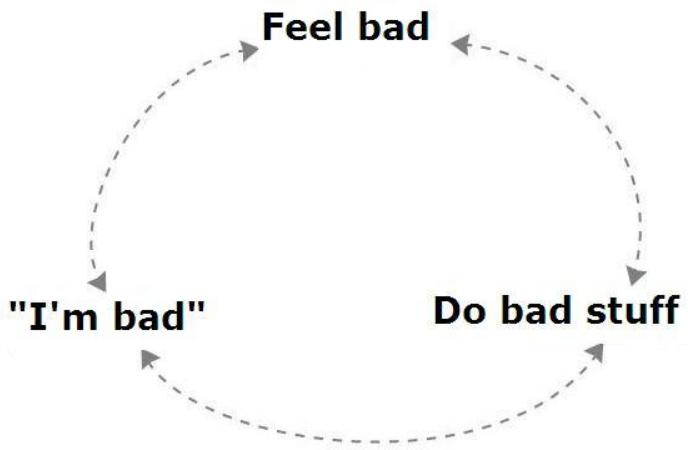
Dealing with Distress



An introduction to healthy coping strategies

Carol Vivyan
2009

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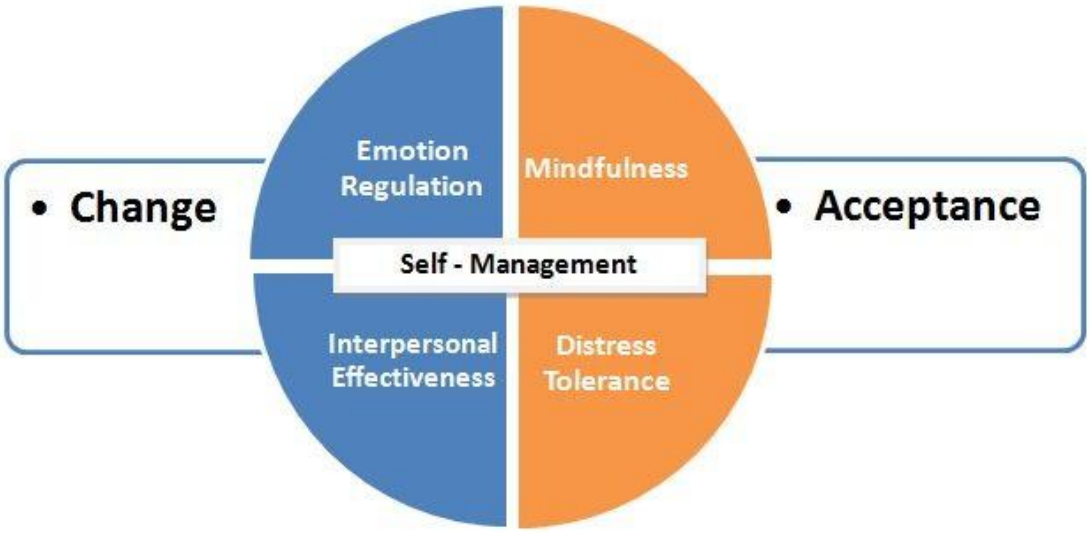
Introduction

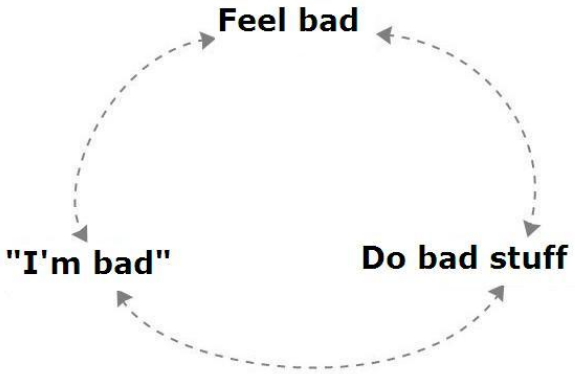
This booklet is only intended as an introduction to (or reminder of) healthy coping strategies used to help us deal with distress, using the headings from the core skills used in DBT (Dialectical Behaviour Therapy):



When we feel upset or distressed, we normally react automatically, without thinking about the consequences. And we can often get into the habit of using unhelpful and often self-destructive behaviours to help us cope. These may include:

- Self-harm including cutting or taking 'overdoses'
- Under or over-eating
- Using or relying on drugs and alcohol
- Depending on physical exercise

When we use these self-destructive coping behaviours, we often then get caught up in thinking we're bad for doing them, which makes us feel even worse, and may make us more likely to keep on doing them. A vicious cycle.



In order to break that cycle, we can learn to do doings differently, including learning new healthy coping skills which will help us feel better about ourselves and others, and learning to understand and see our thoughts differently.

This leaflet aims to suggest introductions to alternative, healthier ways of coping, but like with anything else in real life, it's not easy or a quick fix – it has to be worked consistently hard at, and the only certainty is that it takes a lot of practice, practice, practice!

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Distress Tolerance

Distress Tolerance skills are used when we are unable, unwilling, or it would be inappropriate to change a situation. It's important to use the right skills at the right time. In order to change a situation or emotion, we would use Emotion Regulation skills (page 21).

Distress Tolerance skills are used to help us cope and survive during a crisis, and helps us tolerate short term or long term pain (physical or emotional pain).

Tolerating distress includes a mindfulness of breath and mindful awareness of situations and ourselves (page 13).

Radical Acceptance

Acceptance means being willing to experience a situation as it is, rather than how we want it to be. Not to be willing (wilfulness) means trying to impose our will on a situation. A willingness to accept things as they are, not as we think they should be.

Repeatedly 'turning the mind'. To be in the actual situation you are in, rather than the situation you think you're in, or think you should be in. Your mind is always going to give you other ideas, interpretations, reminding you of old strategies. Each time your mind wanders and you notice these other thoughts and images, simply bring your attention back to this moment. Not judging the situation to be good, or bad, or in any way. Simply bringing your attention back to this moment, this situation, and being effective in this situation.

You may need to 'turn your mind' many many times in a short space of time.

What Radical Acceptance is **NOT**:

- Not judging the situation to be good
- Not giving permission for the situation to go on forever
- Not giving up your options

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It can help to use memory aids such as acronyms to remind us of how we can help ourselves during distressing times:

IMPROVE the moment

I Imagery – e.g. safe place visualisation (page 11)

M find Meaning in the situation

P Prayer – meditation, spirituality, affirmations (page 12)

R Relaxation (page 8)

O One thing at a time

V Vacation – take some time out of the situation, 'me' time, or imagining yourself on an idyllic beautiful holiday

E Encouragement – positive and calming self talk

Wise Mind ACCEPTS

A Activities (see distraction ideas below)

C Contributing – helping others

C Comparisons – comparing self with (better) self

E Emotions – generate different emotions by watching movie/TV, listening to music etc

P Pushing away – thinking about or putting our attention onto something else

T Thoughts - new thoughts. E.g. counting, playing 10 (10 colours in room, 10 musical instruments, 10 fruits, 10 Bond films etc)

S Sensations – use seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching senses

Distraction Ideas

Distraction helps us feel better by diverting our attention away from the distressing thoughts. It works even better if you choose something that will really grab your attention and keep you absorbed in that activity. Different things work for different people. It's worth trying and practising many of those listed, and more that you think of yourself, a few times each before giving up on it.

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Home and garden

- Mow the lawn
- Clean the car
- Do some gardening
- De-clutter a room or part of a room
- Purge your wardrobe (give to charity)
- Clear out the spare room (give to charity)
- Sweep the path
- Cooking or baking something pleasurable
- DIY
- Bath the dog
- Brush the cat
- Clean the hutch/cage
- Re-arrange the furniture in one room

Leisure

- Do a crossword or sudoku
- Try out aromatherapy or reflexology
- Visit the hairdresser – try a new style or colour
- Watch television or a DVD
- Play on the computer
- Surf the internet
- Watch the clouds whilst lying outside
- Read a novel or new newspaper or magazine
- Walk or sit on the beach or park

Getting out

- Join a leisure centre or health suite
- Go for a walk or jog
- Get the old cycle out!
- Visit a new church
- Go to the library
- Visit a museum
- Check out what movies are on
- Go to a concert
- Browse an antiques or charity shop
- Find out what free classes are on offer
- Potter around window shopping
- Go out for lunch
- Go to the beach – whatever the weather!
- Learn to drive, or take a trial lesson
- Visit a nursery, garden centre or park
- Visit a tourist attraction

- Walk alongside the sea, river, reservoir or lake
- Take a bus ride somewhere new
- Visit an aquarium or zoo
- Visit a car boot sale
- Visit a nature reserve
- Visit a historical or natural site
- Visit an art exhibition
- Go for a drive
-

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Being creative

- Take up a new hobby
- Learn another language
- Start an evening class
- Write a letter or article for a magazine
- Learn to meditate, do yoga or tai chi
- Start a diary or journal
- Write a short story or poem
- Take up a musical instrument
- Decorate a room, or a piece of furniture
- Paint, draw, sculpt
- Join a dance class
- Surf the internet
- Create a weblog or site
- Sew or knit
- Bake
- Make an 'emergency' box for distressing times – put in any small reminder of what helps
- Take photographs
- Make a scrapbook
- Sort out your photos

Self Soothing

- Have an early night
- Eat something you haven't tried before
- Listen to some favourite (calming or uplifting) music
- Try a new newspaper or magazine

- Have a bath or shower
- Use aromatherapy oils
- Massage your hands or feet
- Write a list of things you have achieved, great and small
- Soak your feet
- Make a list of things that you can be thankful for
- Paint your nails
- Meditate, relax, yoga, tai chi, reiki
- Cuddle a soft toy
- Write a letter to yourself
- Read a letter you've written to yourself to read at these times

Making contact with others

- Telephone someone you haven't spoken to for a while
- Join a self-help group
- Join a civil rights group
- Do some voluntary work
- Write a letter to someone you haven't written to for a while
- Talk to a friend or family member
- Phone the Samaritans or another helpline
- Join an online support group or discussion forum
- Email a friend

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Express yourself physically

- Bang a drum!
- Scream, shout or sing loudly!
- Rip up a phone book or newspaper
- Dance energetically to loud music
- Write – prose, poem, story, music, journal, diary, weblog, whatever comes into your head
- Write a letter to someone, but don't send it – shred or burn it outside
- Run, walk, cycle, swim, go to the gym
- Paint
- Vacuum enthusiastically
- Kick a ball against a wall
- Punch or kick a cushion or pillow
- Cry

Positive Self-Talk

- I can get through this, I've managed before and I can now
- I don't need to do this, it'll only make it worse afterwards
- I'll regret it and feel awful later
- It helps for a few minutes, but then it just makes it worse in the long run
- I don't want to end up at the hospital again
- I can cope for another hour – I can take one hour at a time
- Positive Affirmations (*see page 12*)

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Relaxation

Relaxation is allowing physical and/or mental tension to be released.

Healthy living is a matter of balance. Relaxation is part of the balancing process alongside other aspects of your lifestyle such as what you eat, your physical activity and how you handle stress. Learning to relax involves a little time and concentration but these are the only costs involved.

It's a great help to learn a relaxation technique, to help us unwind and bring our tensions and anxiety under control. There are several books, leaflets or audio tapes which we can use ourselves. It's a good idea to practise regularly so we can be more prepared for the more stressful times.

How Relaxation helps

- *Reduces tiredness* – if you can manage everyday life without excessive tension
- *Improves performance* – your performance in work, sport or music can be raised through self awareness and control of tension
- *Reduces pain* – pain occurs as a result of tension e.g. headaches and backache. Relaxation can help you to cope by raising your pain threshold and reducing the amount of pain
- *Coping with stress* – relaxation helps you to reduce the effects of stress and to breathe effectively
- *Improves sleep* – by allowing you to be calm and peaceful
- *Improves self-confidence* – by increasing your self-awareness and ability to cope with daily life
- *Improves personal relationships* – it is easier to relate well to other people when you are relaxed and self-confident

Relaxation and stress

When we feel anxious or stressed, our breathing rate increases, as does our blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, sweating, state of mental arousal and adrenaline flow. Relaxation helps to decrease all those things.

Breathing and Relaxation

Our out-breath releases tension in the chest muscles and allows all muscles to release their tension more easily. Breathing is far more effective when we use our diaphragms, rather than with the chest muscles. Sit comfortably in a chair and place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen (hand on navel). Take two or three fairly large breaths – which hand moves first and which moves most? Practise so that it is the lower hand on your abdomen that moves rather than the one on your chest. People often think that their tummy goes in when they breathe in - but the reverse should be the case.

When you're feeling tense or hoping to relax, try breathing out a little bit more slowly and more deeply, noticing a short pause before the in-breath takes over (don't exaggerate the in-breath, just let it happen). You might find it useful to count slowly or prolong a word such as "one" or "peace" to help elongate the out-breath a little (to yourself or out loud).

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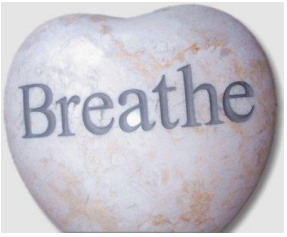
There are various ways in which to achieve relaxation, most use breath control in some way. Whichever method you choose, regular practice will help. Some examples are:

- Progressive Muscle Relaxation – tense/relax muscular relaxation
- Meditation
- Guided Imagery or Visualisation
- Autogenic Training – mental exercises to link body and mind to bring about relaxation
- Alexander Technique – teaches the importance of posture, which improves mental and physical wellbeing.
- Bio Feedback – self-regulation of bodily functions, e.g. Slowing heart rate
- Massage
- Aromatherapy
- Physical Activity
- Tai Chi
- Yoga
- Music (New Age Music may incorporate natural sounds for relaxation such as whalesong, rain, waves etc) either used alone, or with any of the above methods

Simple Breathing Exercise

We'll start with a simple breathing exercise which can be done in a few seconds, no matter where you are. It is particularly helpful at stressful times, but it's also useful to do it at regular intervals throughout the day.



Take a deep, slow breath in and hold it for 5 seconds. Feel your abdomen expand as you do this.

Breathe out slowly, to a count of 5. Breathe in again, make every breath slow and steady and exactly the same as the one before it and the one after it. As you breathe out, concentrate on expelling ALL the air in your lungs. If you're alone, you could make a noise like "whoo" as you do this to help you feel the air being let out. Keep the outbreath going for as long as you can. Keep it relaxed for a few seconds before you inhale again.

Quickie Relaxation

- Wherever you are (e.g. in the car, supermarket, awaiting appointment etc)
- *STOP*
- *SHOULDERS DOWN*
- *TAKE 2 OR 3 SLIGHTLY SLOWER, SLIGHTLY DEEPER OUT-BREATHS (just let the in-breath happen)*
- *CARRY ON WITH WHATEVER YOU WERE DOING, BUT JUST A LITTLE SLOWER*

Before any other relaxation exercise

Before any relaxation exercise, go to the toilet if you need to, and wear loose comfortable clothing. Lie or sit somewhere with the whole of your body supported.

Make yourself totally comfortable. Close your eyes.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- *Sit in a comfortable chair (or lie on the floor, or on a bed). Ensure you will not be disturbed by other noises. If you become aware of sounds - just try to ignore them and let them leave your mind just as soon as they enter. Make sure the whole of your body is comfortably supported - including your arms, head and feet. (Rest your arms on the arms of the chair, with your feet flat on the floor - if sitting!)*
- *Close your eyes. Feel the chair supporting your whole body - your legs, your arms, your head. If you can feel any tension, begin to let it go. Take 2 slow and deep breaths, and let the tension begin to flow out.*
- *Become aware of your head - notice how your forehead feels. Let any tension go and feel your forehead become smooth and wide. Let any tension go from around your eyes, your mouth, your cheeks and your jaw. Let your teeth part slightly and feel the tension go.*
- *Now focus on your neck - let the chair take the weight of your head and feel your neck relax. Now your head is feeling heavy and floppy. Let your shoulders lower gently down. Your shoulders are wider, your neck is longer.*
- *Notice how your body feels as you begin to relax.*
- *Be aware of your arms and your hands. Let them sink down into the chair. Now they are feeling heavy and limp.*
- *Think about your back - from your neck to your hips. Let the tension go and feel yourself sinking down into the chair. Let your hips, your legs and your feet relax and roll outwards. Notice the feeling of relaxation taking over.*
- *Think about your breathing - your abdomen gently rising and falling as you breathe. Let your next breath be a little deeper, a little slower...*
- *Now, you are feeling completely relaxed and heavy. …. Lie still and concentrate on slow, rhythmic breathing….*
- *When you want to count back from 5 to 1 and open your eyes. Wiggle your fingers and toes, breathe deeply and stretch. Pause before gently rising.*

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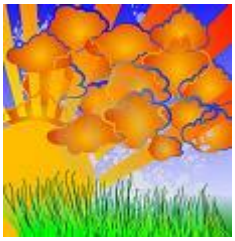
Safe place visualisation



Start each visualisation with relaxation by getting comfortable in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed, and take a couple of minutes to focus on your breathing. Close your eyes, then mentally scan your body and become aware of any areas of tension, and let that tension go with each out-breath.

- All visualisations can be strengthened by ensuring you engage all your senses in building the picture in your mind's eye - it's more than just "seeing"! If you notice any negative links or images entering your positive imagery, then abort that image and think of something else.

Finish each visualisation by taking a few moments to bring yourself back into the room where you are, opening your eyes and looking around, sitting up, and bringing yourself back to alertness in the 'here and now'.

- Imagine a place where you can feel calm, peaceful and safe. It may be a place you've been to before, somewhere you've dreamt about going to, or maybe somewhere you've seen a picture of.
- Focus on the colours in your peaceful safe place.
- Now notice the sounds that are around you, or perhaps the silence.
- Think about any smells you notice there.
- Then focus on any skin sensations - the earth beneath you, the temperature, any movement of air, anything else you can touch.
- Now whilst you're in your peaceful and safe place, you might choose to give it a name, whether one word or a phrase that you can use to bring that image back, anytime you need to.
- You can choose to linger there a while, just enjoying the peacefulness and serenity. You can leave whenever you want to, just by opening your eyes and being aware of where you are now.

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Positive Affirmations

Using positive statements can help us develop a new attitude to ourselves and our situations. Choose a statement from those below, or make one that means more to you, and repeat, repeat, repeat throughout the day, every day, of every week, of every month. You might want to make or print out a card with your affirmation, and carry it with you.

Over the years, we tend to get into unhelpful thinking habits (www.getselfhelp.co.uk/unhelpful.htm), and think negatively about ourselves and situations. For the positive affirmations to work, you must use it whenever you notice you have that negative thought – immediately turn it around by using your affirmation.

Use a statement that starts with "I" and use the present tense. See the examples below – choose one, adapt one, or make up your own. Make it something broadly realistic, even if you don't believe it right now.

- I am strong
- I have strength
- I am determined and successful
- I am a good and worthwhile person
- I am a unique and special person
- I have inner strength and resources
- I am confident and competent
- I hold my head up high
- I look good because I am good
- People like me – I am a likeable person and I like myself
- I care about others, I am needed and worthwhile
- I am a loving person
- I have a lot to be proud of
- I have all that I need
- I am in control of my life
- I can achieve anything I want to achieve
- I make wise decisions based on what I know
- I have set my goals and am moving towards them
- I accept myself as a unique and worthwhile person

- My life has meaning and purpose
- I am in control of my choices
- I am strong and healthy
- I am calm and confident
- I have many options and can make wise decisions
- Everything is getting better every day
- I am calm and relaxed
- I am healthy and have all that I need
- Today is the first day of the rest of my life and I will take notice of the many positive things this day has to offer
- I live a healthy and positive lifestyle
- I know I can master anything if I practice it continually
- I have my wise mind – I can seek inner guidance whenever I need to
- My life purpose can be whatever I choose it to be
- All is well, right here, right now

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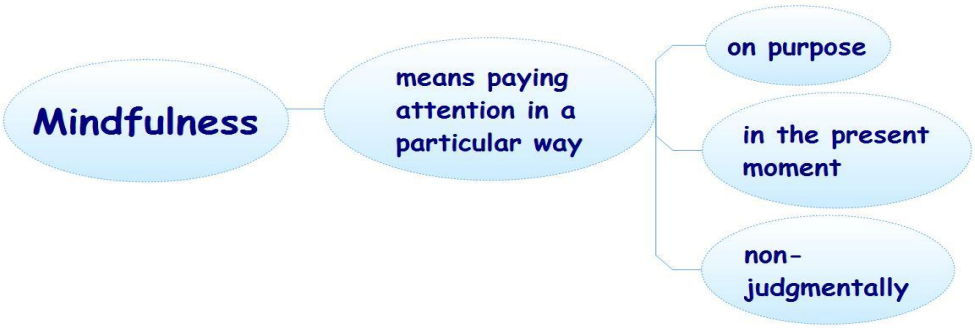
Mindfulness



Jon Kabat-Zinn

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is an ancient Buddhist practice which is very relevant for our lives today. Mindfulness is a very simple concept. Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally.

Mindfulness does not conflict with any beliefs or traditions, whether religious, cultural or scientific. It is simply a practical way to notice thoughts, physical sensations, sights, sounds, smells - anything we might not normally notice. The actual skills might be simple, but because it is so different to how our minds normally behave, it takes a lot of practice.

We might go out into the garden and as we look around, we might think "That grass really needs cutting, and that vegetable patch looks very untidy". A young child on the other hand, will call over excitedly, "Hey - come and look at this ant!"

Mindfulness can simply be noticing what we don't normally notice, because our heads are too busy in the future or in the past - thinking about what we need to do, or going over what we have done.

Mindfulness might simply be described as choosing and learning to control our focus of attention.

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Automatic Pilot

In a car, we can sometimes drive for miles on “automatic pilot”, without really being aware of what we are doing. In the same way, we may not be really “present”, moment-by-moment, for much of our lives: We can often be “miles away” without knowing it.

On automatic pilot, we are more likely to have our “buttons pressed”: Events around us and thoughts, feelings and sensations (of which we may be only dimly aware) can trigger old habits of thinking that are often unhelpful and may lead to worsening mood.

By becoming more aware of our thoughts, feelings, and body sensations, from moment to moment, we give ourselves the possibility of greater freedom and choice; we do not have to go into the same old “mental ruts” that may have caused problems in the past.

Mindful Activity

If we wash the dishes each evening, we might tend to be ‘in our heads’ as we’re washing up, thinking about what we have to do, what we've done earlier in the day, worrying about future events, or regretful thoughts about the past. Again, a young child might see things differently, "Listen to those bubbles! They're fun!"

Washing up or another routine activity can become a routine (practice of) mindful activity for us. We might notice the temperature of the water and how it feels on the skin, the texture of the bubbles on the skin, and yes, we might hear the bubbles as they softly pop. The sounds of the water as we take out and put dishes into the water. The smoothness of the plates, and the texture of the sponge. Just noticing what we might not normally notice.

A mindful walk brings new pleasures. Walking is something most of us do at some time during the day. We can practice, even if only for a couple of minutes at a time, mindful walking. Rather than be "in our heads", we can look around and notice what we see, hear, sense. We might notice the sensations in our own body just through the act of walking. Noticing the sensations and movement of our feet, legs, arms, head and body as we take each step. Noticing our breathing. Thoughts will continuously intrude, but we can just notice them, and then bring our attention back to our walking.

The more we practice, perhaps the more (initially at least) we will notice those thoughts intruding, and that's ok. The only aim of mindful activity is to bring our attention back to the activity continually, noticing those sensations, from outside and within us.

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Mindful Breathing

The primary focus in Mindfulness Meditation is the breathing. However, the primary goal is a calm, non-judging awareness, allowing thoughts and feelings to come and go without getting caught up in them. This creates calmness and acceptance.

- Sit comfortably, with your eyes closed and your spine reasonably straight.
- Direct your attention to your breathing.
- When thoughts, emotions, physical feelings or external sounds occur, simply accept them, giving them the space to come and go without judging or getting involved with them.
- When you notice that your attention has drifted off and is becoming caught up in thoughts or feelings, simply note that the attention has drifted, and then gently bring the attention back to your breathing.

It's ok and natural for thoughts to arise, and for your attention to follow them. No matter how many times this happens, just keep bringing your attention back to your breathing.

Breathing Meditation 1 (Kabat-Zinn 1996)

Assume a comfortable posture lying on your back or sitting. If you are sitting, keep the spine straight and let your shoulders drop.

Close your eyes if it feels comfortable.

Bring your attention to your belly, feeling it rise or expand gently on the in-breath and fall or recede on the out-breath.

Keep your focus on the breathing, 'being with' each in-breath for its full duration and with each out-breath for its full duration, as if you were riding the waves of your own breathing.

Every time you notice that your mind has wandered off the breath, notice what it was that took you away and then gently bring your attention back to your belly and the feeling of the breath coming in and out.

If your mind wanders away from the breath a thousand times, then your job is simply to bring it back to the breath every time, no matter what it becomes preoccupied with.

Practice this exercise for fifteen minutes at a convenient time every day, whether you feel like it or not, for one week and see how it feels to incorporate a disciplined meditation practice into your life. Be aware of how it feels to spend some time each day just being with your breath without having to *do* anything.

Breathing Meditation 2 (Kabat-Zinn 1996)

- Tune into your breathing at different times during the day, feeling the belly go through one or two risings and fallings.
- Become aware of your thoughts and feelings at these moments, just observing them without judging them or yourself.
- At the same time, be aware of any changes in the way you are seeing things and feeling about yourself.

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Using mindfulness to cope with negative experiences (thoughts, feelings, events)

As we become more practised at using mindfulness for breathing, body sensations and routine daily activities, so we can then learn to be mindful of our thoughts and feelings, to become observers, and then more accepting of them. This results in less distressing feelings, and increases our ability to enjoy our lives.

With mindfulness, even the most disturbing sensations, feelings, thoughts, and experiences, can be viewed from a wider perspective as passing events in the mind, rather than as "us", or as being necessarily true. (Brantley 2003)

When we are more practiced in using mindfulness, we can use it even in times of intense distress, by becoming mindful of the actual experience as an observer, using mindful breathing and focussing our attention on the breathing, listening to the distressing thoughts mindfully, recognising them as merely thoughts, breathing with them, allowing them to happen without believing them or arguing with them. If thoughts are too strong or loud, then we can move our attention to our breath, the body, or to sounds around us.

Jon Kabat-Zinn uses the example of waves to help explain mindfulness.

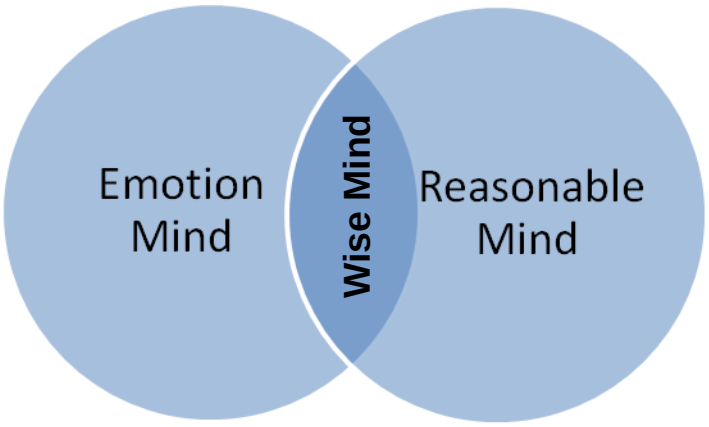
Think of your mind as the surface of a lake or an ocean. There are always waves on the water, sometimes big, sometimes small, sometimes almost imperceptible. The water's waves are churned up by winds, which come and go and vary in direction and intensity, just as do the winds of stress and change in our lives, which stir up waves in our mind. It's possible to find shelter from much of the wind that agitates the mind. Whatever we might do to prevent them, the winds of life and of the mind will blow.

"Y*ou can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf*" (Kabat-Zinn 2004)

Wise Mind

Wise Mind (Linehan 1993) is the part of our mind where 'Emotion Mind' (thoughts based on distressing feelings) and 'Reasonable Mind' (rational thoughts) merge together.

Wise Mind helps us make sense of our thoughts and feelings, and come up with a balanced and wise response, which satisfies our rational thoughts and also soothes emotion mind, and therefore reduces our distress and helps makes us more effective. Usually quietly calm, it's that wise inner part of us that just 'knows' what is true or valid.



Emotion Mind	Wise Mind	Reasonable Mind
Thinking and behaviour controlled by emotional state Thoughts are unhelpful and distressing Difficult to think logically and rationally Facts are distorted to fit with current distress Emotion drives opinion Strong emotions drive strong behaviour What I want to do	Integrates Emotion Mind and Reasonable Mind Adds intuitive knowing to emotional distress and logical analysis The calm that follows a storm Sees or knows something directly and clearly Grasps the bigger picture, rather than just parts Ensures needs of both Emotion Mind and Reasonable Mind are met: Reasonable Mind is right, but Emotion Mind needs to be soothed What's the most appropriate and effective skills that I could use for this situation?	Intellectual, scientific Logical and rational thinking Factual thinking, based on evidence Able to plan how to respond Focuses attention Cool in approaching problems What I should do

An example: At a party, you're feeling really anxious and feel the action urge to leave, even though your rational mind is telling you to stay.

A **Wise Mind response** might be a compromise: Take a couple of minutes break outside to do some mindful breathing and calm down a little, then go back into the party (opposite action) and offer to help out with the washing up. The likely result is that you feel less anxious, and begin to enjoy yourself.

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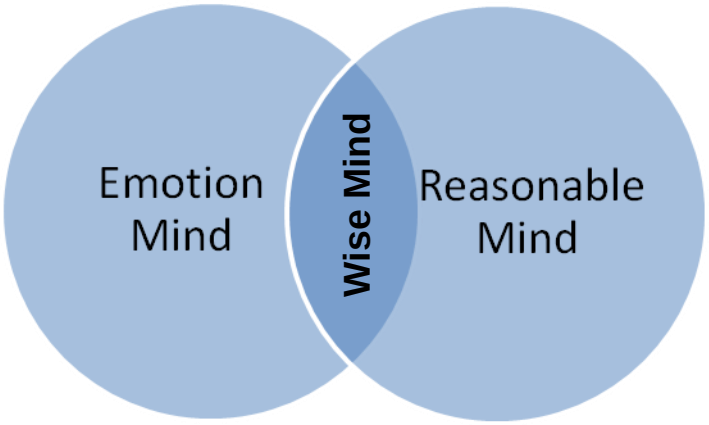
Wise Mind Worksheet



Emotional Thoughts	Rational Thoughts
Based on and driven by our opinions and personal interpretation of events. What went through my mind? What disturbed me? What is it that is making me feel this way? What am I reacting to? What's the worst thing about that, or the worst thing that could happen? What do I want to do or to happen? What am I feeling?	Based on factual evidence. What would be more reasonable? What am I thinking I should do? What advice would I give to a friend, or what would a caring friend say to me? Is this <u>really</u> as important as it seems? What evidence is there about what I think is likely to happen? I've felt this way before and I've got through it.

Wise Mind

STOPP! Take a breath. What does Wise Mind make of this? What's the bigger picture? What will the consequences of my reaction be? (short and long term) What can I change about this situation? If I can't change the situation, what is within my control? What skill can I use for this situation? What's going to be the best response to this situation – best for me, for others, for the situation. What will be most helpful and effective, all things considered?

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Wise Inner Advisor Visualisation

Start each visualisation with relaxation by getting comfortable in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed, and take a couple of minutes to focus on your breathing. Close your eyes, then mentally scan your body and become aware of any areas of tension, and let that tension go with each out-breath.

All visualisations can be strengthened by ensuring you engage all your senses in building the picture in your mind's eye - it's more than just "seeing"! If you notice any negative links or images entering your positive imagery, then abort that image and think of something else.

- If you're unsure about something, or need some guidance, then we all have some form of wise inner part of us which knows.
- Start with relaxing Safe Place imagery (page 11), then you can imagine walking along a path a little way and noticing a "Wise Inner Advisor" - this might be an older person, a representation of another being, perhaps a religious or spiritual figure, or some other being. Use whatever feels right for you.
- Make the image stronger by focusing on the scene, what you can see, hear, smell, touch.
- Spend some time just being with your Wise Inner Advisor, feeling peaceful and comfortable.
- Take the opportunity to ask your Wise Inner Advisor for general guidance or for advice on a particular issue. Don't expect an immediate answer, but be receptive to whatever comes up.
- Some people notice in the following hours, days or weeks that they've received their "answer", perhaps in a very unexpected way.

Finish each visualisation by taking a few moments to bring yourself back into the room where you are, opening your eyes and looking around, sitting up, and bringing yourself back to alertness in the 'here and now'.

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Colour Breathing

From the information at the bottom of this page, choose the colour relating what you feel you need.

- Make yourself comfortable whether sitting or lying.
- Close your eyes, and bring your attention to your breathing.
- Anytime that other thoughts, images, sounds or sensations come to mind, just notice them, and then gently bring your attention back to your breathing, and your colour.
- Perhaps imagine that you have a balloon in your belly, and notice how the balloon inflates as you breathe in, and deflates as you breathe out. Notice the sensations in your abdomen as your belly rises as the balloon inflates on the inbreath, and falls as the balloon deflates on the outbreath.

- Now visualise your colour, perhaps in the form of light, or mist. If it's difficult to visualise that colour, just imagine, in your mind's eye, something that is that colour – for instance green grass, or blue sea or sky, orange sunset, pink dawn. See it in front of you, over you, surrounding you, enveloping you. As you slowly breathe, become aware of breathing in your colour, into your nose, your throat, your chest and abdomen. Imagine now that colour spreading out within you, into every part of your body, and notice the effects that it has.

- Notice the sensations in your body, as this coloured light or mist, flows into and spreads throughout your body and mind.
- Notice how the colour is affecting your body, and your mind, as you allow it to gently flow and infuse your body and mind.
- Continue to notice the colour and the sensations that it brings.
- Anytime that your attention wanders, simply notice that it's wandered, then gently bring your focus back to your colour.
- Whenever you're ready, start to bring your attention back to the here and now, where you are. Open your eyes and look around, noticing what you see and what you hear. Take a couple of breaths and notice the pleasing sensations that accompany this relaxing coloured breathing.

Colour

- breathe in **red** for energy and vitality, strength and will-power.
- breathe in **orange** for joy, happiness and fun.
- breathe in **yellow** to increase your objectivity and intellectual abilities.
- breathe in **green** to cleanse, feel more balanced and to combat tumours.
- breathe in **turquoise** to boost the immune system, reduce inflammation.
- breathe in **blue** for relaxation, peace and good sleep
- breathe in **violet** for self-respect, dignity and beauty.
- breathe in **magenta** to let go of obsessional thoughts, images, memories.

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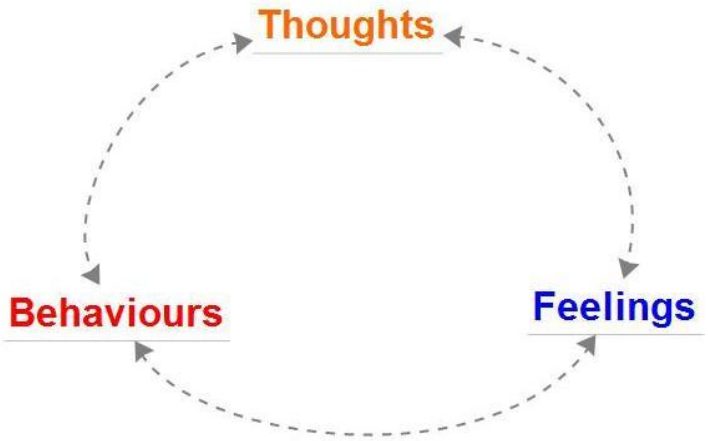
Emotion Regulation

We can use Emotion Regulation skills in order to change our emotions or situations. But sometimes it's not appropriate or we're not able to change the situation or our emotions, then we should use Distress Tolerance skills (page 3).

Emotions are normal and everyone experiences them. Sometimes, particularly when we have had persistent distressing experiences during our lives, we can emotionally react more often to situations (that others may not find distressing) where we feel threatened. The distress can be very intense and it's difficult to manage ourselves and situations when things are feeling so over-whelming.

Learning Emotion Regulation skills will help us learn to effectively manage and change the way we feel and cope with situations.

Emotions, thoughts and what we do or feel an urge to do (behaviours) are all linked and become vicious cycles. Changing one part of the cycle will help improve the situation and help you feel better.



When we experience really strong negative emotions, it’s easy to get caught up into the old pattern of using unhelpful and damaging coping strategies such as using substances, self-harming or unhealthy eating habits.

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Emotions are closely linked to our bodies, and each emotion has a particular behaviour linked to it. The word "emotion" can be described as E - MOTION (Elicit Motion). Emotion causes us to react and move in certain ways.

Examples of emotions and their action urges:

EMOTION	ACTION URGE	OPPOSITE ACTION
Fear	Run away, avoid	Approach: go anyway and participate fully
Anger	Attack	Gently avoid, be kind, see their perspective
Sadness	Withdraw	Be with others & Increase activity

If emotions cause our bodies to react in certain ways, then doing something different - doing the opposite (**'Opposite Action'**) - can affect and help change our emotions.

Opposite Emotion – do something that will help you to feel the opposite of what you feel now. For example, if you feel depressed, watch a funny movie or tv programme, or listen to some uplifting music.

The acronym "**PLEASE Master**" can remind us what we can do regularly in order to keep ourselves healthy and stable.

PL treat Physical iLness

E Eat healthily

A Avoid mood-altering substances (alcohol or drugs)

S Sleep well

E Exercise

Master plan and do something every day that gives you a sense of achievement or ability

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Increase positive emotions

Do more enjoyable activities – every day (see the list of distractions for ideas). Do more enjoyable activities than you would normally do, schedule them in each day.

DO ONE THING each day.

Be mindful of positive experiences

- Focus your attention on positive events as they happen
- Notice when your mind wanders to unhelpful thoughts, and bring your focus back to the current situation

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Emotions and their associated thoughts, body reactions and behaviours

Emotion	Thoughts	Body reaction	Behaviours
Angry frustrated, irritated, impatient, resentful, enraged, peed off, fury, insulted	Assume the worst Problem is enormous Others are unfair ❖ I've been disrespected, treated unfairly, used ❖ I've been treated unfairly ❖ I've been let down ❖ It's not fair! ❖ I won't stand for it	Adrenaline response: ❖ Tense ❖ Fired up ❖ Energised, breathing and heart rate increase ❖ Difficulty concentrating	❖ Fight ❖ Argue ❖ Shout ❖ Slam, smash ❖ Sulk ❖ Snap ❖ Swear ❖ Confront
Anxious nervous, on edge, scared, apprehensive, frightened, panicky, terrified, petrified	Threat: Overestimate danger Underestimate ability to cope ❖ I'm in great danger right now ❖ The worst possible thing is going to happen ❖ I won't be able to cope with it	Adrenaline response: ❖ Tense, shaky, sweaty, hot, ❖ Energised, breathing and heart rate increase ❖ Difficulty concentrating	❖ Avoid people or places (in order to avoid feeling anxious) ❖ Fidget ❖ Escape / run away ❖ Coping or safety behaviours
Depressed sad, down, despairing, hopeless, gloomy, miserable, sorrowful, unhappy, dismayed	Negative focus. Themes of loss, hopelessness, negative view of self ❖ I'm worthless ❖ Nothing's going to change ❖ I've lost....	Slowed down or agitated ❖ Tired, lethargic ❖ Constipated ❖ Memory & concentration problems ❖ Appetite & sleep changes ❖ Loss of interest: hobbies, sex ❖ Restlessness	❖ Do less ❖ Talk less ❖ Eat less or more ❖ Sleep less or more ❖ Isolate and withdraw ❖ Ruminate on negative thoughts

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Dealing with Negative Emotions – Quick Reference Sheet

What emotion am I feeling? What am I thinking?	• What can I notice in my body? • Where do I feel it? 	• **STOPP!** Take a breath. www.getselfhelp.co.uk/stopp.htm • What am I reacting to? What's pressing my buttons here? What does this situation mean to me or say about me? • Is this fact or opinion? • Where is my focus of attention? • How could I see things differently? What would I say to someone else in this situation? How important is this? Is my reaction in proportion to the event? • Take the helicopter view!	• Do what works! • What will be the consequences of my action? • What will be the most effective action? • What will be best for me, for others and for this situation? • Is this in keeping with my principles & values?	• Where do you feel this emotion in your body? If this feeling had a colour, what would it be? What shape is it? How big is it? What consistency is it? • If you felt better: What colour would it be? What about the shape? The size? The consistency? Notice that feeling now.
Emotion	**Body**	**Thinking differently**	**Doing differently**	**Imagery**
Anger • It's not fair. • Others are bad. • I won't stand for it. 	Adrenaline response: Body's alarm system. Energised for fight or flight	What am I reacting to? What's pressing my buttons? Am I over-reacting? Is my reaction in proportion to the actual event? How important is this? I feel like I'm being unfairly treated, but maybe they didn't mean it that way. Am I misreading things? What's the best thing to do here?	Take a breath. Do the best thing – best for me, for others and for the situation. Walk away? When feeling calm, if still appropriate, do something about it in a calm, non-aggressive but assertive way.	Visualise yourself handling this situation in a calm, non-aggressive but assertive way, respecting the rights and opinions of everyone involved. ***Visualise blue for calm,*** *or* ***green for balance.*** *Breathe in green/blue & breathe out red.*
Anxiety • Something bad is going to happen. • I won't be able to cope 	Adrenaline response: Body's alarm system. Energised for fight or flight	Is this threat a real one or is it really bound to happen? Am I exaggerating the threat? Am I misreading things? I feel bad, but that doesn't mean things really are so bad. I can cope with these feelings, I've got through it before. What would someone else say about this? What would be a more helpful way of looking at things?	How will doing this affect me in the long term? Don't avoid situations – go anyway. Problem solve or make plans if necessary. Take things slowly or gradually. Focus attention outside of me – external rather than internal focus.	Imagine yourself coping in a situation that you feel anxious about. See the situation through to a successful completion. ***Visualise blue for calm.*** *Breathe in blue and breathe out red.*
Depression • I'm useless, I'm worthless. • Everything is hopeless 	Fatigue Slowed down Do less Stay in bed/home Disinterest Can't concentrate	It's okay to feel sad about this situation, but I can get through it. I'm looking through those 'gloomy specs' again. This doesn't mean I'm a worthless person. What would be a more helpful way of looking at things? If I do something anyway – I'll feel better.	Do things anyway – in spite of how I'm feeling. Get up. Get out. Do something enjoyable or useful. Be with or contact others. Focus attention outside of me and my situation.	In your mind's eye, see yourself doing and enjoying the things you used to or would like to enjoy doing, and successfully doing what you need to do. ***Visualise orange for positive energy.*** *Breathe in orange, and breathe out blue/black.*

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Dealing with Distress Worksheet

STOP - Take a breath	Observe - mindfully	CHOOSE the most appropriate skill/s – what will help most? ***WISE MIND***	ACT - Do the skill/s	Outcome
Stop, step back and breathe	*What's the emotion I'm feeling? What's the action urge?*	• ***Change*** *the situation or emotion? (Emotion Regulation or Interpersonal Effectiveness skills)* ○ *PLEASE MASTER* ○ *DEAR MAN* • ***Reduce*** *the emotion? (Distress Tolerance skills)* ○ *ACCEPT* ○ *IMPROVE*	*E.g. opposite action, distracting activities, exercise, take a break, new thoughts, helping others*	*What helped? What didn't help? With the benefit of hindsight, what could I have done differently?*

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Dealing with Distress Worksheet 2

Prompting Event – What was happening? Where? When? Who with?
Interpretation – What meaning was I giving the situation?
Body Sensations – What did I feel in my body?
Body Language – What did my body do? How did it move? (posture, facial expression, body movement, gestures etc)
Action Urge – What did I feel like doing? (Running away, attacking, withdrawing)
Emotion Name - Anger, sadness, fear, guilt etc
Choose action – What will help most? Can I, or do I need to, change this situation? If not, how can I reduce the distress? What will be most effective and most appropriate?
Outcome – What helped? What didn't help? What could I have done differently?

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Changing the way we think

As thoughts play such an important role in our distressing emotions, it can be very effective to notice these thoughts, and learn to think differently, or to think about thoughts in a different way. When you start to feel upset

Questions to ask yourself when you feel distressed

STOPP! (page 38) Pause, take a breath, don't react automatically

Ask yourself:

- What am I reacting to?
- What is it that's really pushing my buttons here?
- What is it that I think is going to happen here?
- What's the worst (and best) that could happen? What's most likely to happen?
- Is this fact or opinion?
- Am I getting things out of proportion?
- How important is this really? How important will it be in 6 months time?
- What harm has actually been done?
- Am I expecting something from this person or situation that is unrealistic?
- Am I overestimating the danger?
- Am I underestimating my ability to cope?
- Am I using that negative filter? Those gloomy specs? Is there another way of looking at it?
- What advice would I give to someone else in this situation?
- Am I spending time ruminating about the past or worrying about the future? What could I do right now that would help me feel better?

- Am I putting more pressure on myself, setting up expectations of myself that are almost impossible? What would be more realistic?
- Am I mind-reading what others might be thinking?
- Am I believing I can predict the future?
- Is there another way of looking at this?
- What advice would I give someone else in this situation?
- Am I putting more pressure on myself?
- Just because I **feel** bad, doesn't mean things really **are** bad.
- Am I jumping to conclusions about what this person meant? Am I mis-reading between the lines? Is it possible that they didn't mean that?
- Am I exaggerating the good aspects of others, and putting myself down? Or am I exaggerating the negative and minimising the positives? How would someone else see it? What's the bigger picture?
- Things aren't either totally white or totally black – there are shades of grey. Where is this on the spectrum?
- This is just a reminder of the past. That was then, and this is now. Even though this memory makes me <u>feel</u> upset, it's not <u>actually</u> happening again right now.
- What do I want or need from this person or situation? What do they want or need from me? Is there a compromise?
- What would be the consequences of responding the way I usually do?
- Is there another way of dealing with this? What would be the most helpful and effective action to take? (for me, for the situation, for the other person)

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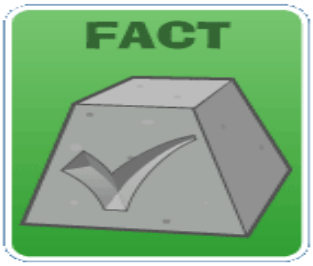
FACT OR OPINION?



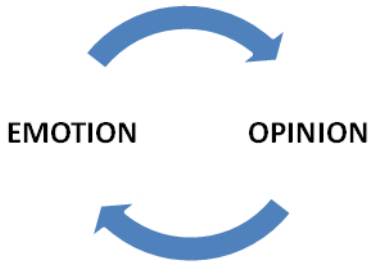
FACT

- Evidence to support its truth
- Undisputed
- Driven by rational thought

OPINION

- Based upon a belief or personal view
- Varies according to individuals' knowledge, experience, culture, belief systems etc
- Driven by and reinforced by emotion

At stressful times, we tend to be driven by our emotions and opinions, which create a vicious cycle by fuelling each other. Our emotions strengthen our opinions, which in turn, intensify our emotions.
This leads to impulsive acts and unhelpful longer term consequences, which help to maintain the overall problem.



It can therefore be helpful to ask ourselves whether what we're thinking is FACT or OPINION.

- If it's a fact, then we can make choices about what we can or cannot do.
- If it's an opinion, then we can look at the facts – what we do **know** about the situation.

Realising that many thoughts are opinion rather than fact makes it less likely that we'll be distressed by them, and more able to make wise and calm decisions about what the best action to take.

Get into the habit of asking yourself:

FACT or OPINION?

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Interpersonal Effectiveness

Interpersonal Effectiveness refers to the skills which help us to

- Attend to relationships
- Balance priorities versus demands
- Balance the 'wants' and 'shoulds'
- Build a sense of mastery and self-respect

GAINING OUR OBJECTIVE

In order to increase our effectiveness in dealing with other people, we need to:

- Clarify what we want from the interaction - be as specific about that as you can
- Identify what we need to do in order to get the results we want

DEAR MAN - helping us gain our objective

D Describe the current situation

E Express your feelings and opinions

A Assert yourself by asking for what you want, or by saying no

R Reward the person - let them know what they will get out of it

M Mindful of objectives without distraction (broken record technique, ignoring attacks)

A Appear effective and competent (role play, use your acting skills)

N Negotiate alternative solutions

THE RELATIONSHIP

- How important is this relationship for me?
- What do I want this person to feel about me after this interaction?
- What do I need to do, in order to keep this relationship?

Keeping the Relationship - GIVE

G Gentle manner without attack or threat

I Interest in the other person

V Validate the other person without judging

E Easy manner (with a little humour?)

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SELF-RESPECT

- What do I want to feel about myself after this interaction?
- What do I have to do in order to feel that way about myself?

Keeping to your self-respect - FAST

F Fair to myself and others

A No Apologies for being alive

S Stick to values (not do anything I'll regret later)

T Truthful without excuses or exaggeration

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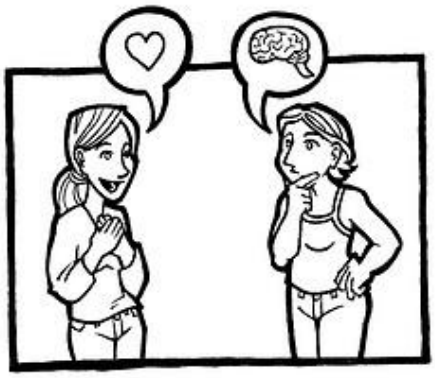
Assertiveness

When communicating with other people, it helps to keep in mind not only what you are experiencing (thoughts, feelings, behaviours) but also what they might be experiencing, which might be similar, different, or completely opposite to your experience (and anywhere in-between!). Just because you believe they're thinking something about you, that doesn't necessarily make it true – our minds are continually trying to make sense of our world, but our minds do not always get it right. Our thoughts and emotions can get in the way of effective communication, and we end up making things worse and messing things up. This awareness of our own reactions, together with an understanding and awareness of how the other person might be reacting (their thoughts, feelings and responses) will give us important knowledge and help us to respond in a more helpful and effective way.

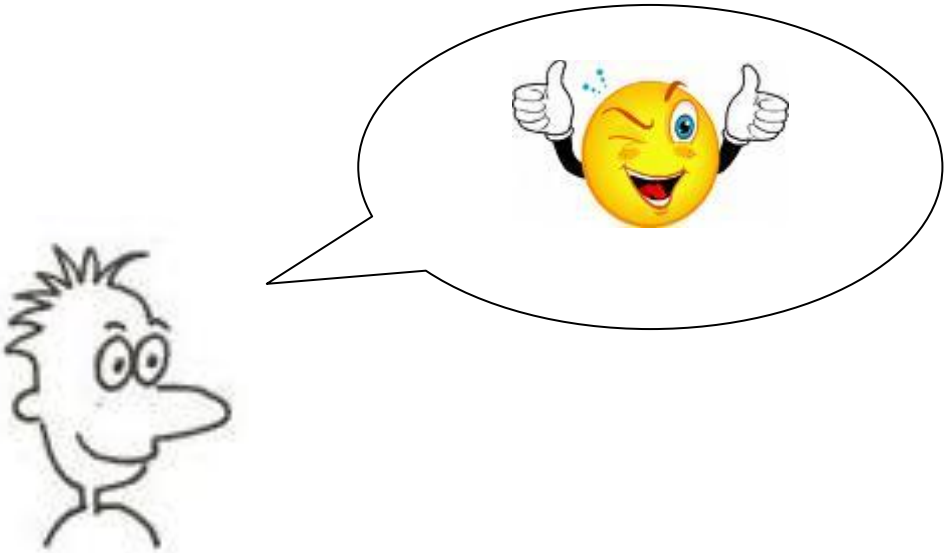


It's so easy to get things wrong, misunderstand what the other person is saying, we react to what we think they mean, they react to what they think we mean….and so it goes on

We can learn to be more assertive and effective in communicating what we really want to say, without upsetting the other person, and reduce misunderstandings on both sides.

The aim is to practice behaving and communicating more assertively, and to reduce acting and communicating in passive and aggressive ways, which usually result in distress.

It can help to think about a person who you respect and who you believe acts and communicates effectively and assertively, respecting others and themselves, who is warm and friendly. This can be a person who is known personally to you, or a famous person, or perhaps a fictional character. You can model yourself on that person – imagine them dealing with particular situations and how they would do it, what that would look like. Then imagine yourself acting in a similar way – and do it. Practice it often. Initially, it doesn't matter if you don't feel like being assertive, just practice it anyway. When you notice yourself acting aggressively or passively, just notice, then change your posture, expression and behaviour to as though you were being assertive. It works!



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Communication Styles

	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
General	Compliant, submissive, talks little, vague non-committal communication, puts self down, praises others *"I don't mind…that's fine….yes alright"*	Actions and expressions fit with words spoken, firm but polite and clear messages, respectful of self and others *"That's a good idea, and how about if we did this too…" or "I can see that, but I'd really like..."*	Sarcastic, harsh, always right, superior, know it all, interrupts, talks over others, critical, put-downs, patronising, disrespectful of others *"This is what we're doing, if you don't like it, tough"*
Beliefs	**You're okay, I'm not** Has no opinion other than that the other person/s are always more important, so it doesn't matter what they think anyway	**I'm okay, you're okay** Believes or acts as if all the individuals involved are equal, each deserving of respect, and no more entitled than the other to have things done their way	**I'm okay, you're not** Believe they are entitled to have things done their way, the way they want it to be done, because they are right, and others (and their needs) are less important
Eyes	Avoids eye contact, looks down, teary, pleading	Warm, welcoming, friendly, comfortable eye contact	Narrow, emotion-less, staring, expressionless
Posture	Makes body smaller – stooped, leaning, hunched shoulders	Relaxed, open, welcoming	Makes body bigger – upright, head high, shoulders out, hands on hips, feet apart
Hands	Together, fidgety, clammy	Open, friendly and appropriate gestures	Pointing fingers, making fists, clenched, hands on hips
Consequences	Give in to others, don't get what we want or need, self-critical thoughts, miserable	Good relationships with others, happy with outcome and to compromise	Make enemies, upset others and self, feel angry and resentful

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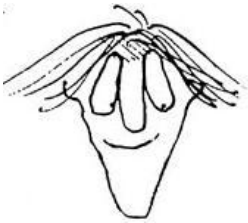
Handling Criticism

When we hear others being critical of something we've done, we tend to believe that they are being critical of 'us' rather than our actions. This may be because we've been criticised in an unhelpful way in the past, which resulted in feeling blamed, rejected or unwanted. However, very often the person offering criticism is intending the criticism to be helpful to us – pointing out the affect of our actions. If we were able to accept that criticism in the spirit in which it was intended, then we could make positive helpful changes.

PASSIVE

"I'm so sorry – you're right, it's all my fault. I'm so stupid and useless"

PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE



"Sorry".
(Thinks: "Huh. It's not my fault! I'll get you back later")

AGGRESSIVE

"What?! You can talk! How dare you"

Whereas, if we were able to consider the criticism in a different way, then maybe something positive could come out of it. When you receive criticism, consider whether the criticism is:

- True
- Not true
- Partly true

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We also need to bear in mind how important the relationship is to us.

- How important is this relationship for me?
- What do I want this person to feel about me after this interaction?
- What do I need to do, in order to keep this relationship?

Keeping the Relationship – GIVE (acronym)

G Gentle manner without attack or threat

I Interest in the other person

V Validate the other person without judging

E Easy manner (with a little humour?)

Whilst also remaining our self-respect

- What do I want to feel about myself after this interaction?
- What do I have to do in order to feel that way about myself?

Keeping to your self-respect - FAST

F Fair to myself and others

A No Apologies for being alive

S Stick to values (not do anything I'll regret later)

T Truthful without excuses or exaggeration

Assertive response to criticism

Criticism is true

Agree

Yes, I can be like that sometimes. How has that affected you? What would have been a more helpful way of doing things? I'm sorry if it upset you.

Criticism is not true

Disagree

I disagree, I don't think that's right, and I feel a bit upset that you can say that. Can you explain what you mean a bit more?

Criticism partly true

Partially agree

I accept that I didn't do that well. I made a mistake, but I disagree with your comments about me personally. Can you explain what you mean a bit more?

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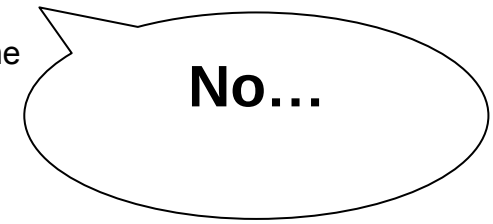
Saying "No"

It can very often be difficult to say no to people who make demands of us, and if we say no, we can get caught up in self-critical thoughts leading us to feel guilty. To avoid feeling guilty, we just keep on saying "yes" to every request.

Someone asks us to do something:

We can learn ways of saying "No" that don't lead us to think self-critically or feel guilty. For example:

- I'm sorry but I really can't take on anything else at the moment.
- I'm quite busy right now. Perhaps another time.
- I'd like to help you out, but I just don't feel up to it at the moment.
- I don't need a new roof (double glazing, vacuum cleaner etc). I'm happy with what I have thank you.
- Thank you for asking me. You're a nice person, but I don't want to go out with you.



If the person seems to have trouble accepting your "No", then just keep repeating yourself, over and over if necessary. You might have to add the word "No" to the beginning of those statements, perhaps with some emphasis on that word. For example:

- **No**. I'm sorry but I really can't at the moment.

Be wary of those self-critical thoughts afterwards. Practice challenging and/or dismissing them, by telling yourself:

- I explained to them why I couldn't do it
- It's not my responsibility
- It would only end up upsetting me if I agreed to it – this is best for me. If I feel less tired and not resentful, then I might be a better position to help them out next time
- They're just thoughts – I don't need to pay them any attention (then put your focus of attention on something else)

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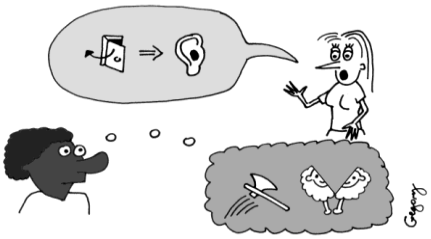
Telling others what we want

When we want something, we use all sorts of messages to try to let others know, such as hints, expressions and gestures, or hidden meanings in what we say.



But the only way to ensure that someone has really understood what you want, is to be clear in what you say:

- I'd like you to give me a hug
- I want to be your friend, but not your girlfriend
- I'd like to talk to you about something…
- I want to leave now

Use the DEAR MAN acronym as a reminder:

D Describe the current situation

E Express your feelings and opinions

A Assert yourself by asking for what you want, or by saying no

R Reward the person - let them know what they will get out of it

M Mindful of objectives without distraction (broken record technique, ignoring attacks)

A Appear effective and competent (role play, use your acting skills)

N Negotiate alternative solutions

It may not always be possible to get what we want or feel we need, perhaps because that would impact on other people. Having said what you'd like, then we need to consider the response according to the rights of the other person too. It's often possible to compromise, which can respect the rights of all those involved: Give and take.

If we are unable to change a situation or get want we want, even using the Interpersonal Effectiveness skills, then we may need to use our Distress Tolerance skills (page 3).

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STOPP

Stop

Don't act immediately. Wait.

Take a Breath

Slowly breathe in and out a couple of times.

Observe

What am I thinking about?
What am I focusing on?
What am I reacting to?
What am I feeling in my body?

Pull Back

Zoom out!
See the bigger picture.
Is this fact or opinion?
Is there another way of looking at this?
What would someone else say about it?
How does this affect others?
What advice would I give a friend in this situation?
How important is this situation right now?

Practise what works

Consider the consequences.
What's the BEST thing to do?
Do what will help most!

Try not to react merely in the moment. Pull back from the situation. Take a wider view: Compose yourself.

Epictetus (AD 55 – 135)

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The Helicopter View

When something is distressing us, we're so close to it, involved with it, part of it – it's really hard to stand back from what's happening. We see the close up view, but we can't see anything else. It's like the well-known saying: "We can't see the wood for the trees". If we could zoom out our view, like a helicopter hovering above, we'd be able to see the bigger picture. We could stand back, be less emotionally involved, and see a different perspective.

SELF
What am I reacting to? What does this situation mean to me?

OTHERS
What would this look like to others involved?

SITUATION
STOPP!
Take a Breath
What's the bigger picture?

OUTSIDER
How would this seem to someone outside the situation – not emotionally involved?

WISE MIND
What would be the best thing to do – for me, for others, for this situation?

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Positive Steps to Wellbeing

Be kind to yourself

Our culture, genes, religion, upbringing, education, gender, sexuality, beliefs, and life experiences make us who we are. We all have bad days.

Be kind to yourself. Encourage rather than criticise yourself. Treat yourself the way you would treat a friend in the same situation.

Exercise regularly

Being active helps lift our mood, reduces stress and anxiety, improves physical health, and gives us more energy.

Get outside, preferably in a green space or near water.

Find an activity you enjoy doing, and just do it.

Take up a hobby and/or learn a new skill

Increase your confidence and interest, meet others, or prepare for finding work.

Have some fun and/or be creative

Having fun or being creative helps us feel better and increases our confidence.

Enjoy yourself!

Help others

Get involved with a community project, charity work, or simply help out someone you know.

As well as benefiting others, you'll be doing something worthwhile which will help you feel better about yourself.

Relax

Make time for yourself. Allow yourself to chill out and relax. Find something that suits you – different things work for different people.

Breathe… (imagine a balloon in your belly, inflating and deflating as you breathe in and out)

Eat healthily

Eat regularly, eat breakfast, eat healthily, eat fruit and vegetables, drink water.

Balance sleep

Get into a healthy sleep routine – including going to bed and getting up at the same time each day.

Connect with others

Stay in touch with family and friends - make regular and frequent contact with them.

Beware drink and drugs

Avoid using alcohol (or non-prescribed drugs) to help you cope – it will only add to your problems.

See the bigger picture

We all give different meanings to situations and see things from our point of view. Broaden out your perspective and consider the bigger picture ('the helicopter view')

What meaning am I giving this? Is this fact or opinion? How would others see it?
Is there another way of looking at this?
How important is it, or will it be in a year's time?
What can I do right now that will help most?

Accepting: 'It is as it is'

We tend to fight against distressing thoughts and feelings, but we can learn to just notice them and give up that struggle.

Some situations we just can't change. We can surf those waves rather than try to stop them.

Allow those thoughts and sensations just to be – they will pass.

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