLY** in what you're
doing. Act on your **VALUES** and pay attention to the effect
your actions are having.

Remember, too: the **PAST** doesn't exist; it's just **MEMORIES**
in the **PRESENT**. And the **FUTURE** doesn't exist; it's just
THOUGHTS in the **PRESENT**.

SO WHAT DOES THAT
LEAVE YOU WITH?



NOW!



REMEMBER: LIFE
GIVES MOST TO
THOSE WHO MAKE
THE *MOST* OF
WHAT LIFE *GIVES!*



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