

ACCEPTANCE & COMMITMENT THERAPY

ACT



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ACCEPTANCE & COMMITMENT THERAPY - ACT

THE WAY OUT OF THE (UN-)HAPPINESS TRAP

I Just Want to Be Happy!

Just suppose for a moment that almost everything you believed about finding happiness turned out to be inaccurate, misleading, or false. And suppose that those very beliefs were making you miserable. What if your very efforts to find happiness were actually preventing you from achieving it? And what if almost everyone you knew turned out to be in the same boat – including all those psychologists, psychiatrists, and self-help gurus who claim to have all the answers?

I'm not posing these questions just to grab your attention. There is a growing body of scientific research that suggests we are all caught in a powerful psychological trap. We lead our lives ruled by many unhelpful and inaccurate beliefs about happiness – ideas widely accepted because “everyone knows they are true.” These beliefs seem to make good sense – that's why you encounter them in nearly every self-help book you ever read. But unfortunately, these misleading ideas create a vicious cycle in which the more we try to find happiness, the more we suffer. And this psychological trap is so well hidden, we don't even have a clue that we're caught in it. That's the bad news.

The good news is there's hope. You can learn how to recognize the “happiness trap” and, more importantly, you can learn how to escape. And this handout will give you the skills and knowledge to do so. It's based on a revolutionary new development in human psychology, a powerful model for change known as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, or ACT. The aim of ACT is to help you live a rich, full, and meaningful life effectively handling the pain that inevitably comes your way. ACT achieves this through the use of six powerful principles, which will enable you to develop a life-enhancing ability known as “psychological flexibility.”

Is Happiness Normal?

In the Western world, we now have a higher standard of living than humans have ever known before. We have better medical treatment, better food, better housing conditions, better sanitation, more money, welfare services, and more access to education, justice, travel, entertainment, and career opportunities. Indeed, today's middle class live better than did the royalty of not so long ago. And yet humans today don't seem very happy. The self-help sections of bookstores are packed with books on depression, anxiety, stress, relationship problems, addiction, and more.

Meanwhile, on the television and radio the “experts” bombard us daily with advice on how to improve our lives. The number of psychiatrists, marriage and family counsellors, social workers, and “life coaches” is increasing every year. Yet, despite all this help and advice, human unhappiness does not seem to be diminishing but growing by leaps and bounds! Isn't there something wrong with this picture?

The statistics are staggering: in any given year, almost 30 percent of the adult population will suffer from a recognized psychological disorder. The World Health Organization estimates that depression is currently the fourth biggest, costliest, and most debilitating disease in the world and, by the year 2020, it will be the second biggest. In any given week, one-tenth of the adult population is suffering from clinical depression, and one in five people will suffer from it at some point in their lifetime. Furthermore, one in four adults, at some stage in their life, will suffer from drug or alcohol addiction, which is why there are now over twenty million alcoholics in the United States alone.

But more startling and more sobering than all those statistics is that almost one in two people will go through a stage in life when they seriously consider suicide and will struggle with it for a period of two weeks or more. Scarier still, one in ten people will at some point actually attempt to kill themselves. Think about those numbers for a moment. Think of your friends, family, and coworkers. Almost half of them will at some point be so overwhelmed by misery that they seriously contemplate suicide. Once in ten will actually go on to attempt it. Clearly, lasting happiness is not normal!

Why Is It So Difficult to Be Happy?

To answer this question, let's take a journey back in time. The modern human mind, with its amazing ability to analyze, plan, create, and communicate has largely evolved over the last hundred thousand years, since our species, Homo sapiens, first appeared on the planet. But our minds did not evolve to make us “feel good” so we could tell jokes, write poems, or say “I love you.” Our minds evolved to help us survive in a world fraught with danger. Imagine that you're an early human hunter-gatherer. What are your essential needs in order to survive and reproduce? There are four of them: food, water, shelter, and sex. But none of these things matter if you're dead. So, the number one priority of the primitive human mind was to look out for anything that might harm you – and avoid it. The primitive mind was basically a “Don't get killed” device, and it proved enormously useful. The better our ancestors became at anticipating and avoiding danger, the longer they lived and the more children they had.

So, with each generation the human mind became increasingly skilled at predicting and avoiding danger. And now, after one hundred thousand years of evolution, the modern mind is constantly on the lookout, assessing and judging everything we encounter: Is this good or bad? Safe or dangerous? Harmful or helpful?

These days, though, it's not saber-toothed tigers or woolly mammoths that our mind warns us about. Instead it's losing our job, being rejected, getting a speeding ticket, embarrassing ourselves in public, getting cancer, or a million and one other common worries. As a result, we spend a lot of time worrying about things that, more often than not, never happen.

Another essential for the survival of any early human is to belong to a group. If your clan boots you out, it won't be long before the wolves find you. So how does the mind protect you from rejection by the group? By comparing you with other members of clan: Am I fitting in? Am I doing the right things? Am I contributing enough? Am I as good as the others? Am I doing anything that might get me rejected?

Sound familiar? Our modern-day minds are continually warning us of rejection and comparing us to the rest of society. No wonder we spend so much energy worrying whether people will like us. No wonder we're always looking for ways to improve ourselves or putting ourselves down because we don't "measure up." A hundred thousand years ago we had only the few members of our immediate clan to compare ourselves with. But these days we only need to glance at a newspaper, magazine, or television to instantly find a whole host of people who are smarter, richer, slimmer, sexier, more famous, more powerful, or more successful than we are. When we compare ourselves to these glamorous media creations, we feel inferior or disappointed with our lives. To make matters worse, our minds are now so sophisticated they can conjure up a fantasy image of the person we'd ideally like to be – and we compare ourselves to that! What chance have we got? We will always end up feeling not good enough.

Now, for any Stone Age person with ambition, the general rule for success is: get more and get better. The better your weapons, the more food you can kill. The larger your food stores, the greater your chances for survival in times of scarcity. The better your shelter, the safer you are from weather and wild animals. The more children you have, the greater the chance that some will survive into adulthood. No surprise then that our modern mind continually looks for "more and better": more money, a better job, more status, a better body, more love, a better partner. And if we succeed, if we actually do get more money or a better car or a better-looking body, then we're satisfied – for a while. But sooner or later (and usually sooner), we end up wanting more.

Thus, evolution has shaped our brains so that we are hardwired to suffer psychologically: to compare, evaluate, and criticize ourselves, to focus on what we're lacking, to rapidly become dissatisfied with what we have, and to imagine all sorts of frightening scenarios, most of which will never happen. No wonder humans find it hard to be happy!

What Exactly Is “Happiness”?

We all want it. We all crave it. We all strive for it. Even the Dalai Lama has said: “The very purpose of life is to seek happiness.” But what exactly is it?

The word “happiness” has two very different meanings. The common meaning of the word is “feeling good.” In other words, feeling a sense of pleasure, gladness, or gratification. We all enjoy these feelings, so it’s no surprise that we chase them. However, like all human emotions, feelings of happiness don’t last. No matter how hard we try to hold on to them, they slip away every time. And as we shall see, a life spent in pursuit of those good feelings is, in the long term, deeply unsatisfying. In fact, the harder we chase after pleasurable feelings, the more we are likely to suffer from anxiety and depression.

The other far-less-common meaning of happiness is “living a rich, full, and meaningful life.” When we take action on the things that truly matter deep in our hearts, move in directions that we consider valuable and worthy, clarify what we stand for in life and act accordingly, then our lives become rich, full and meaningful, and we experience a powerful sense of vitality. This is not some fleeting feeling – it is a profound sense of a life well lived. And although such a life will undoubtedly give us many pleasurable feelings, it will also give us uncomfortable ones, such as sadness, fear, and anger. This is only to be expected. If we live a full life, we will feel the full range of human emotions.

We are far more interested in this second meaning of happiness than in the first. Of course, we all enjoy feeling good, and we should certainly make the most of pleasant feelings when they appear. But if we try to have them all the time, we are doomed to failure.

The reality is, life involves pain. There’s no getting away from it. As human beings, we are all faced with the fact that sooner or later we will grow infirm, get sick, and die. Sooner or later we all will lose valued relationships through rejection, separation, or death. Sooner or later we all will come face to face with crisis, disappointment, and failure. This means that in one form or another, we are all going to experience painful thoughts and feelings.

The good news is that, although we can’t avoid such pain, we can learn to handle it much better – to make room for it, reduce its impact, and create a life worth living despite it.

The Principles of Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (Act)

1. Defusion

Recognizing thoughts, images, and memories for what they are – just words and pictures – and allowing them to come and go as they please, without fighting them, running from them, or giving them more attention that they deserve.

2. Expansion

Making room for feelings, sensations, and urges and allowing them to come and go as they please, without fighting them, running from them, or giving them undue attention.

3. Connection

Bringing full awareness to your here-and-now experience with openness, interest, and receptiveness; focusing on and engaging fully in whatever you're doing.

4. The Observing Self

A transcendent part of you; a perspective from which to observe difficult thoughts and feelings, without being hurt by them. The one part of you which is unchanging, ever-present, and impervious to harm. It has no physical properties: it is "pure awareness."

5. Values

Clarifying what is most important in your heart: what sort of person you want to be, what is significant and meaningful to you, what you want to stand for in this life.

6. Committed Action

Taking effective action in line with your values (again and again, no matter how many times you go off track).

These six basic principles are neatly summarized in the basic ACT formula:

A = Accept your thoughts and feelings and be present.

C = Connect with your values.

T = Take effective action.

The more you live by these six core principles, the more fulfilling and rewarding your life will be. But don't believe this just because I say so. Try it out and trust your own experience. If these principles work for you, if they give you a rich, full life, then it makes sense to embrace them as fully as possible.

The way you live your life is a personal choice. And while most people find that these six basic principles will transform their lives in many positive ways, it's important to remember they are not Ten Commandments. Apply them if and when you choose to, and always in the interest of making life richer, fuller, and more meaningful. But don't make them into rules that must be obeyed absolutely and at all times.

I'm quite sure there will be plenty of times when you "forget" what you've learned. You'll get caught up in unhelpful thoughts, struggle uselessly with your feelings, and act in self-defeating ways. But the instant you recognize what you're doing, you can choose to do something about it – if you want to, that is.

Again, this is a personal choice. You don't have to do anything. In fact, I'm sure there will be times that you deliberately choose not to use the principles in this handout. And that's okay. Just aim to be more aware of the choices you make and the effects they have on your life. That way, you are more likely to make choices that enhance your life, rather than ones that diminish it.

Feeling Stuck?

If you feel stuck while applying the principles of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, you may find that you have come up against one or more components of **FEAR**:

Fusion / Identification with your thoughts and feelings

Excessive expectations

Avoidance of discomfort

Remoteness from your values

So, if you're feeling stuck or you're putting off taking action, take a few moments to identify what's getting in your way and think about how to resolve it. If you're fusing with unhelpful thoughts such as, "It's too hard," "I can't do it," "It won't work," "I can't be bothered," or, "I'll do it later," then practice diffusion skills. If your expectations are unrealistic, break your goals down into smaller steps, give yourself more time, and allow yourself to make mistakes. If you're avoiding uncomfortable feelings such as fear or anxiety, practice your expansion skills and develop willingness. If you're remote from your values, then keep asking yourself, "What do I really care about?" "What really matters deep in my heart?" "What sort of person do I want to be?" and, "Deep down inside, what do I really want?"

Applying ACT in Different Domains of Life

In whichever domain of life you feel dissatisfied – whether it's health, work, friends, family, relationships, or something else – applying the basic ACT principles will help you transform it. **Whatever you're doing, engage yourself fully in it. Whoever you're with, be present. When unhelpful thoughts arise, defuse them. When unpleasant feelings arise, make room for them. And whatever your values are, be faithful to them.**

Using the six core principles of ACT can help you rise to the Serenity Challenge: "Develop the courage to solve those problems that can be solved, the serenity to accept those problems that can't be solved, and the wisdom to know the difference." If your problems can be solved, then take effective action, guided by your values, to solve them. If your problems can't be solved, use diffusion and expansion to accept this. And the more awareness you bring to your experience right now – the more you'll be able to tell which problems are which.

No matter what sort of problematic situation you encounter in life, there are only ever two sensible courses of action:

1. Accept it.
2. Take effective action to improve it.

Of course, sometimes the only way to improve the situation is to leave it. But if you can't leave it and if no effective action is possible right now, then the only option is to accept it until you can take effective action.

Focus on What's in Your Control

Whatever you attempt to do, you'll get the best results when you focus on what is in your control (and the worst results when you focus on what's not in your control). So, what is in your control? Well, mainly two things: your actions and your attention. You can control the actions you take, no matter what your thoughts and feelings may be telling you (as long as you're doing). And you can control how you direct your attention; that is, what you focus on and whether you do so with openness, interest, and receptiveness.

Apart from your actions and your attention, you don't have much control over anything else. For example:

- You have little control over your feelings, thoughts, memories, urges, and sensations – and the more intense they are, the less control you have.
- You have no control over other people. (You can influence other people, of course, but only through your actions. Therefore, those people are not directly in your control; only your actions are. Even if you were to point a gun at someone's head, you couldn't control them, because they could still choose to die rather than obey you.)
- You have no control over the world around you. (You can interact with and transform the world around you, but only through your actions – your actions are in your control; the world isn't.)

Therefore, it makes sense to put your life's energy mainly into action and attention. Do what you value. Engage yourself fully in what you're doing. And pay attention to the effect your actions are having. Remember, each time you act in line with your values, no matter how tiny that action is, you're contributing to a rich and meaningful life.

The Purpose

The whole purpose is to help you escape from the vicious cycle of the happiness trap – to live a full and meaningful life instead of basing your existence on chasing “good” feelings and avoiding “bad” ones. Of course, in a full human life you will experience the full range of human feelings.

You will experience every emotion, from joy and love to fear and anger, and willingly make room for them all.

There's an ancient Eastern saying: "If you don't decide where you're going, you'll end up wherever you're heading." To live a meaningful life, you need direction, and your values are there, deep in your heart, to provide it. So, connect with those values; use them for guidance. Cultivate a sense of purpose. Keep setting meaningful goals and pursue them vigorously.

At the same time, appreciate what you have in your life right now. This is important, because now is the only time you ever have. The past doesn't exist; it's nothing more than memories in the present. And the future doesn't exist; it's nothing more than thoughts and images in the present. The only time you ever have is this moment. So, make the most of it. Notice what is happening.

Appreciate it in its fullness.

And remember: *life gives most to those who make the most of what life gives.*

Thinking Versus Observing

Did anyone ever chide you for not listening? And did you ever reply, "Sorry, I was somewhere else"? Well, if you were "somewhere else," then where were you? And how did you get back again?

It is very useful to teach yourself to recognize two different parts of yourself: the "thinking self" and the "observing self." The thinking self is the part of you that thinks, plans, judges, compares, creates, imagines, visualizes, analyzes, remembers, daydreams, and fantasizes. A more common name for it is the "mind." Popular psychological approaches such as positive thinking, cognitive therapy, creative visualization, hypnosis, and neuro-linguistic programming all focus on controlling the way your thinking self operates. This is all great in theory and it appeals to our common sense, but as you may have seen, the thinking self is not that easy to control. It's not that we have no control – it's just that we have much less control than the "experts" would have us believe.

The observing self is fundamentally different from the thinking self. The observing self is aware, but does not think; it is the part of you that is responsible for focus, attention, and awareness. While it can observe or pay attention to your thoughts, it can't produce them. Whereas the thinking self thinks about your experience, the observing self-registers your experience directly.

For example, if you are playing tennis and you are truly focused, then all your attention is riveted on that ball coming towards you. This is your observing self at work. You are not thinking about the ball; you are observing it.

Now, suppose thoughts start popping into your head like, “I hope my grip is correct,” “I’d better make this a good hit,” or “Wow, that ball is moving fast!” That is your thinking self at work. And of course, such thoughts can often be distracting. If your observing self pays too much attention to those thoughts, then it is no longer focused on the ball, and your performance will be impaired. (How often have you been focused on a task, only to be distracted by a thought such as, “I hope I don’t screw this up!”?)

Or suppose you’re watching a magnificent sunset. There are moments when your mind is quiet; when you’re simply noticing the spectacle before you. This is your observing self at work: observing, not thinking. But those silent moments don’t last long. Your thinking self kicks in: “Wow, look at all those colours! This reminds me of that sunset we saw on vacation last year. I wish I had my camera.” **And the more attention your observing self pays to the running commentary of the thinking self, the more you lose direct contact with that sunset.**

Although we all understand words such as “**awareness**,” “**focus**,” and “**attention**,” most of us in the Western world have little or no concept of the observing self. As a result, there is no common word for it in the English language. We only have the word “mind,” which is generally used to denote both the thinking self and the observing self, without distinguishing between the two. To reduce confusion, whenever I use the word “mind”, I am referring only to the thinking self. When I use terms like “**attention**,” “**observing**,” “**noticing**,” and “**direct experience**,” I’m referring to various aspects of the observing self. To free yourself from the destructive habit of being caught up in the thoughts in your mind, you can learn how to tune in and use this amazingly potent part of you. Let’s begin right now with a simple exercise.

Two Distinct Processes

Close your eyes for about a minute and simply notice what your mind does. Stay on the lookout for any thoughts or images, as if you were a wildlife photographer waiting for an exotic animal to emerge from the undergrowth. If no thoughts or images appear, keep watching; sooner or later they will show themselves – I guarantee it. Notice where those thoughts or images seem to be located: in front of you, above you, behind you, to one side of you, or within you. Once you’ve done this for a minute, open your eyes again.

That’s all there is to it. So, read through these instructions once again; and give it a try.

What you experienced were **two distinct processes** going on. First there was the **process of thinking** – in other words, some thoughts or images appeared. Then there was the **process of observing**; that is, you were able to notice or observe those thoughts and images. It’s important to experience the distinction between thinking and observing. Try the above exercise once more. Close your eyes for about a minute, notice what thoughts or images appear, and notice where they seem to be located.

Hopefully, this little exercise gave you a sense of distance between you and your thoughts: thoughts and images appeared, then disappeared again, and you were able to notice them come and go. Another way of putting this is that your thinking self-produced some thoughts, and your observing self-observed them.

Our thinking self is a bit like radio, constantly playing in the background. Most of the time it's the Radio Doom and Gloom Show, broadcasting negative stories twenty-four hours a day. It reminds us of bad things from the past, it warns us of bad things to come in the future, and it gives us regular updates on everything that's wrong with us. Once in a while it broadcasts something useful or cheerful, but not too often. So, if we're constantly tuned in to this radio, listening to it intently and, worse, believing everything we hear, then we have a sure-fire recipe for stress and misery.

Unfortunately, there's no way to switch off this radio. Even Zen masters are unable to achieve such a feat. Sometimes the radio will stop of its own accord for a few seconds (or even – very rarely – for a few minutes). But we just don't have the power to make it stop (unless we short-circuit it with drugs, alcohol, or brain surgery). In fact, generally speaking, the more we try to make this radio stop, the louder it plays.

But there is an alternative approach. Have you ever had a radio playing in the background but you were so intent on what you were doing that you didn't really listen to it? You could hear the radio playing, but you weren't paying attention to it. In diffusion skills, we are ultimately aiming to do precisely that with our thoughts. Once we know that thoughts are just bits of language, we can treat them like background noise – we can let them come and go without focusing on them and without being bothered by them.

So, here's what we're aiming for with diffusion skills:

- ***If the thinking self is broadcasting something unhelpful, the observing self-need not pay it much attention. The observing self can simply acknowledge the thought, then turn its attention to what you are doing here and now.***
- ***If the thinking self is broadcasting something useful or helpful, then the observing self can tune in and pay attention.***

This is very different from approaches such as positive thinking, which are like airing a second radio show, Radio Happy and Cheerful, alongside Radio Doom and Gloom, in the hope of drowning it out. It's pretty hard to stay focused on what you're doing when you have two radios playing different tunes in the background.

Notice, too, that letting the radio play on without giving it much attention is very different from actively trying to ignore it. Have you ever heard a radio playing and tried not to listen to it? What happened? The more you tried not to hear it, the more it bothered you, right?

The ability to let thoughts come and go in the background while you keep your attention on what you are doing is very useful. Suppose you're in a social situation and your mind is saying, "I'm so boring! I have nothing to say. I wish I could go home!" It's hard to have a good conversation if you're giving all your attention to those thoughts. Similarly, suppose you're learning to drive and your thinking self is saying, "I can't do it. It's too hard. I'm going to crash!" It's hard to drive well if your observing self is focused to those thoughts rather than on the road. The following technique will teach you how to let your thoughts "pass on by" while you keep your attention on what you're doing. First read the instructions, then give it a try.

Ten Deep Breaths

Take ten deep breaths, as slowly as possible. (You may prefer to do this with your eyes closed.) Now focus on the rise and fall of your stomach and the air moving in and out of your lungs. Notice the sensations as the air flows in: your diaphragm relaxing down into your stomach cavity, your belly expanding, your lungs expanding. Notice what you feel as the air flows out: your stomach gently contracting, your diaphragm floating up into your chest cavity, the breath leaving your nostrils. Focus on completely emptying your lungs. Push out every last bit of air, feeling your lungs deflate, and pause for a moment before breathing in again. As you breathe in, notice how your tummy gently pushes outward.

Now let any thoughts and images come and go in the background, as if they were cars passing by outside your house. When a new thought or image appears, briefly **acknowledge its presence**, as if you were nodding at a passing motorist. As you do this, **keep your attention on the breath**, following the air, as it flows in and out of your lungs. You may find it helpful to silently say to yourself, "Thinking," whenever a thought or image appears. Many people find this helps them to acknowledge and let go of the thought. Give it a try, and if it's helpful, keep doing it.

From time to time a thought will capture your attention; it will "hook you" and "carry you away" so that you lose track of the exercise. The moment you realize you've been hooked, take a second to notice what distracted you; then gently "unhook" yourself and refocus on your breathing. Now read through the instructions once more and try it.

How did it go? Most people get hooked up and carried away by their thoughts several times during that exercise.

This is how thoughts typically affect us: they reel us in, pulling our attention away from what we're doing. (So, although we may say that our mind wanders, this is not accurate. In reality, it's our attention that wanders.)

By regularly this diffusion technique, you will learn three important skills: **(1) how to let thoughts come and go, without focusing on them, (2) how to recognize when you're been "hooked" by your thoughts, and (3) how to gently "unhook yourself" and refocus your attention.**

When using this technique, notice the distinction between your thinking self and observing self. (The observing self focuses on the breath, while the thinking self-chatters away in the background.) Notice also that **this is an acceptance strategy, not a control strategy.** We aren't trying to avoid or get rid of unwanted thoughts; we're simply allowing them to be there, to come and go as they please.

Fortunately, this is an easy technique to practice, because you can do it anytime, anywhere. Therefore, aim to practice this exercise through the day while you're stuck at traffic lights, waiting in line, on hold on the telephone, waiting for an appointment, during commercial breaks on the TV, and even in bed, last thing at night. Basically, try it anytime you have a moment to spare. (If you don't have time for the full ten breaths, even three or four can be useful.) In particular, try it anytime you realize that you're all caught up in your thoughts. When you're doing this technique, it doesn't matter how many times you get hooked. **Each time you notice it and unhook yourself, you're getting more proficient at a valuable skill.**

When doing this technique, let go of any expectations; simply notice what effect it has when you do it. Observing your thoughts and your breath in this way is in fact the foundation of mindful meditation. Most modern approaches to stress, anxiety and depression use mindfulness as a cornerstone of effective therapy.

I've designed the above brief exercises for busy people who say they "don't have enough time in the day" to do formal diffusion practice. However, "not enough time" is just another story. So, here's a challenge for you: if you really want to get good at this, then as well as doing all those brief exercises, put aside five minutes twice a day to practice focusing on your breath. For example, you may do five minutes first thing in the morning and five minutes during your lunch break. During these times, keep your attention totally on your breath, while letting your thoughts come and go like passing cars. And each time you notice your attention has wandered, gently refocus. Also, if you haven't already tried it, then try silently saying to yourself, "Thinking," whenever a thought appears. (Some people find this diffusion technique very helpful, but if you don't, then don't bother.)

Realistic Expectations

Your mind will never stop telling you unpleasant stories (at least, not for long) – that's just what minds do. So, let's be realistic. The fact is, you will get hooked up and reeled in by these stories again and again.

That's the bad news.

The good news is, you can make dramatic improvements. You can learn to get hooked much less often. You can learn to recognize much faster when you have been hooked, and you can learn to get much better at unhooking yourself. All these abilities will help to keep you out of the happiness trap.

Staring Down Your Demons

As you read through the emotions listed below, just notice, without thinking too hard about it, which ones you automatically judge as "good" or "positive," and which you automatically judge as "bad" or "negative."

- Fear
- Anger
- Shock
- Disgust
- Sadness
- Guilt
- Love
- Joy
- Curiosity

You have just read a list of the nine basic human emotions. Most people tend to automatically judge the first six emotions as "bad" or "negative" and the last three as "good" or "positive." Why is this so? It's largely because of the stories we believe about emotions.

Our thinking self loves to tell us stories, and we know how these stories affect us when we fuse with them. Here are some of the many unhelpful stories that our thinking self may tell us about emotions:

- Anger, guilt, shame, fear, sadness, embarrassment & anxiety are "negative" emotions.
- Negative emotions are bad, dangerous, irrational & a sign of weakness.
- Negative emotions will damage my health.
- People should hide their feelings.
- Expressing feelings is a sign of weakness.
- Strong emotions mean I'm out of control.
- Women shouldn't feel angry.
- Men shouldn't feel afraid.
- Negative emotions mean there's something wrong with my life.

One reason we tend to judge emotions as “bad” or “negative” is because they feel unpleasant; they create uncomfortable sensations in our bodies. We don’t like those sensations, so we don’t want them. On the other hand, we do like pleasant sensations, so naturally, we want more of them.

If you judge an emotion as “good,” you’ll probably try hard to get more of it; and if you judge it as “bad,” you’re apt to try even harder to get rid of it. Thus, judging sets you up for a struggle with your feelings. I encourage you to let go of judging your feelings altogether and to see them for what they are: a stream of constantly changing sensations and urges, continuously passing through your body.

How the Mind Adds to Our Emotional Discomfort

Judging is one of the most common ways our mind adds to our emotional discomfort; however, there are plenty of others. Below is a list of common questions the mind asks or comments that it makes that often stir up or intensify unpleasant feelings.

“Why Am I Feeling Like This?”

This question sets you up to run through all your problems one by one, to see if you can pinpoint what caused your feelings. Naturally this just makes you feel worse, because it creates the illusion that your life is nothing but problems. It also leads to a lot of time lost in unpleasant thoughts. (And does this process help you in any practical way? Does it help you to take action to change your life for the better?)

People generally ask this question because they think if they can figure out why they’re feeling so “bad,” they’ll be able to figure out how to feel better. Unfortunately, this strategy almost always backfires, as above. And more to the point, in most cases it doesn’t really matter that much exactly why these unpleasant feelings arose; what matters is how you respond to them. The basic fact is always this: what you are feeling is what you are feeling! So, if you can learn how to accept your feelings without having to analyze them, you’ll save yourself a lot of time and effort.

“What Have I Done to Deserve This?”

This question sets you up for self-blame. You rehash all the “bad” things you’ve done, so you can figure out why the universe decided to punish you. As a result, you end up feeling worthless, useless, bad, or inadequate. (And again, does this help you in any practical way? Isn’t this just another ineffective control strategy?)

“Why Am I Like This?”

This question leads you to search through your entire life history looking for the reason why you are the way you are. Frequently this leads to feelings of anger, resentment, and hopelessness. And it very often ends in blaming your parents. (And does this help you in any practical way?)

“I Can’t Handle It!”

Variations on this theme include “I can’t stand it,” “I can’t cope, “I’m going to have a nervous breakdown,” and so on. Your mind is basically feeding you the story that you’re too weak to handle this, and something bad is going to happen if you keep feeling this way. (And is this a helpful story to pay attention to?)

“I Shouldn’t Feel Like This.”

This is a classic. Here your mind picks an argument with reality. The reality is this: the way you are feeling right now is the way you are feeling. But your mind says, “Reality is wrong! It’s not supposed to be this way! Stop it! Give me the odds in your favour. (And does it change anything?)

“I Wish I Didn’t Feel Like This!”

Wishful thinking: one of the mind's favourite pastimes. (“I wish I felt more confident.” “I wish I didn’t feel so anxious.”) This can keep us wrapped up in second-guessing ourselves for hours, imagining how our lives could be so much better if only we felt differently. (And does this help us deal with the life we have now?)

And the list could go on and on. Suffice to say, the thinking self has lots of ways either to directly intensify our bad feelings or else to get us to waste a huge amount of time uselessly brooding on them. So, from now on, catch your mind in the act when it tries to hook you with these questions and comments. Then simply refuse to play the game. Thank your mind for trying to waste your time and focus instead on some useful or meaningful activity. You may find it helpful to say, “Thanks, Mind, but I’m not playing today.”

The Struggle Switch

Now you can see how the struggle switch got there. Our thinking self-created it by telling us that uncomfortable feelings are “bad” or “dangerous,” that we can’t cope with them, that we are defective or damaged for having them, that they will take over or overwhelm us, or that they will harm us in some way. If we fuse with these stories, the switch goes ON and we perceive uncomfortable emotions as a threat. And how does our brain respond to a threat? It activates the fight-or-flight response, which then gives rise to a whole new set of unpleasant feelings.

To draw an analogy, suppose a distant relative shows up on your doorstep. You’ve never met this relative before, but you’ve been told a lot of stories about her. You’ve been told that she’s bad, that she’s dangerous, that no one can stand her, that the only relationships she has are with defective or damaged people, and that she always ends up hurting or damaging those people or taking control of them and ruining their lives.

If you truly believe those stories, what would your attitude be toward this relative? Would you want her in your house? Would you want her anywhere near you? Of course not. You'd do anything you could to get rid of her as fast as possible. But what if all those stories were false or exaggerated? What if this relative were actually an okay person who had just been the victim of malicious gossip?

The only way you'd ever find out would be to spend some time with her, put aside all the gossip and slander, and check her out for yourself. You've probably already experienced something like this in your own life. Perhaps there was once someone at school or at work whom you'd heard a lot of bad things about. Then you spent some time with them and discovered they were nowhere near as bad as their reputation.

And so, it is in learning to handle unpleasant emotions; what you need to do is have a direct experience of them, to connect with them directly via your observing self, rather than automatically believing the stories of your thinking self. When you do this, you'll discover that those feelings are nowhere near as bad as you thought, and you'll realize they can't possibly harm you, control you, or overwhelm you.

Sometimes when I say, "Your emotions can't harm you," people mention the research that shows that chronic anger and depression can have bad effects on your physical health. However, the key word here is "chronic," which means ongoing, over a long period of time. **Painful emotions become chronic only when you keep the struggle switch ON.** Once you stop struggling, they are free to move, and they generally do so fairly quickly. So, when you respond to your emotions with acceptance, they don't hurt you. Acceptance breaks the vicious cycle of struggle and frees you to invest your time and energy in life-enhancing activities.

Expansion

So why the term "expansion"? Well, consider some of the words we commonly use to describe feeling bad; words such as "tension," and "stress," and "strain." If you look up these terms in a dictionary, you'll find they are all interlinked: tension is a state of being stretched or strained; stress is to subject to strain or pressure; and strain is to stretch beyond the proper point or limit. All these words imply that our feelings are too big; they are pulling us apart and stretching us beyond our limits. Contrast these terms with "expand": to increase in extent, size, volume, scope; to spread, unfold, or develop.

Basically, expansion means making room for our feelings. If we give unpleasant feelings enough space, they no longer stretch or strain us. Typically, when unpleasant emotions arise, we "tense up"; that is, our muscles tighten and contract. It's as if we were trying to squeeze these feelings out, to push them out of our body by sheer brute force.

With expansion, we're intending the very opposite. Instead of squeezing down, we're opening up. Instead of increasing tension, we're releasing it. Instead of contracting, we're expanding.

We also commonly talk about being "under pressure" and of needing "room" or "breathing space." It's exactly the same when it comes to our own feelings: if we feel "pressure" building, we need to give them space. Fighting or avoiding our feelings does not create room for them; expansion does.

When you hear the term "expanse of water" Or expanse of sky," what comes to mind? Most people imagine a vast, open space. This is what we are aiming for in expansion: to open up to our feelings and make plenty of room for them. This will ease the pressure, lighten the tension, and free those feelings to move. Sometimes they will move very rapidly; sometimes they will move more slowly. But as long as we make room for them, they will move. And more importantly, expansion frees us to invest our energy in creating a better life, rather than wasting it in useless struggles.

The following exercise will help distinguish these two distinct parts of you and will also give you a sense of something called "body awareness" (a key factor in expansion).

Body Awareness

In the exercise that follows, you will be repeatedly asked to notice something. In each case, take about ten seconds to do the noticing before you read on.

- Notice your feet.
- Notice what position your legs are in.
- Notice the position and curvature of your spine.
- Notice the rhythm, speed, and depth of your breathing.
- Notice the position of your arms.
- Notice what you can feel in your neck and shoulders.
- Notice your body temperature and which parts of your body feel warmest and coolest.
- Notice the air on your skin.
- Scan your body from head to toe and notice if there's any stiffness, tension, pain, or discomfort anywhere.
- Scan your body from head to toe and notice if there are any pleasant or comfortable sensations.

Hopefully, during that exercise you experienced that awareness of the body is very different from thinking about it. Awareness arises from the observing self, and thoughts arise from the thinking self. Of course, some thoughts about your body probably popped into your head. But the awareness – the *noticing* – is a fundamentally different process from *thinking*.

If you didn't experience this distinction between awareness and thinking, do the above exercise again. And notice that while the thinking self is chattering away, the observing self is simply paying attention to your body. Notice, too, that there are brief moments (which may last less than a second) when the thinking self shuts up and the observing self can observe without any distractions.

Once you have experienced the distinction, it's time to move on to...

The Observing Self

In expansion, we need to sidestep the thinking self – to let its unhelpful commentary fade into the background like a distant radio – and connect with our emotions through the observing self. This will enable us to experience our emotions directly, to see them as they actually are, rather than as the thinking self claims they are. According to the thinking self, negative emotions are giant, dangerous demons. However, the observing self reveals them for what they are: relatively small and harmless (even if they're ugly).

So, in practicing expansion, the aim is to observe your emotions, not think about them. There's just one problem: the thinking self never shuts up! This means that while you practice expansion, your thinking self will continually try to distract you. It may pass judgments on your feelings or try to analyse them or tell you scary stories about them or claim that you can't handle them. (Or it may say, "Don't bother with these exercises; reading about them is enough." It may even suggest that you "do them later," knowing full well that you probably won't.)

None of this need to be a problem. Just allow those thoughts to be there and let them come and go as they please. Acknowledge their presence, but don't focus on them. Treat them as if they are cars driving past your house – you know they're there, but you don't have to peer out the window each time one goes by. And if a thought does hook you (in the same way that the sound of screeching tires might pull you to the window), then the moment you realize it, gently refocus on what you are doing.

So, when practicing expansion, let your thoughts come and go in the background and keep your attention focused on your emotions. And remember:

- The essence of an emotion is a set of physical changes in the body.
- We primarily notice these changes as physical sensations.

Expansion starts with noticing what we're feeling in our body (body awareness) and observing precisely where those sensations are located. It then progresses to studying those sensations in more detail. This is the first of four basic steps, outlined below.

The Four Steps of Expansion

The four basic steps of expansion are: observe your feelings, breathe into them, make room for them, and allow them to be there. Sound simple, doesn't it? That's because it is. It's also effortless. However, that does not mean it's easy. Remember the quicksand scenario? Lying back and floating on quicksand is both simple and effortless – yet it's far from easy. But don't worry. If you fell into quicksand several times a week, you'd soon be a pro at lying back and floating. And the same is true for expansion: the more you practice, the easier (and more natural) it becomes.

So, let's take a look at these steps in a bit more detail, and then it's practice time. Whenever you're struggling with an unpleasant emotion of any sort, follow these four steps:

Step 1: Observe

Observe the sensations in your body. Take a few seconds to scan yourself from head to toe. As you do this, you will probably notice several uncomfortable sensations. Look for the one that bothers you the most. For example, it may be a lump in your throat, a knot in your stomach, or a teary feeling in your eyes. (If your entire body feels uncomfortable, then just pick the area that bothers you the most.) Now focus your attention on that sensation. Observe it with curiosity, like a scientist who has discovered some interesting new phenomenon. Notice where it starts and where it stops. If you had to draw an outline around this sensation, what shape would it have? Is it on the surface of the body, or inside you, or both? How far inside you does it go? Where is it most intense? Where is it weakest? How is it different in the centre from around the edges? Is there any pulse or vibration? Is it light or heavy? Moving or still? Warm or cool?

Step 2: Breathe

Breathe into and around the sensation. Begin with a few deep breaths (the slower the better) and make sure you fully empty your lungs as you breathe out. Slow, deep breathing is important because it lowers the level of tension in your body. It won't get rid of your feelings, but it will provide a centre of calm within you. It's like an anchor in the midst of an emotional storm: the anchor won't get rid of the storm, but it will hold you steady until it passes. So, breathe slowly and deeply and imagine your breath flowing into and around the sensation.

Step 3: Create Space

As your breath flows into and around the feeling, it's as if you are somehow creating extra space within your body. You open up and create a space around this sensation, giving it plenty of room to move. (And if it gets bigger, you give it even more space.)

Step 4: Allow

Allow the sensation to be there, even though you don't like it or want it. In other words, "let it be." When your mind starts commenting on what's happening, just say, "Thanks, Mind!" and come back to observing. Of course, you may find this difficult. You may feel a strong urge to fight with this feeling or push it away. If so, just acknowledge that urge. (Acknowledging is like nodding your head in recognition, as if to say, "There you are; I see you.") Then bring your attention back to the sensation itself.

Remember: don't try to get rid of the sensation or alter it. If it changes by itself, that's ok. If it doesn't change, that's okay too. Changing or getting rid of it is not the goal. The goal is to make peace with it, to let it be even if you don't like it or want it.

You may need to focus on this sensation anywhere from a few seconds to a few minutes, until you've completely given up the struggle with it. Be patient; take as long as you need. You're learning a valuable skill.

Then once you've done this, scan your body again and see if there's another bothersome sensation. If so, repeat the procedure with that one. You can do this with as many different sensations as necessary. Keep going until your struggle switch is completely OFF.

As you practice this technique, one of two things will happen: either your feelings will change or they won't. It doesn't matter either way, because this technique is not about changing your feelings – it's about accepting them. If you have truly dropped the struggle with a feeling, it will have much less impact on you, regardless of whether or not it changes.

Now It's Time to Practice!

So, at last we come to the practical part. In order to practice expansion, you'll need to have some uncomfortable feelings to deal with. So, bring to mind something that's currently a problem, something that worries, disturbs, or stresses you – the sort of problem that prompted you to pick up this handout in the first place.

"What?" you're probably yelling. "Are you crazy? I don't want to make myself feel bad!"

Well, join the club. I don't know anyone who wants to feel discomfort. The idea here is to be willing to feel it. Wanting something means you actively like it.

Willingness simply means that you're allowing it.

Why develop willingness? Because throughout your life uncomfortable feelings will arise. If you keep trying to avoid them, you'll simply create additional "dirty discomfort."

By making room for your feelings and willingly feeling them (even though you may not want to), you'll change your relationship with them. They'll become much less threatening and will have much less influence on you. They'll also take up much less time and energy.

The more we turn away from our demons, the harder we try not look at them, the bigger and scarier they seem. Menacing shapes half-glimpsed from the corner of our vision are far more disturbing than the things we can see clearly. That's why in horror movies, they always film the monster lurking in darkness. If they brought it out into broad daylight, it wouldn't be nearly as scary.

"But isn't this all a bit masochistic?" you may ask.

Well, if you were feeling pain just for the sake of it, then, yes, that would be masochism. But this is not the case. We don't recommend exposing yourself to discomfort unless it's in the service of something important.

Suppose you get mild arthritis in your left ankle, so that from time to time it swells up and aches. And suppose your doctor offers to amputate your leg. There's no way you'd consent to that for something so minor, is there? But suppose you developed bone cancer in that leg, and amputation became your only chance of survival. Then you would certainly do it. You would accept the discomfort of amputation because it's in the service of something important: your life!

It's the same with emotional discomfort. There's no point in wallowing aimlessly in it. Accepting discomfort has only one purpose: to help you take your life forward in a meaningful direction. In bringing up some discomfort in order to practice expansion, you are learning a valuable skill for transforming, your life.

So enough of the talk, already! It's time to take action. Once again, read through the four steps of expansion described above. Then bring to mind some major problem in your life and dwell on it for a minute or two in order to dredge up some unpleasant feelings. Once you have a feeling to work with, practice the four steps: observe, breathe, create space, and allow.

Follow Your Heart

What's it all about? What are you here for? What makes your life worth living? It's amazing how many of us have never deeply considered these questions. We go through life following the same routine, day after day. But in order to create a rich, full, and meaningful life, we need to stop to reflect on what we're doing and why we're doing it. So, it's time now to ask yourself:

- Deep down inside, what is important to you?
- What do you want your life to be about?
- What sort of person do you want to be?
- What sort of relationships do you want to build?
- If you weren't struggling with your feelings or avoiding your fears, what would you channel your time and energy into doing?

Your Values Are:

- Our heart's deepest desires: how we want to be, what we want to stand for, and how we want to relate to the world around us.
- Leading principles that can guide us and motivate us as we move through life.

When you go through life guided by your values, not only do you gain a sense of vitality and joyfulness, but you also experience that life can be rich, full, and meaningful, even when bad things happen.

Values Versus Goals

It's important to recognize that values are not the same as goals. A value is a direction we desire to keep moving in, an ongoing process that never reaches an end. For example, the desire to be a loving and caring partner is a value. It's ongoing for the rest of your life. The moment you stop being loving and caring, you are no longer living by that value.

A goal is a desired outcome that can be achieved or completed. For example, the desire to get married is a goal. Once achieved, it's done and can be crossed off the list. Once you're married, you're married, whether you're loving and kind, or hard-hearted and uncaring. So, a value is like heading west. No matter how far you travel, there's always farther west you can go. Whereas a goal is like the mountain or river you wish to cross on your journey. Once you've gone over it, it's a "done deal."

If you want a better job, that's a goal. Once you've gotten it, the goal is achieved. But if you want to apply yourself fully at work, to be attentive to detail, supportive to your colleagues, friendly to customers, and engaged in what you're doing, those are values.

Values Make Life Worth Living

Life involves hard work. All meaningful projects require effort, whether you're raising kids, renovating your house, learning Kung Fu, or starting your own business. These things are challenging. Unfortunately, all too often, when faced with a challenge, we think, "It's too hard," and we give up or avoid it. That's where our values come in.

Connecting with our values gives us a sense that our hard work is worth the effort. For instance, if we value connecting with nature, this makes it worth the effort to organize a trip to the countryside. If we value being a loving parent, it's worth taking the time to play with our kids. If we value our health, we're willing to exercise on a regular basis despite the inconvenience. In this way, values act as motivations. We may not feel like exercising, but valuing our health can give us the will to "just do it."

The same principle applies to life in general. Many of my clients ask questions such as, “What’s the point of life?” “Is this all there is?” “Why don’t I feel excited about anything?” Others say things such as, “Maybe the world would be better off without me.” “I have nothing to offer.” “Sometimes I wish I could go to bed and never wake up again.” Such thoughts are commonplace not just among the 10 percent of adults who suffer from depression at any given time, but also among the rest of the population. Values provide a powerful antidote, a way to give your life purpose, meaning, and passion.

Imagine You’re Eighty Years Old

Here’s a simple exercise to get you started on clarifying your values. Please take a few minutes to write out or think about your answers. (Hint: you’ll get more out of it if you write your answers down.)

Imagine that you’re eighty years old and you’re looking back on your life as it is today. Then finish the following sentences:

- I spent too much time worrying about...
- I spent too little time doing things such as...
- If I could go back in time, then what I would do differently from today onward is...
-

How did it go? For many people, this simple exercise is quite an eye-opener. It often points to a big difference between what we value doing and what we are actually doing. I’ll leave you with this off-quoted extract from **Man’s Search for Meaning**:

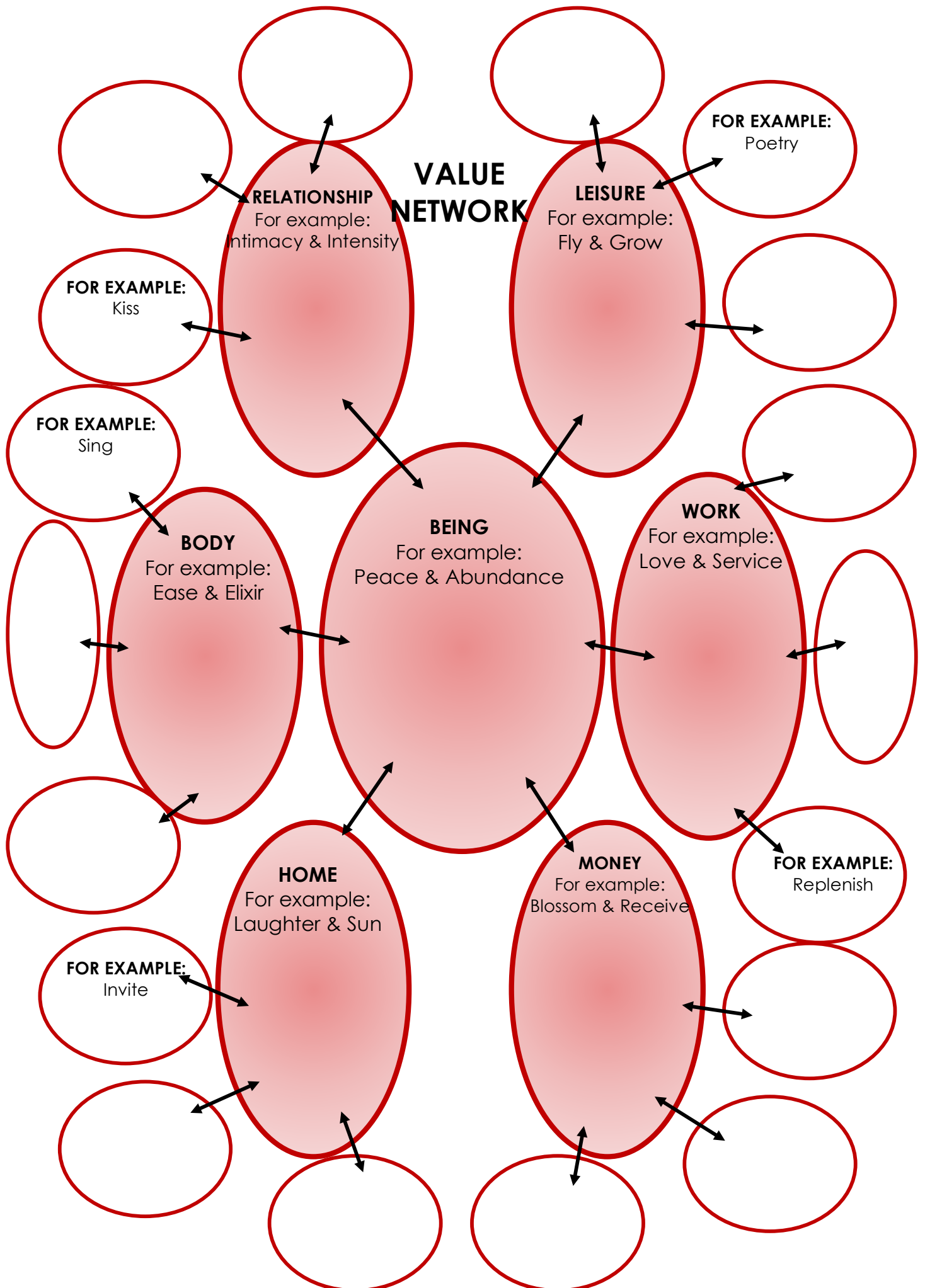
We who lived in concentration camps remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way. - Viktor Frankl

Network of Values

To help you to clarify the values that will enable you to live a full, rich and meaningful life, you may do the following exercise. Consult the ABC of Values and fill in the circles of the Value Network. The centre circle will contain those values that you consider to be central to your very being; those values which are so precious to you that you want them to permeate every area of your life. These are really the values that will eventually shape and build your character (as opposed to your personality, or your ego).

The other circles are for those values that you wish to express in particular areas of your life like relationships, or your work. The smaller circles on the periphery of the network may contain optional or additional extras, like the icing on the cake of your meaningful life. (This handout is based on extracts from the book “The Happiness Trap” by Russ Harris)

VALUE NETWORK



<i>Attitude</i>	<i>Affirmation</i>	<i>Abundance</i>	<i>Awareness</i>
<i>Aromatic</i>	<i>Attention</i>	<i>Angels</i>	<i>Alive</i>
<i>Admire</i>	<i>Allow</i>	<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Assertiveness</i>
<i>Attraction</i>	<i>Accomplish</i>	<i>Acceptance</i>	<i>Advancement</i>
<i>Advocate</i>	<i>Anticipate</i>	<i>Adventure</i>	<i>Amplify</i>
<i>Authority</i>	<i>Aspire</i>	<i>Awaken</i>	<i>Awe</i>
<i>Astonish</i>	<i>Adore</i>	<i>Achieve</i>	<i>Amaze</i>
<i>Astound</i>	<i>Artistry</i>	<i>Appreciate</i>	<i>Advertise</i>
<i>Belief</i>	<i>Body</i>	<i>Become</i>	<i>Barefoot</i>
<i>Beloved</i>	<i>Breathing</i>	<i>Beauty</i>	<i>Birth</i>
<i>Buoyant</i>	<i>Be</i>	<i>Bless</i>	<i>Benefit</i>
<i>Bliss</i>	<i>Belong</i>	<i>Bare</i>	<i>Behold</i>
<i>Bubble</i>	<i>Boundaries</i>	<i>Beatific</i>	<i>Being-ness</i>
<i>Buddha</i>	<i>Bath</i>	<i>Blossom</i>	<i>Brighten</i>
<i>Balance</i>	<i>Brave</i>	<i>Contemplation</i>	<i>Clouds</i>
<i>Change</i>	<i>Clarity</i>	<i>Concentrate</i>	<i>Cozy</i>
<i>Create</i>	<i>Courage</i>	<i>Commitment</i>	<i>Courtesy</i>
<i>Caress</i>	<i>Chill</i>	<i>Coach</i>	<i>Challenge</i>
<i>Care</i>	<i>Contentment</i>	<i>Choice</i>	<i>Cherish</i>
<i>Celebrate</i>	<i>Cleanliness</i>	<i>Connection</i>	<i>Confidence</i>
<i>Calm</i>	<i>Communicate</i>	<i>Contribute</i>	<i>Comfort</i>
<i>Charisma</i>	<i>Cosmic</i>	<i>Cuddle</i>	<i>Charm</i>
<i>Confront</i>	<i>Character</i>	<i>Curiosity</i>	<i>Complete</i>
<i>Chastity</i>	<i>Christ</i>	<i>Counsel</i>	<i>Develop</i>
<i>Delight</i>	<i>Death</i>	<i>Determination</i>	<i>Discuss</i>
<i>Desire</i>	<i>Diet</i>	<i>Decide</i>	<i>Divine</i>
<i>Discover</i>	<i>Destiny</i>	<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Direction</i>
<i>Demonstrate</i>	<i>Dedicate</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Decorate</i>
<i>Detachment</i>	<i>Distribute</i>	<i>Drool</i>	<i>Dream</i>
<i>Delegate</i>	<i>Design</i>	<i>Devotion</i>	<i>Dazzle</i>
<i>Detox</i>	<i>Dance</i>	<i>Dare</i>	<i>Enthusiasm</i>
<i>Enable</i>	<i>Expand</i>	<i>Endearing</i>	<i>Enough</i>
<i>Entertain</i>	<i>Extraordinary</i>	<i>Educate</i>	<i>Experience</i>
<i>Effortless</i>	<i>Excellence</i>	<i>Effectiveness</i>	<i>Energy</i>
<i>Emotion</i>	<i>Enjoy</i>	<i>Eternity</i>	<i>Encourage</i>
<i>Example</i>	<i>Ecstasy</i>	<i>Envision</i>	<i>Embrace</i>
<i>Evolution</i>	<i>Body</i>	<i>Become</i>	<i>Barefoot</i>
<i>Beloved</i>	<i>Elegance</i>	<i>Enlightenment</i>	<i>Enrich</i>
<i>Enhance</i>	<i>Exuberance</i>	<i>Equanimity</i>	<i>Exercise</i>
<i>Express</i>	<i>Endless</i>	<i>Ease</i>	<i>Endurance</i>
<i>Energize</i>	<i>Empathy</i>	<i>Efficiency</i>	<i>Enchant</i>
<i>Effort</i>	<i>Empower</i>	<i>Elixir</i>	<i>Explore</i>
<i>Friendship</i>	<i>Fulfillment</i>	<i>Fragrance</i>	<i>Fantasy</i>
<i>Freshness</i>	<i>Fortitude</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Flow</i>

Feel	Facilitate	Fun	Fascinate
Forgiveness	Freedom	Find	Flexibility
Fabulous	Flower	Festivity	Formulate
Firmness	Functionality	Faith	Guidance
<i>Glorious</i>	<i>Glow</i>	<i>Game</i>	<i>Gratitude</i>
<i>Generosity</i>	<i>Goals</i>	<i>Glide</i>	<i>Give</i>
<i>Goodness</i>	<i>God</i>	<i>Guide</i>	<i>Giggle</i>
<i>Graceful</i>	<i>Garden</i>	<i>Growth</i>	<i>Gifts</i>
<i>Gorgeous</i>	<i>Grandeur</i>	<i>Gentleness</i>	<i>Grace</i>
Hope	Health	Honey	Heaven
Happiness	Honesty	Hero	Heart
Healing	Hear	Humor	Highroad
Hospitality	Harmony	Holy	Hug
Imagine	Independence	Identity	Insight
Implement	Integrity	Inspire	Invent
Inquisitive	Improve	Immortality	Invite
Innocence	Illuminate	Infinity	Intimacy
Intention	Intensity	Increase	Integrate
Irresistible	Intelligence	Impeccability	Investigate
Inform	Juicy	Joy	Jump
Journal	Join	Journey	Jubilation
Joke	Kindness	Kick-ass	Knowledge
Kingdom	Kinky	Kindred	Kiss
Know	Let go	Laughter	Lucky
Love	Listen	Luminous	Learn
Lessons	Luxurious	Legacy	Live
Light	Liberate	Lead	Lubricate
Limitless	Meaning	Magnificence	Magnify
Mystery	Manufacture	Miracle	Money
Manifest	Motivate	Mastery	Music
Mission	Moderation	Me-time	Manage
Ministry	Marvel	Move	Market
Magic	Moments	Moisturize	Mentor
Natural	Nap	Nourish	Nurture
Neatness	Naked	Now	Outrageous
Oxygen	Opportunity	Open	Observe
Organize	Opulence	Ownership	Original
Optimism	Oneness	Priceless	Productive
Practical	Perfection	Pleasant	Praise
Possibilities	Persist	Purify	Pleasure
Pray	Purpose	Peace	Pamper
Positive	Perseverance	Pursue	Potential
Power	Perspective	Precious	Profound
Produce	Poignant	Pillow	Protection
Permission	Plan	Preserve	Patience

Passion	Protect	Quality	Quietude
Quest	Question	Quiescence	Quiet
Revelation	Receive	Replenish	Reality
Remembrance	Responsibility	Relaxation	Recreation
Release	Rest	Rationality	Right action
Radiance	Reconcile	Ritual	Renew
Respect	Relevance	Romance	Rich
Refresh	Restore	Rapture	Recognize
Restraint	Rectify	Rejuvenate	Reward
Splendor	Safety	Sing	Solace
Satisfy	Sparkle	Savor	Spirituality
Spontaneity	Success	Sensualize	Strength
Speak	Smooth	Source	Surrender
Stimulation	Share	Significance	Service
Smile	Sun	Self-actualize	Surprise
Security	Simplicity	Sufficiency	Self-love
Star	Succulent	Stretch	Support
Spice	Serendipity	Space	Sexy
Story	Soulfulness	Sacred	Supple
Style	Self-respect	Sleep	Serenity
Solve	Self	Tolerance	Truth
Togetherness	Transcend	Time	Tickle
Transformation	Trust	Touch	Treasure
Talent	Thoughtfulness	Tenderness	Test
Temperance	Totality	Teach	Understanding
Useful	Unconditional	Unity	Utilize
Undulate	Uncoil	Us	Unexpected
Untroubled	Ululate	Unique	Untamed
Unify	Vision	Validate	Voice
Vitality	Virginity	Venture	Value
Visualize	Voluptuous	Voluminous	Vigor
Victory	Voluntary	Virtue	Water
Woman	Wholeness	Wine	Whistle
Wealth	Wisdom	Wonder	Work
Welcome	Witness	Will	Wow
Window	World	Whirl	Wide
Wake up	Wild	xxx (kisses)	X-factor
Youth	Yes	You	Yearn
Yoga	Yodel	Yummy	Zany
Zen	Zest	Zero-point	Zone

This booklet on ACT is also available electronically on my website. To download this booklet as well as a collection of other booklets and CD's, please visit my website – **www.susankriegler.com** - or scan the QR Code below. If you would like to schedule an appointment, please contact my reception.

-Susan-

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