

Forms Handouts



Compassionate Use of Exposure Strategies in

Acceptance & Commitment Therapy

A 1-day Master Class
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FACING YOUR FEARS: EXPOSURE

An important step in managing anxiety involves facing feared situations, places or objects. It is normal to want to avoid the things you fear. However, avoidance prevents you from learning that the things you fear are not as dangerous as you think.

The process of facing fears is called **EXPOSURE**. Exposure involves gradually and repeatedly going into feared situations until you feel less anxious. Exposure is not dangerous and will not make the fear worse. And after a while, your anxiety will naturally lessen.

Starting with situations that are less scary, you work your way up to facing things that cause you a great deal of anxiety. Over time, you build up confidence in those situations and may even come to enjoy them. This process often happens naturally. A person who is afraid of the water takes swimming lessons every week and practises putting their feet and legs in the water, then the whole body and, finally, diving underwater. People with a fear of water can learn to love swimming. The same process occurs when people learn to ride a bike, skate, or drive a car.

Doubts about the helpfulness of exposure?

You may have tried exposure in the past and found that it did not work. However, you may have tried to face something too scary too soon, which can be overwhelming. Or, you didn't have the chance to practise repeatedly in order to get the benefits of exposure. If done correctly, exposure can be VERY effective in overcoming fears. Be willing to try again! Follow the steps below to get the most out of exposure.

Exposure is one of the most effective ways of overcoming fears. However, it takes some planning and patience.

How To Do It

STEP 1. Make a list

Make a list of situations, places or objects that you fear. For example, if you are afraid of dogs, the list may include: looking at pictures of dogs; standing across the park from a dog on a leash; standing in the same room as a dog on a leash; standing a few feet from a dog; or petting a puppy. If you are afraid of social situations, the list may include: saying “hi” to a co-worker; asking a stranger a question; making small talk with a cashier; or calling a friend on the phone.



HELPFUL HINT: Group Fears Together. Some people have a lot of different fears, so it can help to group similar fears or specific fear themes together. For example, you may have a fear of bugs, as well as a fear of heights. Make different lists for different fear themes.

STEP 2. Build a Fear Ladder

Once you have made a list, arrange things from the least scary to the most scary. You can do this by rating how much fear you have for each situation on the list, from “0” (No fear) to “10” (Extreme fear). Once you have rated each situation, use the [Fear Ladder](#) form to make a final list.



HELPFUL HINTS: When making a fear ladder, identify a specific **goal** (such as having a meal in a restaurant), and then list the steps needed to achieve that goal (e.g., go to a restaurant and get a coffee to go; have a coffee at the restaurant and sit near the door; have a snack at the restaurant and sit near the door; have a snack at the restaurant and sit at a table in the middle of the room; have a meal at the restaurant and sit near the door; have a meal at the restaurant and sit in the middle of the room). See [Examples of Fear Ladders](#) for some ideas on building your fear ladder.

- If you have a lot of different fears, build separate ladders for each fear theme.
- Each ladder should include a whole range of situations. The ladder should include some steps you can do now with mild anxiety, some that you can do now with moderate anxiety and, finally, the steps you find too difficult to do now. It is important to start really small and take gradual steps.
- Some steps on the ladder can be broken down into smaller steps. For example, if you are afraid to talk to co-workers, facing this situation could be broken up into a number of steps such as saying “hi” to a co-worker, asking a quick question, and then talking about your weekend.

- Because it is sometimes difficult to come up with steps on the fear ladder that cause only moderate anxiety (that is, somewhere between a little and very scary), you can consider other factors that might make it easier or harder for you to do.

Some examples include:

- **Length of time:** for example, talking to someone for 30 seconds is probably less scary than talking for five minutes.
- **Time of day:** for example, driving over a bridge in the middle of the afternoon versus evening rush hour.
- **Environment:** for example, swimming at a local pool versus swimming in a lake.
- **Who is with you:** for example, going to the mall with your spouse versus alone.

See [Examples of Fear Ladders](#) for some ideas about building your fear ladder.

STEP 3. Facing fears (exposure)

- Starting with the situation that causes the least anxiety, **repeatedly** engage in that activity (e.g., saying “hi” to the bus driver everyday) until you start to feel less anxious doing it. If the situation is one that you can remain in for a **prolonged** period of time (such as standing on a balcony), stay in the situation long enough for your anxiety to lessen (e.g., standing on the balcony for 20-30 minutes). If the situation is short in duration, try “looping” it, which involves doing the same thing over and over again for a set number of times (e.g., repeatedly driving back and forth over a bridge until you start to feel less anxious or making consecutive phone calls until you feel more comfortable doing it).
- If you stay in a situation long enough (or continue engaging in a specific activity), your anxiety will start to reduce. This is because anxiety takes a lot of energy and at some point it “runs out of gas”. The longer you face something, the more you get used to it and the less anxious you will feel when you face it again.



HELPFUL HINT: It can help to track your fear level during exposure exercises and to try and remain in those situations (or continue engaging in a specific activity) until your fear level drops by about 50%. For example, if you rated holding a needle as a 6/10 on the fear scale (remember that “0” = no fear and “10” = extreme fear) then you want to continue holding the needle until your fear level drops to a 3/10.

- It is important to **plan** exposure exercises in advance; that way you feel more in control of the situation. Identify what you are going to do and when you plan to do it.
- Make sure to track your progress. See the [Facing Fears](#) form, which will help you identify how anxious you were before and after facing the feared situation, and what you learned. Make copies and fill one out each time you face a fear.
- Once you are able to enter a specific situation on several separate occasions without experiencing much anxiety you can move on to the next thing on the list.

Remember - Exposures should be planned, prolonged, and repeated!



KEY: Don't Rush! It can be very scary facing the things you fear. Be patient and take your time. Go at a pace that you can manage!

Step 5. Practise

- It is important to practise on a regular basis. Some steps can be practised daily (e.g., driving over a bridge, taking an elevator, saying “hi” to a stranger, touching doorknobs), while other steps can only be done once in a while (e.g., giving a formal presentation to a large group or taking a plane trip). However, the more often you practise the faster the fear will fade.
- Don't forget to maintain the gains that you have made. Even if you have become comfortable doing something, it's important to keep exposing yourself to it from time to time, so your fears don't creep back. For example, if you have overcome a fear of needles, you should schedule routine blood tests or donate blood every six months so that your fear of needles does not return.
- Re-rate your entire fear ladder every once in a while; that way, you can see the progress you have made, and identify the steps on the ladder you still need to tackle.

Remember, you will experience anxiety when facing fears - this is normal.

Step 6. Reward brave behaviour

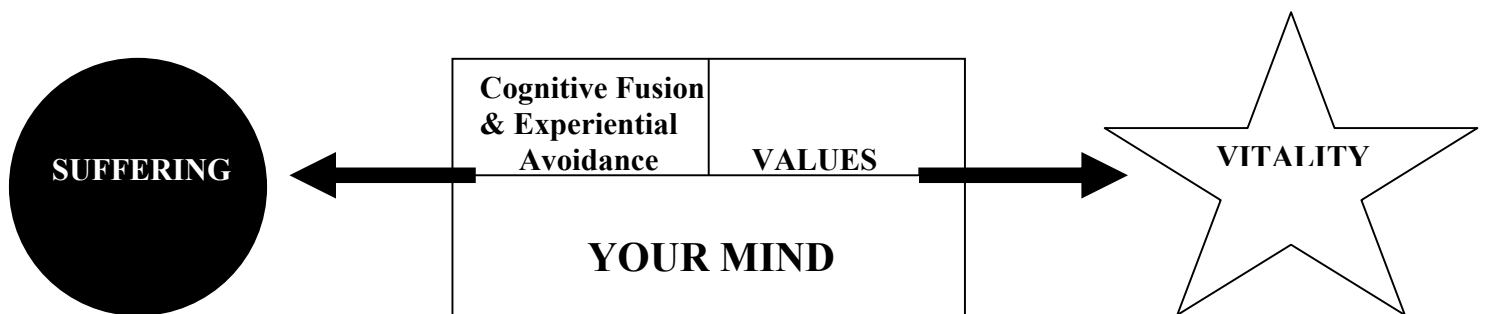
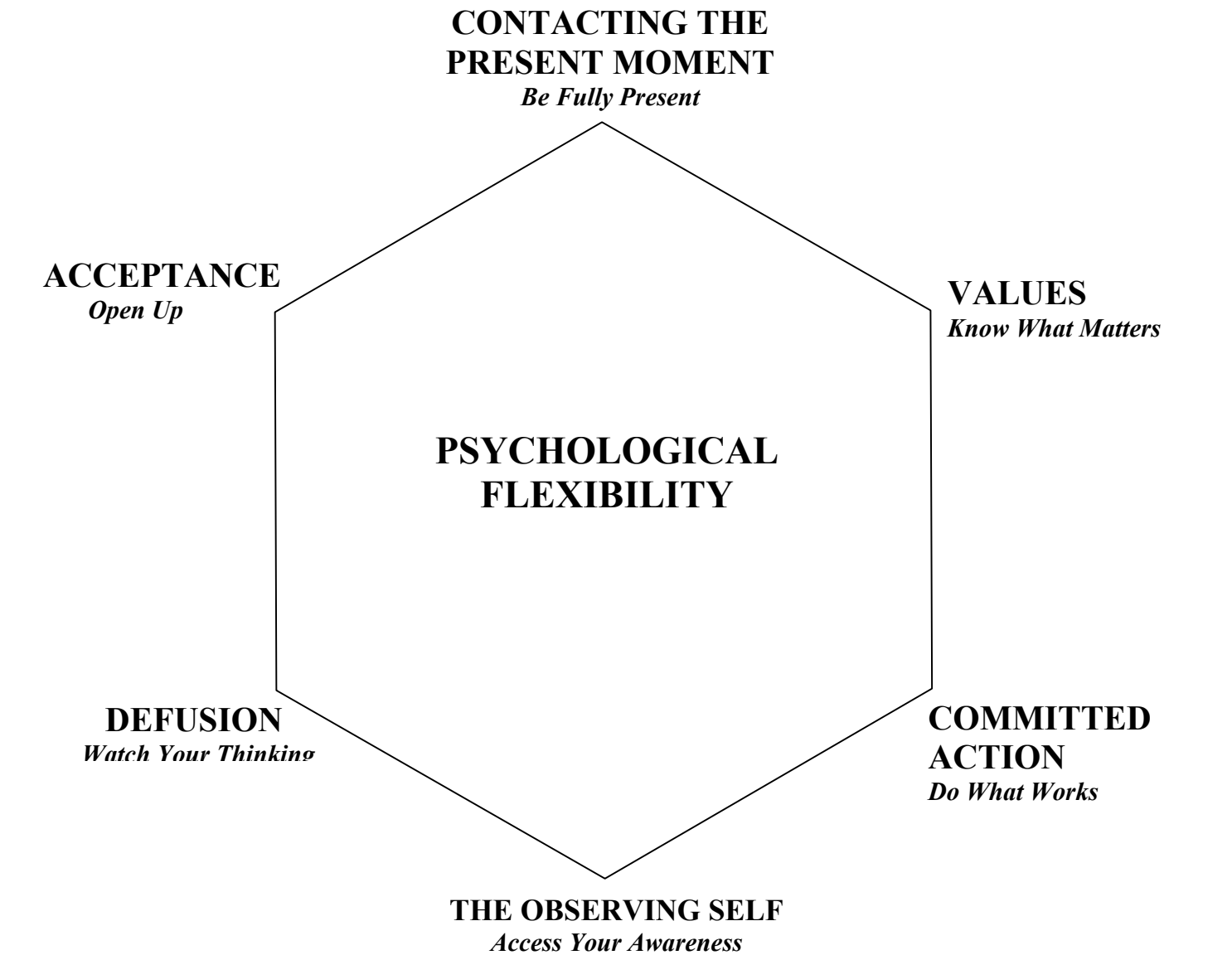
- It's not easy facing fears. Reward yourself when you do it!
- It may be helpful to use specific rewards as a motivation to achieve a goal. For example, plan to purchase a special gift for yourself (DVD, CD, book, treat) or engage in a fun activity (rent a movie, go to the movies, go out for lunch or dinner, plan a relaxing evening) after you reach a goal.
- Don't forget the power of positive self-talk (e.g., "I did it!").

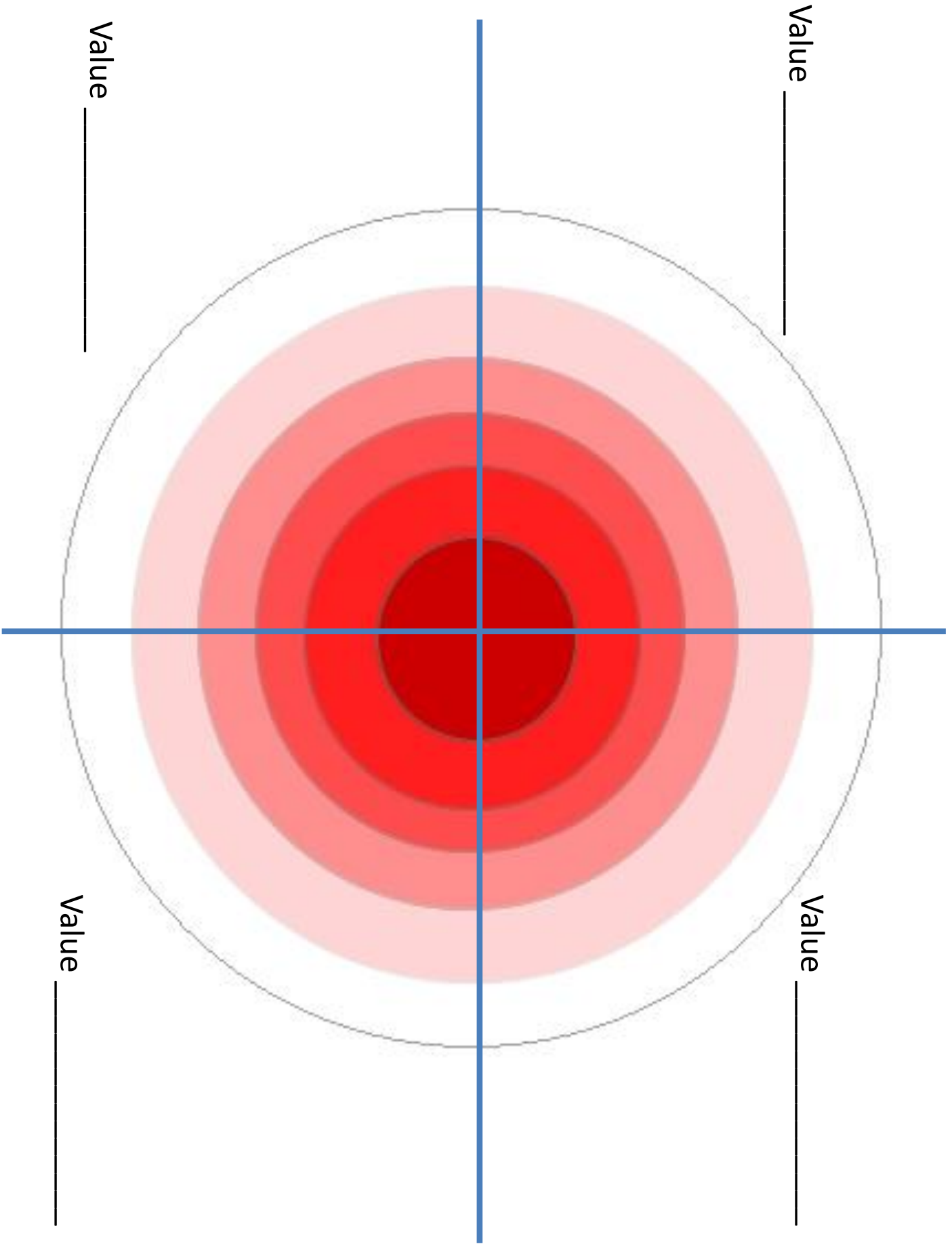


TIP: Don't be discouraged if your fears start creeping back. This can happen from time to time, especially during stressful periods or transitions (for example, starting a new job or moving). This is normal. It just means that you need to start practising using the tools – plan some exposures! Remember, coping with anxiety is a lifelong process.

For more information on how to maintain your progress and how to cope with relapses in symptoms, see [How to Prevent a Relapse](#) .

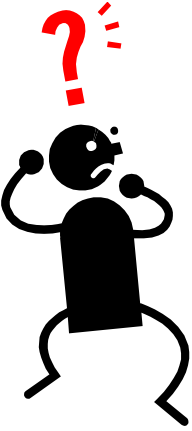
ACCEPTANCE & COMMITMENT THERAPY





MY BARRIERS

Important Value Area (From Values Worksheet: _____)

YOU	Barriers	VALUE INTENTIONS
		

Kindness Script and Exercises

Adapted from *ACT Online for OIF / OEF Veterans Study* (Forsyth, Hickling, Kipp)

Script / Rationale:

I'd like to start off here by acknowledging something that has to do with you and me and life in general ... There are countless people, all over the world, and from all walks of life, who have suffered and continue to suffer. Some can't see. Others can't walk. Some can't speak or hear. Many more are hungry, thirsty, cold and struggle to make it to another day. Others suffer day in and day out with incurable illnesses or disease, and live with physical pain and emotional discomfort almost daily. And many more have lived through extraordinary circumstances ... like war and violence, trauma, abuse, losses, hardship ... Countless souls wake up each day with many good reasons to give up and walk away from life... but they don't. They go on and find a way to make the most of the time they've been given ... You may have heard stories of such people. You might be one yourself. Or, you may know someone that fits this profile.

And, you may ask yourself this – what little secret do they have that allows them to go forward and live their lives with all the pain and hardship that they carry?

Well, their secret's really no secret at all. What they've learned to do is to be kinder and more compassionate with themselves. They've learned to drop the rope and treat themselves – body, mind, and soul – just as they would something precious, like a newborn baby. Take a second and imagine that ...

Suppose I were to hand you a newborn infant. If you're willing, go ahead and put your arms out as if I were passing a baby off to you to hold. Now take it in your arms ... and notice ... How are you holding it? Are you holding the baby lightly and with the greatest of care? Did you bring your arms closer to your chest and body? Are you being careful, kind, and gentle? And notice that even if you think of yourself as someone who is tough and strong, you're still capable of acting in ways that are kind and gentle. Notice too, you may not have to FEEL kindness toward the baby in order to ACT kindly ...

That's what we're talking about here ... when you learn to treat your mind and body with kindness and compassion you are doing something that is directly opposite of unkindness and warfare ... You are giving yourself a gift and letting yourself off the hook ...

Consider that for a moment. What does your experience tell you about how you tend to respond to the discomfort you feel in your body? Do you hold it like that newborn, or something fragile that you don't want to break? Or, do you harden, resist, grab the rope and struggle, and let your physical discomfort take over your life bus? This is the difference between kindness and warfare ... And, when people get caught up in warfare with themselves, they tend to do lots of things to buy themselves some relief. But the relief never seems to last for very long, and so they're right back at it again in what can seem like a never-ending struggle. You may feel that way too, like you're stuck, living a life that doesn't give you much satisfaction or joy. And, if that's true of your experience, then maybe it's time to explore what kindness might offer you.

Before we go further, I'd like to invite you to practice an exercise that will help you bring a bit of kindness and gentleness to your bodily sensations ... and anything else your mind throws into the mix about them ... If you're willing, approach the exercise just as you might holding that newborn infant ... with a sense of softness and gentleness ... See if you can allow yourself to open up to your experience and treat it with the greatest of care, whatever that might be for you. As we do the exercise, follow along as best you can, eyes closed or open.

The Exercise -- A Kind and Gentle Hand (4-5 min):

Begin by getting yourself in a comfortable position. Sit upright and allow yourself to get centered with a few slow breaths in ... and out ... in ... and out.

- Now bring to mind a situation that you've been struggling with [select something from the client's experience, an area linked with their values]. See if you can put yourself in that situation ... Where were you? What happened? What were you doing? What were others saying or doing? See if you can give yourself permission to be present with this experience as fully as you can. Notice how you reacted then. [pause] And, notice how you may be reacting now. [pause]

- Slow things down as best you can ... and notice difficult thoughts and physical sensations that may be showing up right now. Just stay with this experience as best you can ... [pause]
- Now pick one of your hands and imagine that this is the hand of a person that leaves you feeling good, understood, loved, and cared for ... It may be someone from your distant past, or someone in your life now ... Just allow your hand to be filled with the feelings you have when you're around that kind and caring person ... [pause]
- When you're ready, place this hand, slowly and gently, on whichever part of your body that hurts most ... You may feel more pain in your chest, or perhaps you feel discomfort in your stomach, head, or neck. Or, you may notice physical changes like tensing, or your heartbeat picking up ... Just pick one part of your body where the feelings and physical sensations are most intense and place that hand there.
- And, if you feel numb anywhere, you can place the hand on that part of your body that feels numb. Or, if you're not feeling much of anything that's hard for you to have, just go ahead and place that loving hand on your chest.
- Allow that kind and loving hand to rest gently on you ... Feel it against your skin and clothes ... And notice the warmth flowing from the palm of your hand into your body and to the place of discomfort... Imagine that hand as a hand of healing ... that it's opening your heart to be present with you, to be kind to yourself.
- Just hold that hand of kindness on you gently ... Allow yourself to open up to this gentle action, feeling waves of caring and warmth penetrating your body ... Notice any softening ... spaciousness ... as you do that ... [longer pause]
- Go on now to make one last gesture of kindness with both hands ... Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly Let them gently rest there as you hold yourself kindly ... Take as long as you wish to sit this way Just caring for yourself, being with yourself, giving yourself comfort, caring, and support ... This is something you can do for yourself ... anytime, anywhere. [longer pause]
- As we end of this practice, allow yourself to come back to the present, with the intention to bring kindness to yourself, your barriers, and your life.

Post Exercise Debrief

This exercise can be hard to do. Your mind may have been judging this as some “weak” or “touchy feely” kind of exercise. And, if those thoughts showed up and got in your way, just notice that ... Learning to be kind toward ourselves is a skill – it's not something we're born with ... You don't need anyone else to provide it for you either – you give it to yourself like you were doing in the exercise a moment ago! But that requires practice, and for many, it doesn't come naturally.

So, allow yourself time to repeat this exercise. As you practice, bring up other situations that call out your physical discomfort and other barriers ... And then apply that kind and caring hand to areas of your body where the discomfort is strongest ... With practice, kindness and self-compassion will become a habit in your life ... In a way, the practice is like working to build muscle, but here you're building your kindness muscles. With that newfound strength, you'll be able to give yourself kindness anytime, anywhere....

And remember, kindness and compassion aren't feelings, they're actions. They're something you do with your hands, feet, and mouth. In fact, you may have already made the connection between kindness and your values. Like, whenever you do something that moves you closer to one of your values, you're also being kind to yourself. And, when you make the choice to let go of struggling with yourself and allow yourself to be as you are, you're also doing something kind for yourself. So, this isn't some “far out” woo woo stuff we're talking about. This is about your life!

And, these skills may not come naturally to you either ... Your mind may tell you that being kind and compassionate are signs of weakness, or being soft ... But let me tell you something ... It takes commitment and courage to be kind and compassionate with yourself... In fact, the easy path is to just turn and walk away from the pain and challenges life offers. Or, to get tangled up in a tug of war with

your mind, body, memories, and life ... The harder path is to open yourself up, totally present with the experience, aware, gentle, caring... this is the stance I'd like to help you develop towards your bodily sensations and other forms of discomfort that get in the way of the life you want to lead.

Exercise for Traumatic/Painful Memories -- Being Kind With Your Old Wounds (10 min):

Begin by getting yourself in a comfortable position. Sit upright and allow yourself to get grounded with a few slow breaths in ... and out.

- Now bring to mind a memory that you've been struggling with [again, link memory to client's values]. Or, maybe it's a memory that you've been struggling with for a very long time. See if you can put yourself in that situation. Where were you? What happened? What were you doing? What were others saying or doing? Watch it as if it was unfolding on a movie screen. See if you can give yourself permission to be present with this experience as fully as you can. Notice how you reacted then. [pause] And, notice how you may be reacting to the memory now. [pause]
- Slow things down as best you can ... and notice the thoughts as thoughts, images as images, physical sensations as sensations, emotions as emotions ... just as they are. Watch and gently observe parts of your experience as they come and go as you take the perspective of the chessboard. There's nothing to do but notice. You don't have to take sides...just stay with this experience as best you can and breathe [pause]
- Now release that difficult image with a large grounding breath in and out through your feet, and then imagine an earlier time in your life – one long before the difficult memory. Go back as far as you can remember ... to a time in your early childhood when you remember feeling good. See if you can visualize that younger you then – notice your face and eyes as a child, your hair, what you were wearing, and how small you were. And, notice where you were, what you were doing, what you were experiencing that left you feeling whole and complete, even if that was brief.
- Now, imagine that younger you is standing in front of you now, and comes over to sit on your lap. That younger you has no idea what the future holds. Only you know. And, you know what that child will eventually experience in life because you've lived through it.
- As you hold that younger you on your lap, what advice would you share with them, knowing all that you know about what they'll face in the future? How would you respond to that younger you, knowing what you know about what they'll live through? What does that little child need from you? What do they need to hear from you? Take a moment to hear your words as you look into the eyes of the younger you from very long ago. And notice that YOU were there then and YOU here now too.
- Linger with this experience for a few moments. When you're ready, allow yourself to slowly come back to an awareness of sitting where you are right now ... see if you can bring a sense of kindness to your experience now and to any old wounds that you remember. As you do, hear the words that you shared with the smaller you and extend them to your experience now. Sense any gentleness and compassion you may have felt with the younger you and bring that to yourself and your experience now. What do you need from yourself right now?
- As this exercise comes to a close, make one last gesture of kindness with both hands. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. Let them gently rest there as you hold yourself kindly ... Take as long as you wish to sit this way Just caring for yourself, being with yourself, giving yourself comfort, caring, and support ... Gently remind yourself that you are more than what you lived through, however difficult or painful it may be to remember. [longer pause]
- As this time for practice comes to a close, allow yourself to come back to the present, with the intention to bring kindness to yourself, your history and old wounds, and your life.

EXERCISE: ACCEPTANCE OF THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS



Get in a comfortable position in your chair. Sit upright with your feet flat on the floor, your arms and legs uncrossed, and your hands resting in your lap (palms up or down, whichever is more comfortable). Allow your eyes to close gently.

Take a few moments to get in touch with the movement of your breath and the sensations in your body. Bring your awareness to the physical sensations in your body, especially to the sensations of touch or pressure, where your body makes contact with the chair or floor.

Now, slowly bring your attention to the gentle rising and falling of your breath in your chest and belly. Like ocean waves coming in and out, your breath is always there. Notice its rhythm in your body. Focus on each inhale . . . and exhale. Notice the changing patterns of sensations in your belly as you breathe in and as you breathe out. Take a few moments to feel the physical sensations as you breathe in and out.

There's no need to control your breathing in any way—simply let the breath breathe itself. As best you can, bring an attitude of generous allowing and gentle acceptance to the rest of your experience. There's nothing to be fixed, no particular state to be achieved. Simply allow your experience to be your experience, without needing it to be other than what it is.

Sooner or later your mind will wander away from the breath to other concerns, thoughts, worries, images, bodily sensations, planning, or daydreams, or it may just drift along. This is what minds do much of the

time. When you notice that your mind has wandered, gently congratulate yourself—you have come back and are once more aware of your experience!

You may want to acknowledge briefly where your mind has been (“Ah, there’s thinking” or “There’s feeling”). Then, gently escort your attention back to the breath coming in and going out. As best you can, bring a quality of kindness and compassion to your awareness. See the wanderings of your mind as opportunities to bring patience and gentle curiosity to your experience.

When you become aware of bodily sensations and feelings, tension, or other intense sensations in parts of your body, just notice them, acknowledge their presence, and see if you can make space for them. Don’t try to hold on to them or make them go away. Open your heart. Make some room for the discomfort, for the tension, for the anxiety, just allowing them to be there. Is there enough space in you to welcome in all of your experiences?

Watch the sensations change from moment to moment. Sometimes they grow stronger, sometimes they stay the same, and sometimes they grow weaker—it doesn’t really matter what they do. Breathe calmly in to and out *from* the sensations of discomfort, imagining the breath moving in *to* and out *from* that region of the body. Remember, the purpose is not to feel *better* but to get better at *feeling and being with all that is you, as it is*.

If you notice that you’re unable to focus on your breathing because of intense physical sensations of discomfort, let go of your focus on the breath and shift your focus to the place of discomfort. Gently direct your attention *on* and *into* the discomfort and stay with it, no matter how bad it seems. Take a look at it. What does it *really* feel like? Again, see if you can make room for the discomfort and allow it to be there. Are you willing to be with whatever you have?

Along with physical sensations in your body, you may also notice thoughts about the sensations and thoughts about the thoughts. You may notice your mind coming up with evaluations such as “dangerous” or “getting worse.” If that happens, simply label those evaluations as “thinking” and return to the present experience as it is, not as your mind says it is, noticing thoughts as thoughts, physical sensations as physical sensations, feelings as feelings—nothing more, nothing less.

To help you experience the difference between yourself and your thoughts and feelings, you can name thoughts and feelings as you notice them. For instance, if you notice you’re worrying, silently say to yourself, “Worry . . . there is worry,” just observing worry and not judging yourself for having these thoughts and feelings. If you find yourself judging, just notice that and call it “Judging . . . there is judging” and observe that with a quality of kindness and compassion.

You can do the same with other thoughts and feelings and just name them as “planning,” “reminiscing,” “longing,” or whatever you experience. Label the thought or emotion and move on. Thoughts and feelings come and go in your mind and body. You are not what those thoughts and feelings say, no matter how persistent or intense they may be. You are the place and the space for your experience. Make that space a kind space, a gentle space, a loving space, a welcome home.

As this time for formal practice comes to an end, gradually widen your attention to take in the sounds around you . . . notice your surroundings and slowly open your eyes with the intention to bring this awareness to the present moment and into the upcoming moments of the day.

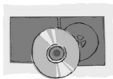
In our previous exercises, we have used the breath as the focus of attention. When your mind wandered off and started focusing on thoughts, worries, images, or feelings, you were asked to notice these thoughts and feelings and then gently redirect attention back to your breath.

In this exercise, we're simply building on the skills you've been learning. What's new is the expanded focus of the practice. Here, you'll be actively and openly inviting into your awareness bodily sensations and unwanted thoughts, worries, and images so that you may learn to approach them in a more accepting and compassionate way. Just like the finger trap and tug-of-war exercises, this exercise encourages you to lean into anxiety rather than fight it. This will create space for you to feel your emotions and think your thoughts as they are, not as your mind tells you they are.

You'll practice opening up to uncomfortable feelings and thoughts rather than rushing to fix or change them. As you do that, you're dropping the rope and willingly making space for WAFs when they're present—because they're present anyway. And with that, you'll get more space to do the things with your life that you may have put on hold for a long time. Are you willing to do an exercise to help you do that?

If you are willing, we suggest you select a quiet place where you feel comfortable and distraction is limited. Let's call this your kind space, your peaceful place. Go through the exercise slowly and pause after each section. It will take about fifteen minutes.

The easiest way to do this exercise is by listening to the recording (the male- or female-voice version) on the CD that comes with this book. After practicing with the CD for a week or two, you may prefer to practice at your own pace without the CD. If you'd like, you can occasionally go back and do the exercise while listening to the recording again.



EXERCISE: ACCEPTANCE OF ANXIETY



Go ahead and get in a comfortable position in your chair. Sit upright with your feet flat on the floor, your arms and legs uncrossed, and your hands resting in your lap (palms up or down). Allow your eyes to close gently.

Take a few moments to get in touch with the physical sensations in your body, especially the sensations of touch or pressure where your body makes contact with the chair or floor. Notice the gentle rising and falling of your breath in your chest and belly. There's no need to control your breathing in any way—simply let the breath breathe itself. As best you can, also bring this attitude of kind allowing and gentleness to the rest of your experience. There's nothing to be fixed. Simply allow your experience to be your experience, without needing it to be other than what it is.

It's natural for your mind to wander away to thoughts, worries, images, bodily sensations, or feelings. Notice these thoughts and feelings, acknowledge their presence, and stay with them. There's no need to think of something else, make them go away, or resolve anything. As best you can, allow them to be . . . giving yourself space to have whatever you have . . . bringing a quality of kindness and compassion to your experience.

Allow yourself to be present to what you are afraid of. Notice any doubts, reservations, fears, and worries. Just notice them and acknowledge their presence, and don't work on them. As you do that, allow yourself to be present with your values and commitments. Ask yourself, "Why am I here?" "Where do I want to go?" "What do I want to do?"

When you're ready, gently shift your attention to a thought or situation that has been difficult for you. It could be a troubling thought, worry, image, or intense bodily sensation. Gently, directly, and firmly shift your attention on and into the discomfort, no matter how bad it seems. Notice any strong feelings that may arise in your body, allowing them to be as they are rather than what your mind tells you they are. Simply hold them in awareness. Stay with your discomfort and breathe with it. See if you can gently open up to it and make space for it, accepting and allowing it to be while bringing compassionate and focused attention to the discomfort.

If you notice yourself tensing up and resisting, pushing away from the experience, just acknowledge that and see if you can make some space for whatever you're experiencing. Must this feeling or thought be your enemy? Or can you have it, notice it, own it, and let it be? Can you make room for the discomfort, for the tension, for the anxiety? What does it really feel like—moment to moment—to have it all? Is this something you *must* struggle with, or can you invite the discomfort in, saying to yourself, "Let me have it; let me feel what there is to be felt because it is my experience right now"?

If the sensations or discomfort grow stronger, acknowledge that, stay with them, breathing with them, and accepting them. Is this discomfort something you *must not* have, you *cannot* have? Can you open up a space for the discomfort in your heart? Is there room inside you to feel that, with compassion and kindness toward yourself and your experience?

As you open up and embrace your experience, you may notice thoughts coming along with the physical sensations, and you may see thoughts about your thoughts. When that happens, invite them in too . . . softening and opening to them as you become aware of them. You may also notice your mind coming up with judgmental labels such as "dangerous" or "getting worse." If that happens, you can simply thank your mind for the label and return to the present experience as it is, not as your mind says it is, noticing thoughts as thoughts, physical sensations as physical sensations, feelings as feelings—nothing more, nothing less.

Stay with your discomfort for as long as it pulls on your attention. If and when you sense that the anxiety and other discomfort are no longer pulling for your attention, let them go.

As this time for practice comes to a close, gradually widen your attention to take in the sounds around you. Take a moment to make the intention to bring this sense of gentle allowing and self-acceptance into the present moment and the rest of your day. Then, slowly open your eyes.

This exercise can be challenging. This is the first time you're deliberately welcoming in your WAF experiences and practicing a new response to them. Don't let that challenge (a judgment) stand in the way of you doing the exercise again this week and in the weeks to come. It'll get easier over time.

Remember that mindful acceptance is a skill. Like a seedling, it needs to be cultivated in order to grow. It has many possible results, not just one. You may feel relaxed during or after the exercise, or you may not. You may feel tense and keyed up at some point, or you may not. You may experience sadness or regret, or you may not. These and other responses are just fine.

ACT Willingness FEAR Ladder

Valued Direction: _____

Willingness

Yes No

FEAR

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Willingness

Yes No

FEAR

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Willingness

Yes No

FEAR

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Willingness

Yes No

FEAR

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Willingness

Yes No

FEAR

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Willingness

Yes No

FEAR

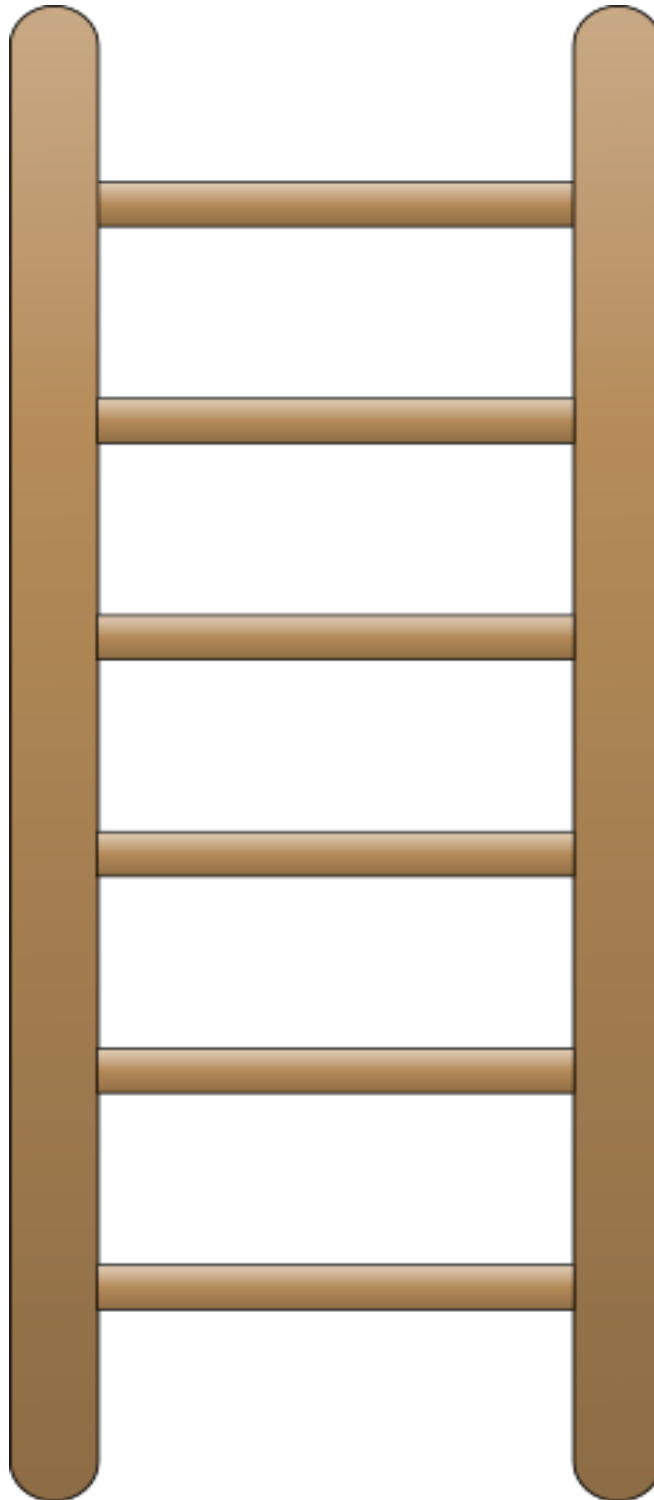
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Willingness

Yes No

FEAR

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



Willingness with Physical Discomfort Exposure Exercises

Adapted from the ACT Online for OIF / OEF Veterans Study (Forsyth, Hickling, Kip)

The exercises below will help you practice being with, and moving with, physical barriers that block your path toward your values. The exercises build upon values work, willingness, and practice with mindfulness, defusion, and compassion. This foundational set is then expanded out to other sources of discomfort that show up in real-life situations.

Before going on, take a moment to center yourself and review your *Values* and *Barriers Worksheets*. Look for places where your struggle with unpleasant physical sensations has stood between you and what you want to do—your values.

We've found that people benefit most when they do all of the exercises that apply to the barriers that keep them stuck. Each provides you with skills to weaken the power of physical barriers and gives you a chance to practice developing willingness with bodily discomfort.

5 Steps for Developing Willingness with Bodily Sensations

All of the exercises below follow the steps outlined below. Keep these steps handy as you first do the exercises. Then commit them to memory. Remember to apply all of the skills you have been learning up to this point as you do each exercise. Here are the steps:

1. **Identify a physical sensation that is a barrier for you.** Review your *Values* and *Barriers Worksheets* for a physical sensation that blocks your valued path. Take a moment to connect with that value, *flip on your willingness switch*, and keep your value in mind as you do the exercises. Remember, you are doing this for a reason greater than just getting with your barrier. You're doing it for your life.
2. **Select an exercise to practice.** Each of the following exercises will bring up physical sensations in different ways. Select one that may bring up a physical sensation that has been difficult for you. Begin by picking one from the list of exercises below. After you have practiced, find a situation that tends to bring that sensation up for you and practice your new skills in your everyday life.
3. **Start, and stick with, the exercise.** Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed and do the exercise. After you start, stick with it just beyond the point that you first notice sensations of discomfort, which will usually show up within 30 to 60 seconds. Start small, and gradually work up to longer practice sessions with the exercises. Bring a sense of kind allowing and gentleness to your experience during this time.
4. **When finished, apply your mindfulness and self-kindness skills.** After you've noticed the sensations of physical discomfort, stop the exercise. Then, go ahead and sit comfortably and continue opening up and getting present with your experience for 1 to 2 minutes, just noticing your thoughts and sensations as they are. Use your mindfulness and other skills from this program during this time of rest and awareness.
5. **Reflect and repeat.** Take some time to gently reflect on what you learned. Were you willing, or did you experience high levels of unwillingness and struggle? If you struggled, repeat the exercise again more slowly, watching for sticky thoughts like "*This isn't working*" or "*I can't stand this sensation.*" Simply notice these thoughts from the observer perspective of your Wise Mind, and gently remind yourself "*I'm having the thought that ...*" Or simply label them all as "*thinking.*" Aim for two to three repetitions of an exercise per sitting when you start out, allowing yourself a mindful rest period between each repetition. When you are 100% willing to have your experience, move on to another one of the exercises. If you like, you can keep a journal of your reactions and notes as you practice.

Physical Health Check

If you haven't done so already, check in with your doctor to see that you are physically able to do the exercises. Most involve mild-to-moderate physical activity. If you suffer from any of the following health conditions, we suggest that you not do the exercises until you've talked with your doctor.

- Asthma or lung problems
- A heart condition
- Pregnancy
- Epilepsy
- Physical injuries (neck, joint, back)
- History of fainting/low blood pressure

Should your doctor recommend against you doing one or more of these exercises, then you can still practice them by imagining doing what they say. Remember the goal is to practice being with discomfort in all its forms, whenever and in whatever form it may take.

Willingness *With* Dizziness

Moving your head and body through space at a rate faster than your brain's balance system can keep up with will produce sensations of dizziness. Some people experience lightheadedness, a sense of imbalance or floating, and nausea while practicing. These are all expected reactions. It's fine if you need to sit down between practice sessions. Just watch that you don't go to sitting or lying flat on the floor as a way to avoid your sensations. If you remain in a standing or sitting position while dizzy, you'll notice that the sensations will pass without you having to do anything about them.

To start, find a space where you won't be disturbed or fall or hurt yourself during the practice. It is best to keep your eyes open as you practice mindful acceptance with sensations of dizziness, unsteadiness, or vertigo. Here are some suggested exercises:

- **Staring at a spot.** Position yourself 1 to 2 feet from a wall. Find a small spot on the wall and stare at it for 2 minutes. Try to resist blinking as much as you can. Then, turn away quickly and focus on something else in the distance.
- **Spinning.** Using a swivel chair, spin yourself around as quickly as you can by pushing off of the floor. You can then vary this by spinning while standing up, then while standing with your arms outstretched.
- **Head between legs.** Get in a sitting position. Place your head between your legs (at the knees) and hold it there for about 30 seconds. Then, sit upright quickly. Do this gently if you have a history of back problems. You can play with this exercise by repeating it from a standing position.
- **Shaking head.** From a standing position, move your head back and forth from side-to-side for at least 30 seconds, or until the sensations are first noticed. Do this in a way that is steady and not too vigorous. Then stop, and focus straight ahead.

Willingness *With* Breathlessness

Feeling out of breath or short of breath is a common experience. These sensations happen naturally when our normal blood-gas balance gets out of sync, specifically the balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide. Your body is set up to restore this blood-gas balance without effort on your part, and the main way it does this is by getting you to breathe faster or more heavily than you normally would. Along with the sensations of breathlessness, you may also experience lightheadedness, dizziness, a sense of detachment from yourself, blurred vision, tingling, heart flutters and chest tightness, or numbness in areas of the body.

These experiences are normal. They happen as a consequence of what we do—many activities have the potential to bring them on, such doing yard work, working out, or playing with your children. You can willingly bring on these sensations with any of the exercises below.

- **Breath-holding.** Take a deep breath and hold it for as long as you can. Start by doing the exercise while sitting down with your eyes open. Later, vary it by doing it longer while sitting, and then standing with eyes open or closed.
- **Breathing through a small straw.** This is the exercise Kate did during Module 5. You can find straws at your local supermarket or restaurant. Breathe through the straw for at least 30 seconds while you pinch your nostrils closed with your free hand. Gradually lengthen the time you do the breathing from there. The important thing is to take it slow. When you can be with the discomfort without pulling back

from it, you are ready to challenge yourself in terms of length or new variations such as breathing through a straw with eyes closed or open, while standing or sitting, or while walking up and down stairs.

- **Over-breathing.** Breathing too quickly and deeply leads to hyperventilation. You can willingly bring it on yourself by taking rapid inhales and exhales at a pace of about 1 breath every 2 seconds. Start in a sitting position and take in a deep breath and then exhale fully, and repeat. Use a watch with a second hand and see if you can do it for at least 60 seconds at first, and then work your way up to 2 or 3 minutes.

Willingness *With* General Arousal

Engaging in your life requires that you get out and move. All of the following aerobic exercises get you out and moving. And, all are good for you in more than one way. They'll buy you a renewed sense of freedom, increase your vitality, range of options, and more. Remember to keep your values in view as you move into your discomfort.

Rather than avoiding activities or exercise because of the possibility of physical discomfort, practice willingness by deliberately moving with physical arousal that must happen within your body as you get moving. There are many ways you can do that, and most have the added benefit of being good for your health. Here are a few:

- **Fast walking.** Walking engages your entire body and it's a great way to practice making space for bodily discomfort. Start walking indoors or outside, slowly, and work up to a fast, comfortable pace. Allow enough walking time so that you're able to notice and experience any bodily discomfort. It's best to do this exercise without other distractions (e.g., listening to music). When you can willingly be with your body while walking, you can then add the headphones.
- **Jogging in place.** After you're willing to be with your experience while walking fast, jogging can be an excellent next exercise. Begin by jogging in place, and when you feel that you have let go of the struggle with your sensations, begin taking short runs through your neighborhood, gradually increasing the time you spend jogging. Plan a route that circles back to your house so you won't find yourself too tired to make it back home when you are finished. Jogging will get your heart and respiratory system going.
- **Climbing steps.** Simply go up and down a few steps, over and over again, until you begin to notice bodily discomfort. You can then increase the number and duration of practice (e.g., 2 steps, 5 steps, 10 steps, a flight or several flights of stairs).
- **Other aerobic exercises.** The list of possible aerobic exercises is only limited by your imagination. For instance, you could do aerobic exercises while doing household chores like vacuuming, cleaning, mowing the lawn, raking the yard—anything that gets your body going. You can go swimming, hiking, bike riding, or shopping too. And even running errands or sexual activities are good forms of aerobic exercise.

Pause and Reflect

Take a moment to reflect on your practice and your progress with the exercises we've covered. Are you making a conscious choice to turn on your willingness switch? Are you meeting the discomfort that you are producing in a new way – more as an observer, with kindness, gentleness, and compassion? Do you have your values and living well in focus? Take stock. There's no need to rush. And, it's ok if this doesn't come easy. Be kind and patient with yourself. These small moments will add up to something new in your life.

Emotional Contact Exercise

A less Nefarious Way to Speak About Exposure

Adapted from the *ACT Online OIF / OEF Veterans Study* (Forsyth, Hickling, Kip)

Script / Rationale:

When you make full contact with something you can touch it, look at it, and savor it just as it is. Basically, you're opening up and taking it all in. Like right now, you're watching me, listening. AND, right now, you're also in contact with many other things in your environment; maybe the computer, the lighting or temperature, a desk, the chair you're sitting in, or even your mood and how you're feeling physically. You already have plenty of practice contacting people and objects in your world. And you can learn to do the same with your emotional life.

Now, in a moment, we're going to walk you through an exercise to help you open up to emotional barriers that get in your way. Just like you saw with the finger trap and tug of war, this exercise will help you lean into difficult emotions. As you do that, you'll create space to do things with your life that have been put on hold for a long time.

Be mindful that this exercise will teach you skills, AND it may be challenging at first, especially if you're not used to being open to what you feel. That's ok. There's no right or wrong way to do this. Just follow along as best you can, and practice just being with what shows up, noticing your experience as it is.

It's perfectly ok to approach contacting difficult feelings in small, gradual steps too. With each step, you'll get closer to knowing what it's like to feel what you feel – what it's really like to just be with yourself ... AND, you'll learn to lean in when you'd normally pull away.

Before we get started, you may want to go back and review the values that you care about but struggle to act on. These are the areas of your life that are probably obstructed by barriers. Then, allow yourself to imagine acting in ways that support each blocked value until you notice a value that triggers an emotion or feeling that you'd rather not have, or tend to avoid quite a bit ... This is the value you'll start with and we'd like you to keep it in mind as you do the exercise. Now, it's on the long side, about 10-15 minutes, but it's well worth the time ... So, when you're ready and have your willingness switch turned ON, click below to start the exercise.

Emotional Contact Exercise (10-15 min):

Get in a comfortable position in your chair. Sit upright with your feet flat on the floor, your arms and legs uncrossed, and your hands resting in your lap (palms up or down). It's best to close your eyes for this exercise, but if you'd rather keep your eyes open, you can do that too by focusing on a spot on the floor just in front of you. The exercise will end with a small chime to tell you when to open your eyes and move on. [pause]

- Notice the gentle rising and falling of your breath in your chest and belly. There's no need to control your breathing in any way—simply let the breath breathe itself. As best you can, also bring this attitude of kind allowing and gentleness to the rest of your experience. There's nothing to be fixed. Simply allow your experience to be your experience, without needing it to be other than what it is. [longer pause]
- Take a few moments to get in touch with the physical sensations in your body, especially the sensations of touch or pressure where your body makes contact with the chair or floor. [pause]
- It's natural for your mind to wander away to thoughts, worries, images, unpleasant sensations, or feelings. Notice and acknowledge their presence, and stay with them. There's no need to think of something else, make them go away, or resolve anything. As best you can, allow them to be . . . giving yourself space to have whatever you have . . . bringing a quality of kindness and compassion to your experience. [longer pause]
- When you're ready, gently shift your attention to a value you've had difficulty with because of a strong emotion. In your mind's eye, visualize the situation and bring it to life as vividly as you can.

Where are you? Notice all the details of your environment. See who's present and what's being said.

- Continue to watch the scene slowly unfold, as if it's being projected on a movie screen one frame at a time. As the scene unfolds, pay attention to your feelings – hurt, anger, shame, sadness, and especially FEAR. See yourself in that situation, wanting to act but getting stopped by emotional blocks, troubling thoughts, worries, images, or intense bodily sensations. See if you can find words to describe what you feel ... notice the strength of your feelings ... slowly ... Notice any impulse to escape, shut down, or push the feelings away. Be aware of any desire to retreat from your valued actions in this situation [pause]
- As you imagine the scene, notice what's showing up inside of you ... and notice any strong feelings that may arise in your body, allowing them to be as they are ... Hold them in your awareness and see if you can really make contact with the feeling. Notice how you're experiencing the feeling in your body. Then, gently, directly, and firmly shift your attention on and into the discomfort.
- Stay with your discomfort and breathe... See if you can gently open up and make space for it, accepting and allowing it to be while bringing a sense of kindness and focused attention to the discomfort. [pause]
- If you notice yourself resisting, pushing away from the experience, just acknowledge that and see if you can make some space for whatever you're experiencing. Notice that you can notice your thoughts, sensations, feelings and urges from the shores of your wise observer self ... You may even silently say to yourself "I'm having the thought that ..." or "I'm experiencing a sensation in my body," or "I'm feeling the urge to ..."
- As you continue to watch, gently ask yourself if this feeling or thought is really your enemy. Can you have it, notice it, own it, and let it be? Can you make room for the discomfort, for the tension, for the anxiety, for the sadness, for the unease? What does it really feel like—moment to moment—to have it all? [pause]
- Is this something you must struggle with, or can you invite the discomfort in? ... See if you can make a choice to meet each automatic response with something that goes against the grain ...If you notice the urge to pull back, then gently lean in ... if the urge is to freeze, then kindly move ... to frown, smile ... or if the urge is to lash out in anger, be still and silent ...
- If the feelings or sensations in your body grow stronger, acknowledge that, stay with them, breathing with them, and open up to them. Is there room inside you to feel what you feel, with compassion and kindness toward yourself and your experience? See if you can soften to it. [pause]
- As you open up and welcome your experience, you may notice thoughts coming along with the physical sensations and feelings, and you may notice thoughts about your thoughts. When that happens, invite them in too . . . softening and opening to them as you become aware of them. [pause] Are these really your enemies? [pause]
- Your mind may come up with judgmental labels such as "bad," "getting worse," or "can't stand this." Simply thank your mind for the label and return to the present experience, just noticing what's there as it is -- thoughts as thoughts, physical sensations as physical sensations, feelings as feelings—nothing more, nothing less. [pause]
- Stay with your discomfort for as long as it pulls on your attention. If and when you sense that the strong emotion and other discomfort are no longer pulling for your attention, let them go. [pause]
- As this time for practice comes to a close, gently bring yourself back to the room you're in and gradually widen your attention to take in the sounds around you. Take a moment to make the intention to bring this sense of gentle allowing and self-acceptance into the present moment and the rest of your day. Then, slowly open your eyes. [pause]

Post Exercise Reflections:

Now that you've finished the exercise, take a minute or two to relax, perhaps bringing to mind a scene that fills you with a sense of peace and joy. Take a moment to reflect on what you learned about yourself.

Do you notice anything that seems new or different? Is there anything in your experience that you absolutely cannot have, cannot feel, or cannot think? Look around the edges for any sticky spots, name them, and be mindful of them the next time you practice. By sticky I mean places where you may have switched off your willingness, or got all tangled up in your judgmental mind proclaiming things like “it’s not working,” “you can’t do this,” or “You’re not really going to do it, are you?”

You’ll get the most out of this exercise if you repeat it several times in a row. Are you willing to do that? As you practice, it’s important to notice changes in the quality and intensity of your feelings. And especially when you notice urges to pull back, avoid, shut down, or turn away. These urges are great clues to do the opposite – to go in when your mind tells you to turn away ... That’s how you take back control over your life. With practice, difficult emotions will lose their power to steer you off course.

And, you’re doing something else too. You’re learning that your emotions aren’t enemies – that you can have them just as they are, even the painful ones. You have lots of freedom in how you do this exercise. You can do it for longer stretches, or repeat the exercise three or more times, do it with different emotions that get in your way. You can even vary the setting by practicing at home, in the park, in your car, or on a plane.

But here’s what you can’t do: You can’t hold back from the experience. You must choose to be willing to have and experience whatever your mind and body does. Remember the point of the exercise is to empower you to act on your life and values regardless of the current pattern of emotional waves that you’re experiencing. That’s how you get something new in your life ...

So, however you decide to practice the exercise, be sure you’re doing it with arms wide open, willing to embrace your experience with your life and values in mind ...

Breathing in pain and breathing out relief is the basis of an ancient form of meditation known as Tonglen (meaning “giving and receiving”). Welcoming your pain and giving away good may strike you as odd. It goes against the grain. This is precisely why it can be so powerful. When you embrace what you don’t like, you transform it. That transformation will release you from attachment to pleasure seeking, fear, and self-absorption, and it will nurture your capacity for love and compassion. The next exercise will help you develop this important skill.

EXERCISE: EMBRACING THE “BAD,” GIVING AWAY THE “GOOD”



Start by getting yourself comfortable in a place where you’ll be undisturbed for five to ten minutes or so. You may sit on the floor or in a chair. Sit upright with your palms up or down on your lap.

Now, close your eyes and gently guide your attention to the natural rhythm of your breath in your chest and belly. After a few moments, bring to mind something painful or hurtful, perhaps a recent event or a time in which you felt very anxious. Then, with your next inhale, visualize taking in that negativity and painful upset. Breathe in the discomfort with the thought in your mind that what you’re feeling in this very moment is being felt by millions of people all over this world. You’re not alone with this. This anxiety has been felt by countless numbers of people from the beginning of time.

Your intention here, for yourself and others, is for you and them to be free of the suffering, the struggle, blame, and shame that can happen with the pain that you and they experience. With that intention in mind, on each exhale, breathe out relief, joyfulness, and goodwill. Do it slowly with the natural rhythm of your breathing. Continue to connect with your pain as you breathe in, and with each out breath, expend goodwill and a wish that others may find relief from the suffering they get caught in when they experience hurt and discomfort.

If you find breathing in anxiety gets too heavy or tight, you can imagine breathing into a vast space, or that your heart is an infinite space. Imagine breathing into your heart, making it bigger and bigger with every out breath until there’s enough space for all the worries, anxieties, and concerns. With each out breath, you’re opening up your whole being so you no longer have to push the WAFs away—you’re opening your heart to whatever arises.

If you find your mind wandering or you feel distracted, just kindly notice that and return your attention to the intention of welcoming in your pain and hurts, and releasing goodwill and kindness. Continue this practice of giving and receiving for as long as you wish.

Then, when you’re ready, gradually widen your attention and gently open your eyes with the intention of bringing this skill of kind observing to your experiences throughout the day.

You can also practice Tonglen in everyday life. Whenever anxiety shows up, you can remind yourself, “Other people feel this too. I’m not alone with this.” It will help ease the sense of isolation and burden of feeling that you’re alone with your WAFs.

Key Content for Compassionate Use of Exposure

1. what it is – Define
 - a. Among the most effective interventions we have
 - b. 70% effective for all anxiety disorders
 - c. not a single procedure, but a family of interventions that expand on a common functional element – facing fears without avoidance / escape!
2. Core Elements of Exposure Therapy (CBT)
 - a. Systematic exposure to a stimulus (in vivo or imaginally)
 - i. Until distress / fear is lower than pre-treatment levels and is acceptable to the client
 - b. Anxiety / fear reduction is THE goal
3. Repeated or prolonged exposure
 - a. Across sessions or within a single session
4. Response prevention
 - a. Prevent avoidance / escape / safety behaviors
 - b. Encourage client to engage in alternative behavior
5. Fear hierarchy
 - a. Arranged from least to most fear evoking
6. Reduce distractions
 - a. Safety cues or anything that would interfere with contacting the feared stimulus and inhibit new learning
7. Experiencing the present
 - a. Contact in the present moment
8. Exposure rarely occurs in isolation from other interventions
 - a. Anxiolytics may retard exposure
 - b. Coping skills may interfere with exposure
9. Process learning
 - a. Encourage clients to contact new ways of relating with feared stimuli (public and private)

10. In ACT, we provide clients with strategies
 - a. That promote expansiveness, kindness, and valued ACTION
 - b. Exposure IS NOT about having less FEAR, ANXIETY, PAIN ...
11. When might you use exposure?
 - a. High levels of avoidance
 - i. Thoughts
 - ii. Feelings
 - iii. memories
 - iv. Images
 - v. Situations/places
 - vi. Objects
 - b. Expand behavioral repertoire
 - c. FEAR interferes with valued living (avoidance gets in the way of life)
12. Assess the client's skills and flexibility before exposure
13. Can the client ...
 - a. Discriminate among private events?
 - b. Practice willingness with aversive stimuli and events?
 - c. E.g., "I'm having the thought that ... I am notice this sensation ..."
14. If the client can't discriminate ...
 - a. E.g., I don't know what I'm thinking of feeling in my body ... or, I'm not thinking or feeling anything ... or I'm just really anxious
15. Or, if the client can't practice willingness
 - a. E.g., no, I'm not willing to experience that sensation, even for 30 seconds ... if I feel that, I will die or kill myself
16. If 13 or 14 seem likely, then consider
 - a. Creative hopelessness

- b. Training in shaping awareness (note. THIS SHOULD COME FIRST bc IT WOULD TAKE CARE OF THE PROBLEM – ACT PREPARES CLIENTS FOR EXPOSURE)
 - c. Practice willingness
 - d. Therapist can model and shape with questions – e.g., what are you noticing right now? What is that sensation like for you? Textures, color, shape ... more or less.
17. ACT exercises and metaphors that might help prepare client for exposure
- a. Acceptance of thoughts and feelings exercise
 - b. Acceptance of anxiety
 - c. Feeding the tiger
 - d. Passengers on the bus
 - e. Polygraph
 - f. Willingness switch
 - g. Observer self – WISE MIND
 - h. Eyes On
 - i. Clouds and sky
 - j. Note. YOU SHOULD ALWAYS PREPARE CLIENTS FOR EXPOSURE! GIVE THEM SKILLS. MANY OF THESE EXERCISES ARE FORMS OF EXPOSURE IN THEMSELVES – EXPOSURE IS EVERYWHERE IN ACT
18. Give rationale for why exposure
- a. What the client is agreeing to
 - b. What it will involve
 - c. How it will help them live their values and life
 - d. Note. USING THE WORD EXPOSURE IS UNNECESSARY AND CAN BE AVOIDED – FOCUS ON THE PROCESS AND PURPOSE!
 - e. AVOID HARD SELL – EXPOSURE IS A WAY TO LEARN TO BE WITH WHAT YOU TEND TO AVOID ... SO THAT YOU CAN DO WHAT MATTERS TO YOU

WHEN BARRIERS TO A MATTERING LIFE SHOW UP,
BC THEY WILL

19. RULES OF THUMB

- a. Evoke and shape in session or out of session – behaviorism 101. Easier to reinforce behavior directly as it occurs
- b. Collaborate and structure. Agree on what will be done, for how long, and how often; link to goals in the service of values; structure is really important for out of session in vivo exercises – what, when, where? Focus of exposure may change as the client comes more in contact with what's important to them
- c. Arrange for generalization – different contexts and situations, different emotional and psychological content. In vivo exercises should as much as possible be naturalistic and linked to client's world and life;
- d. Capitalize on strengths – clients may be good at tacting or labeling aspects of their experience; or great at committed action but white knuckles it; reinforce spontaneous actions, esp things that clients typically avoid
- e. Be flexible – 30 sec of exposure is better than no exposure; tweak exercises as values dictate; make it about the client choosing and willingness in the service of values; is this moving you forward or not? Lack of progress may indicate that the exposure is not closely tied with client values

20. How do you know when to end exposure?

- a. CBT – habituation, reduction in SUDs
- b. ACT – Valued living; they can continue without having to engage in specific exposure exercises. In short, they are living their lives

(Self-Compassion Scale)

HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARDS MYSELF IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

**Almost
never**
1

2

3

4

**Almost
always**
5

- ___ 1. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
- ___ 2. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.
- ___ 3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.
- ___ 4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.
- ___ 5. I try to be loving towards myself when I'm feeling emotional pain.
- ___ 6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.
- ___ 7. When I'm down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.
- ___ 8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.
- ___ 9. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.
- ___ 10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.
- ___ 11. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.
- ___ 12. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.
- ___ 13. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.
- ___ 14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.
- ___ 15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.
- ___ 16. When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself.
- ___ 17. When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective.
- ___ 18. When I'm really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.
- ___ 19. I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
- ___ 20. When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.
- ___ 21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
- ___ 22. When I'm feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.
- ___ 23. I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.
- ___ 24. When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.
- ___ 25. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.
- ___ 26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.

Suggested readings -- Compassion

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THE AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY LTD

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DIRECTORATE OF TRAINING AND STANDARDS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY EVALUATION FORM

To assist the Society and presenters of Professional Development Activities to provide activities of value to members, each participant is asked to complete an evaluation of the activity attended. Thank you for your cooperation.

ACTIVITY TITLE:	Acceptance & Commitment Therapy
PRESENTER (S):	Dr Russell Harris
DATE (S) OF ACTIVITY:	
VENUE:	

Please indicate your agreement/disagreement with the following statements by circling the appropriate number.

	Not Applicable	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The publicised description of the activity was accurate	0	1	2	3	4	5
The venue (building/room/facilities) was suitable	0	1	2	3	4	5
The material was of sufficient complexity and scope for me to learn	0	1	2	3	4	5
The material was relevant to my professional development needs	0	1	2	3	4	5
I acquired new knowledge or skills	0	1	2	3	4	5
The presentation format was suitable for the content	0	1	2	3	4	5
The teaching level was appropriate	0	1	2	3	4	5
Sufficient opportunity was provided for active participation	0	1	2	3	4	5
Audiovisual aids and handouts were legible, relevant and helpful	0	1	2	3	4	5
The learning objectives were met as stated	0	1	2	3	4	5
The presenter(s) was/were well prepared	0	1	2	3	4	5
Concepts were clearly explained	0	1	2	3	4	5
The presenter(s) was/were good teachers	0	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, the activity should be presented again	0	1	2	3	4	5
The enrolment process was smooth and efficient	0	1	2	3	4	5
The National Office staff was responsive and helpful	0	1	2	3	4	5

Other Comments:
