

# Basics of ACT Group

Life Change Associates

## Basics of ACT Group - Overview

1. Experiential and Didactic Design
2. 1 or more experiential activities each week\*
3. Possibility of monthly didactic, experiential and process group (ACT in Daily Living)
4. Rules, norms and expectations
5. \*Breathing and Imagery - (meditation activity)

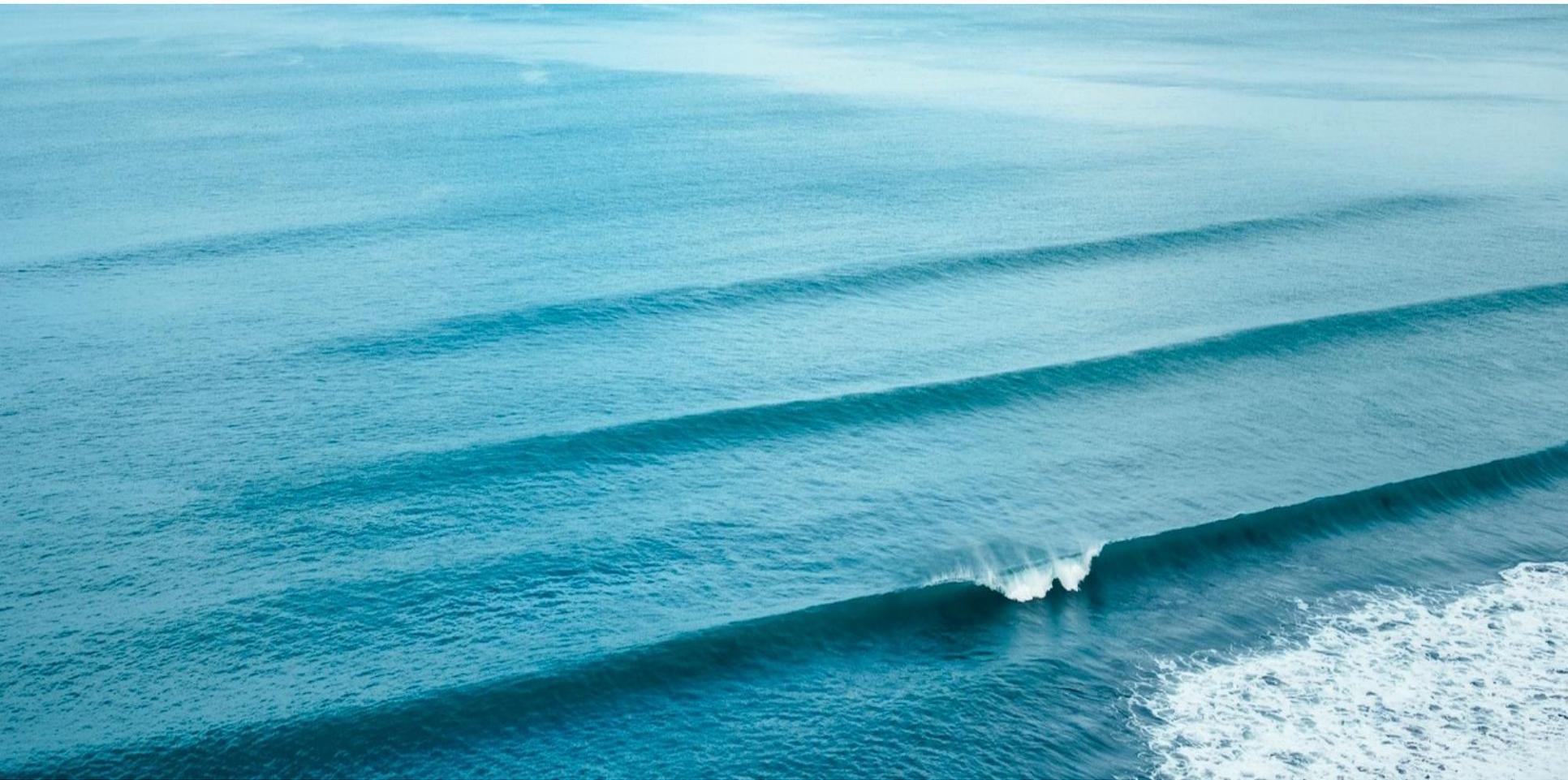
# Rules, norms and expectations

Additionally, ACT group members will need to follow the group norms, rules and expectations which include, but are not limited to:

1. Group cohesiveness – learning to participate and trust, create a safe environment for all participants
2. Universality – recognize and respect that each participant and Dr. Ravsten are all on a similar journey of growth
3. Empathy - practice and reflect an understanding of others emotional experience
4. Participation - in mindfulness and meditation exercises each week
5. Sharing - as directed by Dr. Ravsten, of struggles and successes related to the application of Acceptance and Commitment learning each week.

# Rules, norms and expectations

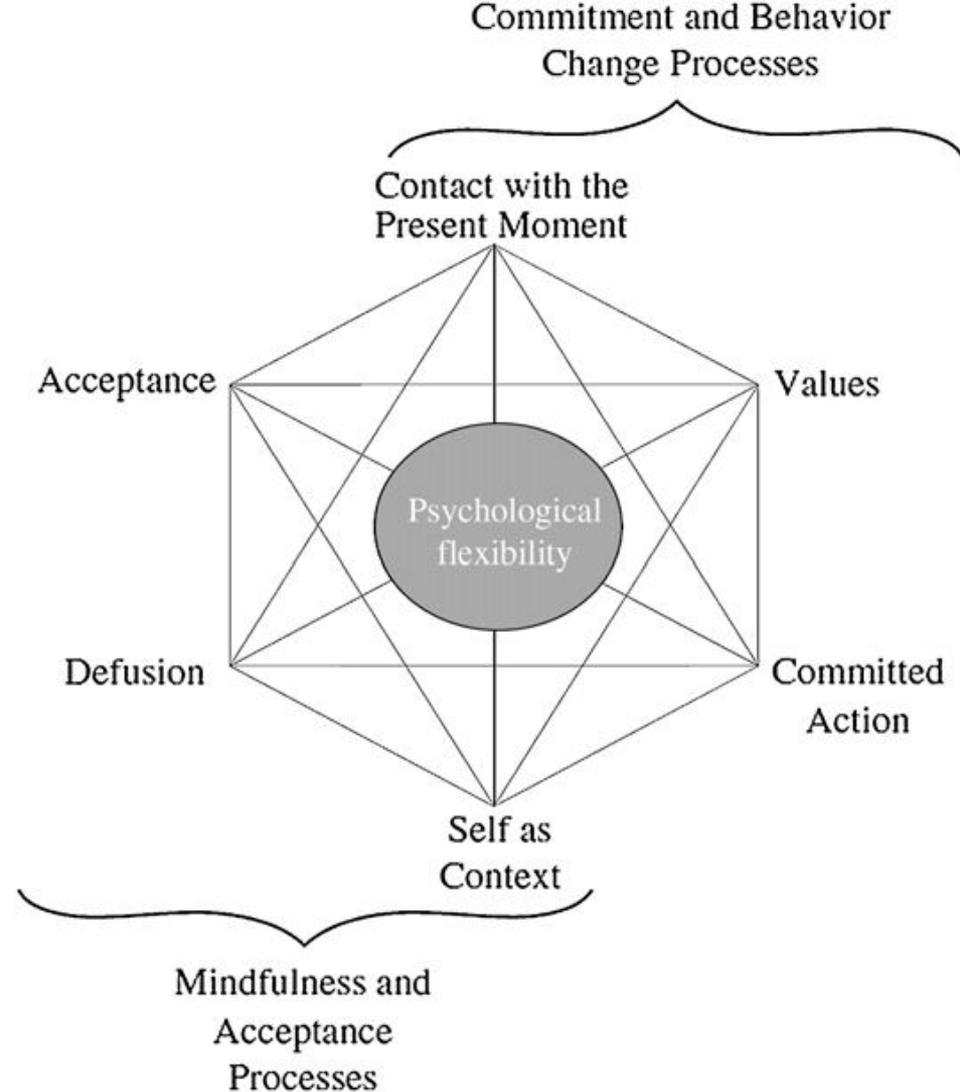
6. Reflect Understanding - of how False Values promote stagnation and leave one feeling “stuck”
7. Practice - the application of individual & group core values of Courage, Practical Wisdom, Temperance, and Justice.
8. Development - of the ability to observe and be present, choosing not to avoid and remain shut down emotionally
9. Encouragement - of self and others to build and live a life worth living
10. Confidentiality - both in and out of group, avoiding unapproved contact outside of group



# What is ACT?

Acceptance of what?

Commitment to?



# Emotional Stability, Control and Acceptance

Viktor Frankl, Austrian Psychiatrist:

“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.”, *-Man's Search for Meaning*

What do we control? **Intentions** (Commitment) and **Judgments** (Acceptance)

Acceptance (judgment of our own making) of those events outside of our control allows us to let go (a result of our Intention) of negative emotions. Doing so frees our minds and hearts from being continually and repeatedly experiencing *past or future* suffering.

# Dissecting the Problem

Regardless of what your problem is – whether it is a physical illness, a difficult relationship, a work situation, a financial crisis, a performance issue, the loss of a loved one, a severe injury, or a clinical disorder such as depression - **when we dissect the problem, we usually find four major elements that contribute significantly to the issue.**

To do this we need to describe the main problem and how it affects your life. In the following 4 Major Areas please write as much as you can in each area about the thoughts, feelings and actions that contribute to or worsen the challenge, problem or issue facing you.

# Dissecting the Problem - Defining the Problem and Its impact

This exercise will help you gather information about the nature of the main challenge, issue, or problem facing you.

First, please summarize, in 1 or 2 sentences, what the main issue or problem is:

Second, please describe, in 1 or 2 sentences, how it affects your life, and what it stops you from doing or being:

# Dissecting the Problem - 4 Major Elements

## **1. Entanglement With Thoughts**

What memories, worries, fears, self-criticisms, or other unhelpful thoughts do you dwell on, or get “caught up” in, related to this issue? What thoughts do you allow to hold you back or push you around or bring you down?

## **2. Life-draining Actions:**

What are you currently doing that makes your life worse in the long term: keeps you stuck; wastes your time or money; drains your energy; restricts your life, impacts negatively on your health, work or relationships; maintains or worsens the problems you are dealing with?

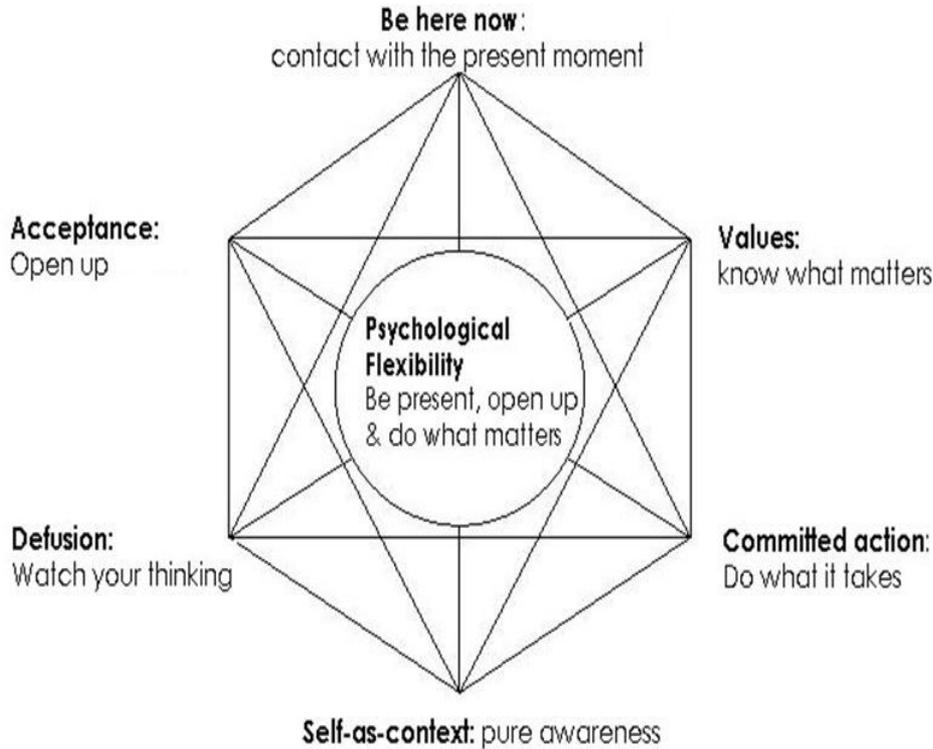
## **3. Struggle With Feelings:**

What emotions, feelings, urges, impulses, or sensations (associated with this issue) do you fight with, avoid, suppress, try to get rid of, or otherwise struggle with?

## **4. Avoiding Challenging Situations:**

What situations, activities, people or places are you avoiding or staying away from? What have you quit, withdrawn from, dropped out of? What do you keep “putting off” until later?

# ACT Processes – Hexaflex



# Psychological Flexibility Scale (Hayes, 2012 modified)

## Attention to present scale (0-10)

- “I flexibly pay attention to what is happening in the present moment (10) vs “I spend most of the my time on attention to past and/or future (autopilot) (0)

## Acceptance scale (0-10)

- “I willingly accept my thoughts and feelings even when I don’t like them” (10) vs “I constantly struggle with my thoughts and feelings” (0)

## Defusion scale (0-10)

- “I see each of my thoughts as just one of many ways to think about things - what I do next is up to me and what works” (10) vs “My thoughts tell me how things really are and what I need to do” (0)

# Psychological Flexibility Scale (Hayes, 2012 modified)

## Self as observer scale (0-10)

- “The person I call me knows what I am thinking and feeling but is distinct from that process” (10) vs. “The person I call me is my thoughts and feelings about myself” (0)

## Values Identification Scale (0-10)

- “I am clear about what I choose to value in my life” (10) vs “I don’t know what I want from life”

## Commitment and taking action scale (0-10)

- “I identify the actions I need to take to put my values into practice and I see them through” (10) vs “I don’t manage to act on the things I care about” (0)

# Pure Awareness - Self as Context

Illusion of control - Eg. we can control our emotions

-Activities:

Hold still while waving

Delete a memory

Numb your leg

Falling in love

ANSWER: Quicksand and Monster Tug-of-War metaphors

# Core Values

When **Core Values** form the foundation and pillars of our Identity we enjoy a stable self concept (Identity) and allows us to consistently experience **energy, passion, creativity and peace.**



# YOUR CORE VALUES:

1. What really matters to you, deep in your heart?
2. What do you want to do with your time on this planet?
3. What sort of person do you want to be?
4. What personal strengths or qualities do you want to develop?

# Core Values

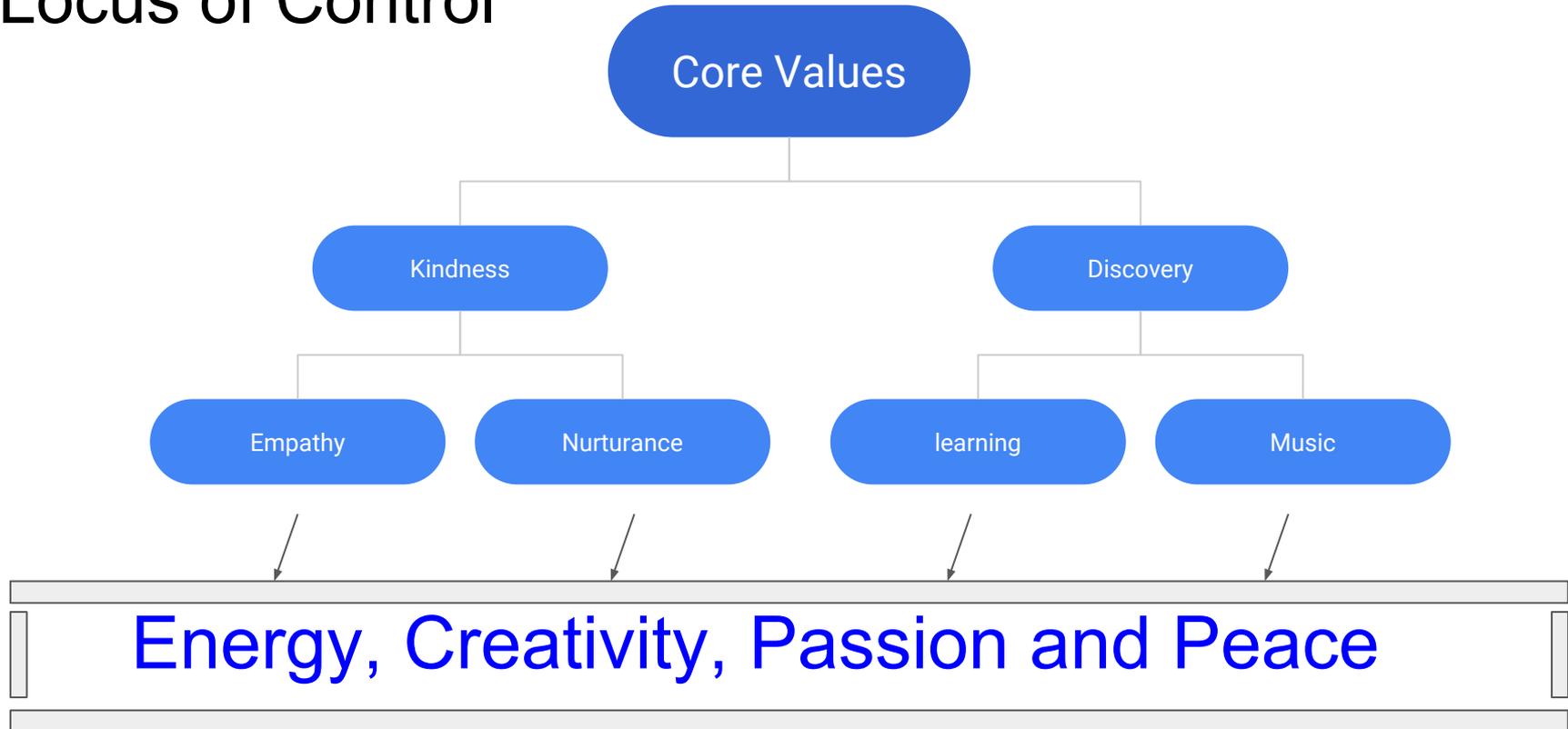
Reflect who we are, what we want to be and what we stand for

Are desired qualities of ongoing action

Are referred to as “chosen life directions”



# Core Values - Create Stable Identity & Internal Locus of Control

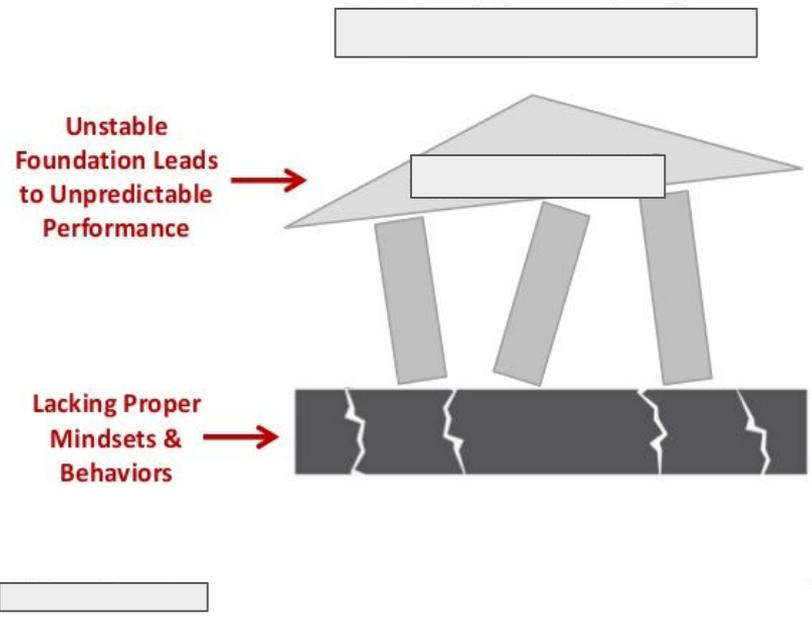
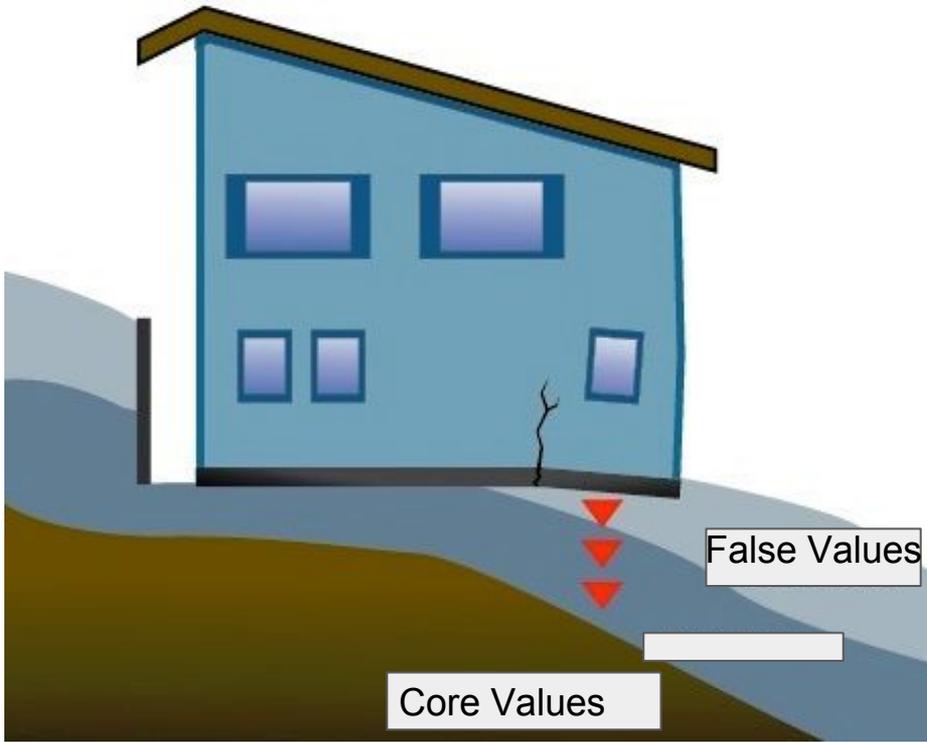


# False (External) Values

False Values are those of others and the world around us that connect us to feelings of:

- Shame
- Guilt
- Anger/rage
- Fear
- Doubt
- Helplessness
- Hopelessness

# False Values - Create an unstable Identity & growth limiting connection to feelings of shame, fear, guilt, anger and despair.



## A Quick Look at Your Values – page 1

Values are your heart's deepest desires for how you want to behave as a human being. Values are not about what you want to get or achieve; **they are about how you want to behave or act on an ongoing basis.**

There are literally hundreds of different values, but below you'll find a list of the most common ones. Probably, not all of them will be relevant to you. Keep in mind there are no such things as 'right values' or 'wrong values'. We all are individual and will have some similar and dissimilar values. So read through the list below and write a letter next to each value: **V = Very important, Q = Quite important, and N = Not so important;** and make sure to score at least ten of them as Very important.

Once you've marked each value as V, Q, N (Very, Quite, or Not so important), **go through all the Vs, and select out the top six that are most important to you. Mark each one with a 6, to show it's in your top six.** Finally, write those six values out below, to remind yourself this is what you want to stand for as a human being.

1. Acceptance: to be open to and accepting of myself, others, life etc
2. Adventure: to be adventurous; to actively seek, create, or explore novel or stimulating experiences
3. Assertiveness: to respectfully stand up for my rights and request what I want
4. Authenticity: to be authentic, genuine, real;
5. Beauty: to appreciate, create, nurture or cultivate beauty in myself, others, my environ
6. Caring: to be caring towards myself, others, the environment etc
7. Challenge: to keep challenging myself to grow, learn, improve
8. Compassion: to act with kindness towards those who are suffering
9. Connection: to engage fully in whatever I am doing, and be fully present with others
10. Contribution: to contribute, help, assist, or make a positive difference to myself or others

11. Conformity: to be respectful and obedient of rules and obligations
12. Cooperation: to be cooperative and collaborative with others
13. Courage: to be courageous or brave; to persist in the face of fear, threat, or difficulty
14. Creativity: to be creative or innovative
15. Curiosity: to be curious, open-minded and interested; to explore and discover
16. Encouragement: to encourage and reward behaviour that I value in myself or others
17. Equality: to treat others as equal to myself, and vice-versa
18. Excitement: to seek, create and engage in activities that are exciting, stimulating or thrilling
19. Fairness: to be fair to myself or others
20. Fitness: to maintain or improve my fitness; to look after my physical and mental health and wellbeing

21. Flexibility: to adjust and adapt readily to changing circumstances

22. Freedom: to live freely; to choose how I live and behave, or help others do likewise

23. Friendliness: to be friendly, companionable, or agreeable towards others

24. Forgiveness: to be forgiving towards myself or others

25. Fun: to be fun-loving; to seek, create, and engage in fun-filled activities

26. Generosity: to be generous, sharing and giving, to myself or others

27. Gratitude: to be grateful for and appreciative of the positive aspects of myself, others & life

28. Honesty: to be honest, truthful, and sincere with myself and others

29. Humour: to see and appreciate the humorous side of life

30. Humility: to be humble or modest; to let my achievements speak for themselves

31. Industry: to be industrious, hard-working, dedicated

32. Independence: to be self-supportive, and choose my own way of doing things

33. Intimacy: to selectively open up, reveal, and share myself -- emotionally or physically

34. Justice: to uphold justice and fairness

35. Kindness: to be kind, compassionate, considerate, nurturing or caring to self & others

36. Love: to act lovingly or affectionately towards myself or others

37. Mindfulness: to be conscious of, open to, and curious about my here-and-now experience

38. Order: to be orderly and organized

39. Open-mindedness: to think things through, see things from other's points of view, and weigh evidence fairly.

40. Patience: to wait calmly for what I want

41. Persistence: to continue resolutely, despite problems or difficulties.

42. Pleasure: to create and give pleasure to myself or others

43. Power: to strongly influence or wield authority, e.g. taking charge, leading, organizing

44. Reciprocity: to build relationships in which there is a fair balance of giving and taking

45. Respect: to be respectful, polite, considerate and show positive regard

46. Responsibility: to be responsible and accountable for my actions

47. Romance: to be romantic; to display and express love or strong affection

48. Safety: to secure, protect, or ensure safety of myself or others

49. Self-awareness: to be aware of my own thoughts, feelings and actions

50. Self-care: to look after my health and wellbeing, and get my needs met

51. Self-development: to keep growing, advancing or improving in knowledge, skills, character, or life experience.

52. Self-control: to act in accordance with my own ideals

53. Sensuality: to create, explore and enjoy experiences that stimulate the five senses

54. Sexuality: to explore or express my sexuality

55. Spirituality: to connect with things bigger than myself

56. Skillfulness: to continually practice and improve my skills, and apply myself fully when using them

57. Supportiveness: to be supportive, helpful, encouraging, and available to myself or others

58. Trust: to be trustworthy; to be loyal, faithful, sincere, and reliable

## Contact with the present moment

*Be in the "now"*

## Chosen Values

*Knowing what matters in a persons life, what can guide their behaviors*

## Committed Action

*Effective mental and physical actions guided by values*

**Psychological Flexibility**

*Being present, open, doing what matters to you*

## Self as Context

*Observing self, pure Awareness of thoughts, behaviours, moods*

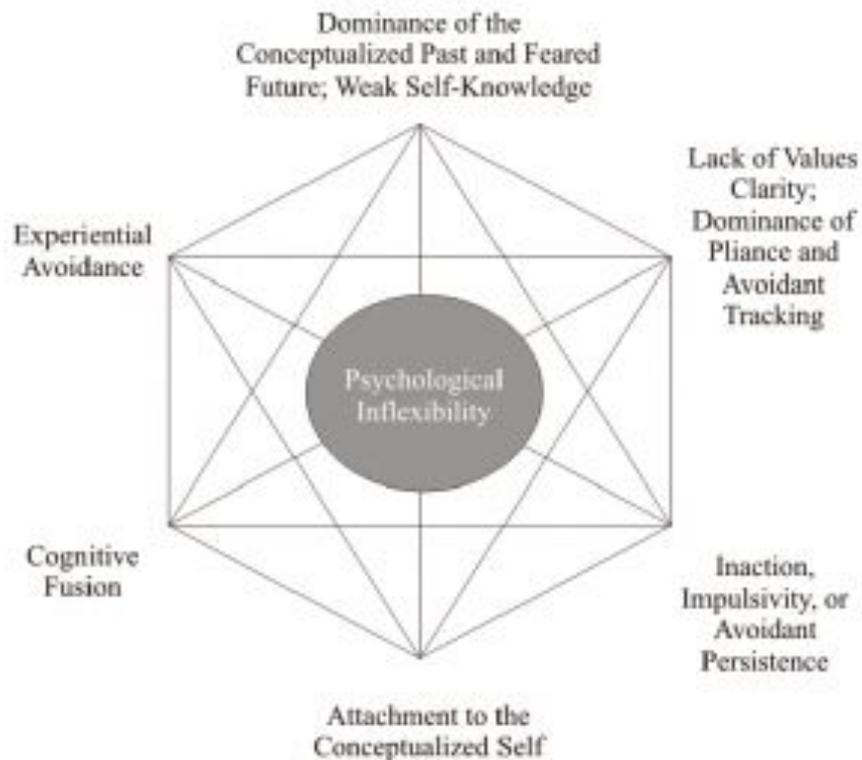
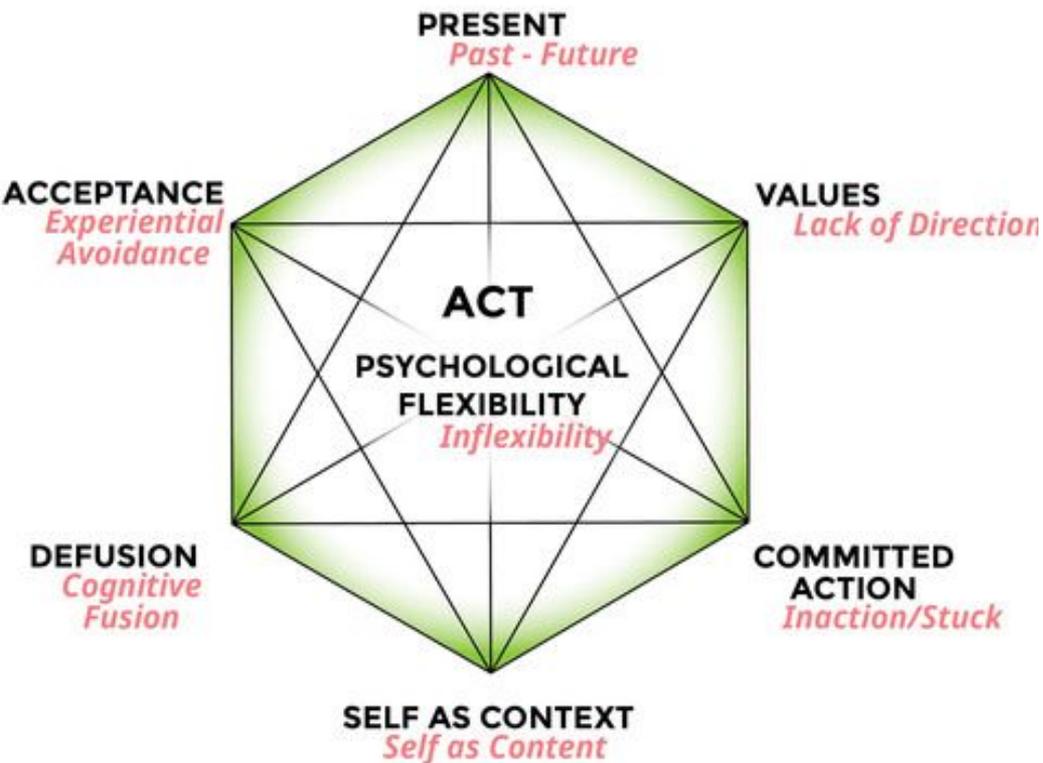
## Acceptance / Willingness

*Open to whatever comes*

## Thought Defusion

*Observing thoughts as they come and go without attaching meaning or judgment, detaching from thoughts*

# ACT HEXAFLEX



# Identity Remodel: False Values replaced with Core Values

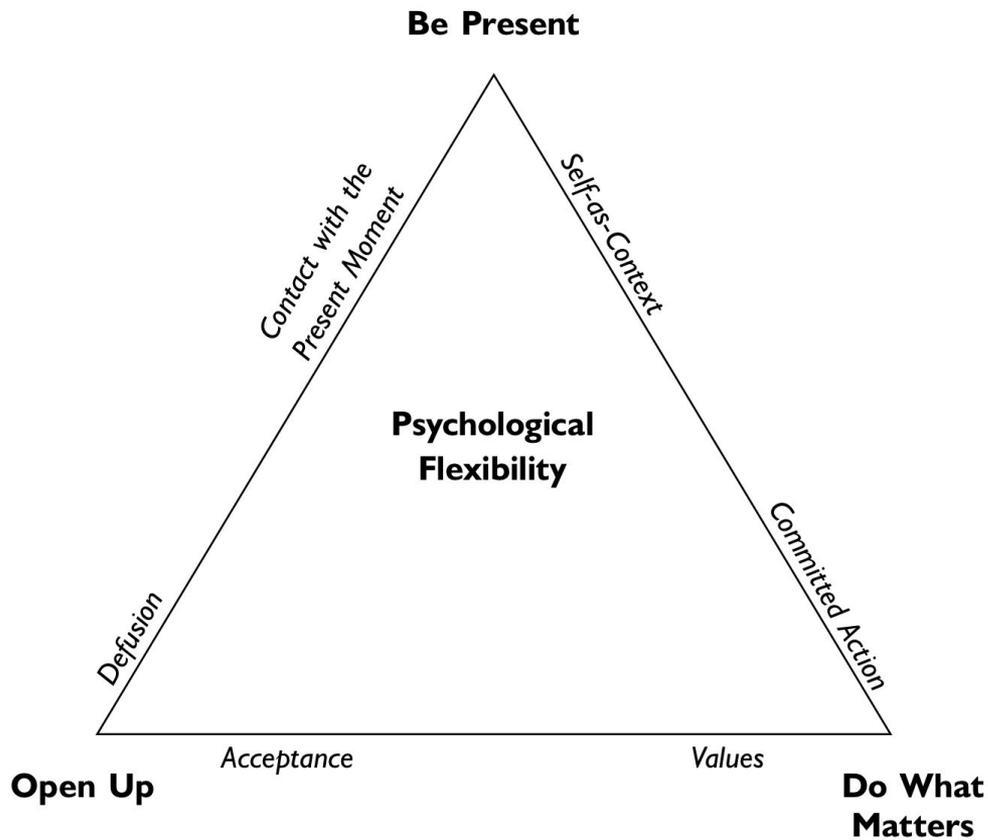
Maintenance of Identity is an ACTIVE not a PASSIVE process. It requires Discovery, Awareness and Action.

Discovered through Openness and and the Letting Go of negative energy

Experienced through Being Present and Pure Awareness

Rooted in Core Values and Committed Action





## The ACT “Triflex”

- ▶ Do What Matters
  - What are your values?
  - What do you want to do?

Be Present

Mindfulness

Be Aware of Shame (past) and Anxiety (future)

Open Up

What are you “stuck to?” (ideas, people, drugs)









# Being Present

## Notice exercise

Relationship Skills:

Active Listening

## Homework Activity / Practice being present during

Morning routine of making bed,

Vacuuming/doing dishes

Taking a shower,

Brushing teeth

## PURE AWARENESS/NOTICING

See

Hear

Touch

Taste

Smell

Thoughts

Emotions

Behavior

**Committed Action:** taking effective action, guided by core values. It is through values-congruent action that life becomes rich, full and meaningful

What behaviors or actions do you already do that reflect values-congruent living?

What could you stop doing, to better support or live one of your core values?

What could you start doing, to better support or live one of your core values?

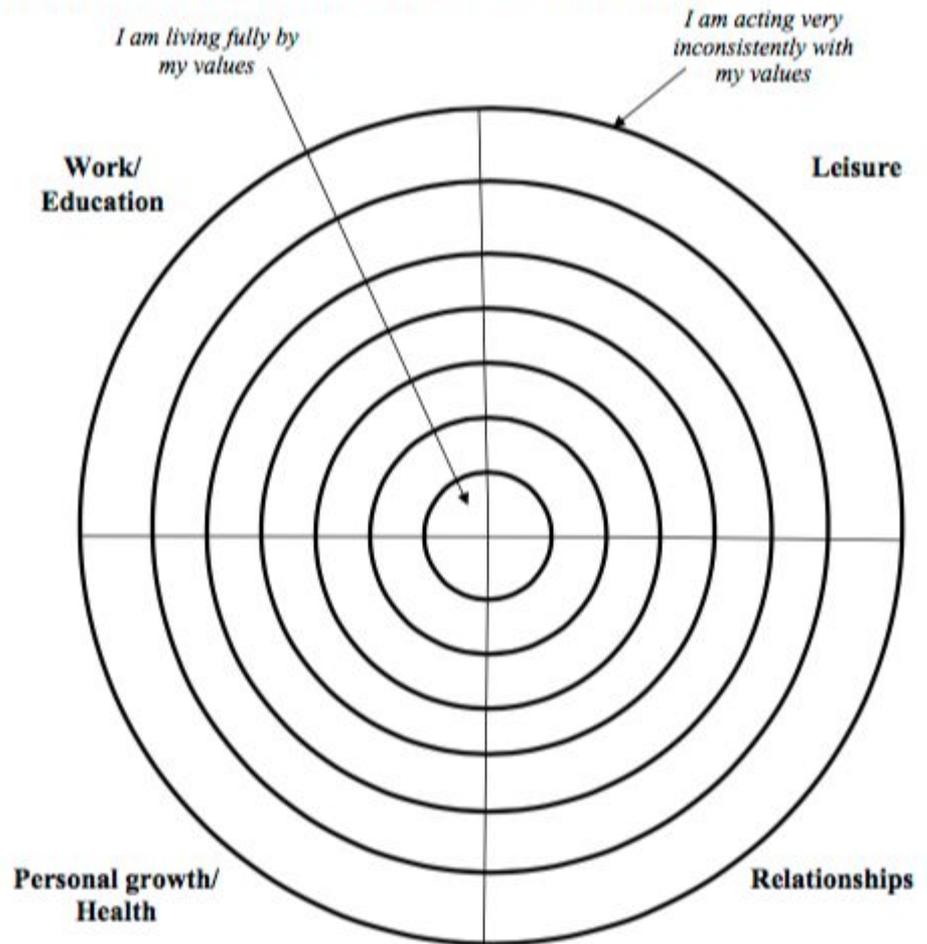
**THE BULL'S EYE:** make an X in each area of the dart board, to represent where you stand today.

**1. Work/Education:** includes workplace, career, education, skills development, etc.

**2. Relationships:** includes your partner, children, parents, relatives, friends, co-workers, and other social contacts.

**3. Personal Growth/Health:** may include religion, spirituality, creativity, life skills, meditation, yoga, nature; exercise, nutrition, and/or addressing health risk factors like smoking, alcohol, drugs or overeating etc

**4. Leisure:** how you play, relax, stimulate, or enjoy yourself; activities for rest, recreation, fun and creativity.



# Discovery, Awareness and Action

Identity is both formed and maintained by Discovery, Awareness and Action

Identity is:

Maintained through **Openness/Expansion** and the **Letting Go** of negative energy

Experienced through **Being Present** and **Pure Awareness**

Rooted in **Core Values** and **Committed Action**

# Acceptance

- Not the same as approval, tolerance, or even liking something
- Accept if and when doing so enables us to act on our values
- Is a process, not a technique
  - Expand, make space
  - Letting go of any urge to resist or avoid what is in front of you at the present moment
    - This may mean “sitting with” a craving to use
    - Recognize that a craving is just that – a craving
  - Show self-compassion
    - *“I’m not a bad person because I am craving the dope right now.”*

# Acceptance (Expansion or Willingness): If and When it allows us to act on our values

Open up and make room

Expand around it

Allow it to be there

Let go of the struggle

Give it some space

Breathe into it

Cease pushing it away, make room for it

Hold it loosely

# From Defusion to Acceptance

Your mind says “it’s unbearable...I can’t do this anymore”

Can we test this out, is this really the case?

From Values: review core values, “What feelings show up now?”

From Committed Action: “What feelings show up when taking committed action?”

From perspective of Observing Self: “What feelings are you struggling with?” and then label those feelings/emotions

# Exercise to assist Acceptance Process

Clipboard - hold it out all day, in front of you

Now do so while:

-talking

-driving

-eating

-working

Now let it sit on your lap...

# Meditations for Acceptance of Emotions

Observe

Breathe

Expand

Allow

Objectify

Normalize

Show Self Compassion

Enlarge Awareness

# “I can’t let go” (into Acceptance)

Next, take a few minutes to write a list of every single thing you’ve tried in order to avoid or get rid of these unpleasant thoughts or feelings. Try to remember every strategy you have ever used (whether deliberately or by default). Below is a guide to help you:

**Distraction:** list everything you have ever done to distract yourself from, or ‘zone out’, or take your mind off these painful thoughts, feelings, sensations or memories.

**Opting out:** list all the activities, interests, events, people, or places that you have avoided or withdrawn from, and all the opportunities you have missed out on, because you did not feel good or wanted to avoid feeling bad:

# “I can’t let go” (into Acceptance)

Thinking strategies: list all the different ways of thinking you have tried (deliberately or unintentionally) when painful thoughts and feelings started showing up. Tick any of the following that you have done, and write in any others:

- Worrying
- Dwelling on the past
- Fantasizing about the future
- Imagining escape scenarios (eg. leaving your job or your partner)
- Imagining revenge scenarios
- Imagining suicide scenarios
- Thinking ‘It’s not fair ...’
- Thinking ‘If only ....’
- Thinking of killing yourself
- Blaming yourself

# “I can’t let go” (into Acceptance)

- Blaming others
- Blaming the world
- Talking logically to yourself
- Talking positively to yourself
- Talking negatively to yourself
- Analyzing yourself (trying to figure out why you are like this)
- Analyzing the situation (trying to figure out why this happened)
- Analyzing others (trying to figure out why they are like this)

Substances: list all the substances you have ever used to try and feel better, including foods, drinks, cigarettes, recreational drugs, and prescription drugs

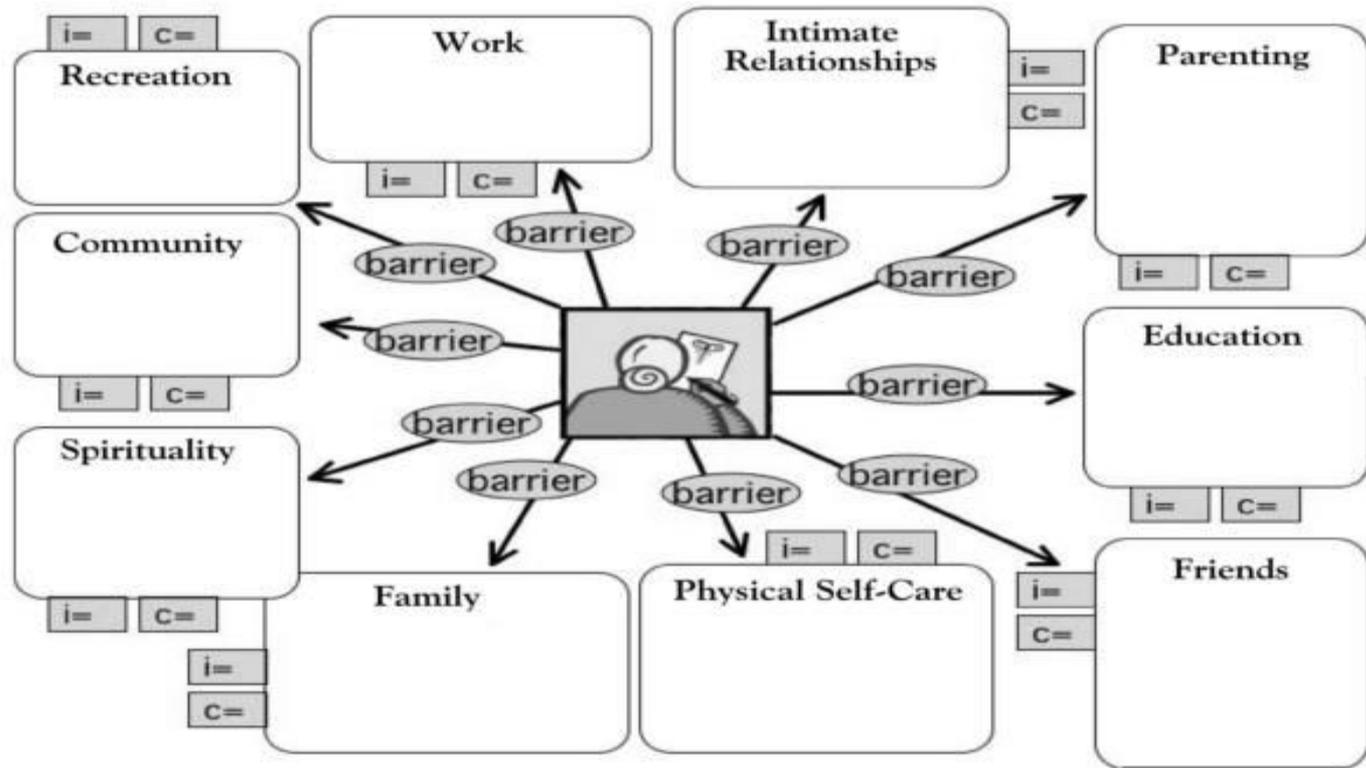
# “I can’t let go” (into Acceptance)

**Anything else:** write down anything else you can think of you have ever tried to make yourself feel a bit better, or not so bad, when these painful thoughts and feelings showed up.

Once you’ve done that, go through your list and for each item, ask yourself:

- 1. Did this get rid of my painful thoughts and feelings in the long term?**
- 2. Did it bring me closer to a rich, full, and meaningful life?**
- 3. If the answer to question 2 is “no”, then what did this cost me in terms of time, energy, money, health, relationships, and vitality?**

# Life Compass Worksheet



# The Life Change List

As I develop genuine confidence . . .

- Here are some ways I will act differently:
- Here are some ways I will treat others differently:
- Here are some ways I will treat myself differently:
- Here are some personal qualities and character strengths I will develop and demonstrate to others:
- Here are some ways I will behave differently in close relationships with friends and family:
- Here are some ways I will behave differently in relationships involving work, education, sport or leisure:
- Here are some important things I will 'stand for':
- Here are some activities I will start or do more of:
- Here are some goals I will work towards:
- Here are some actions I will take to improve my life:

**CONTACTING THE PRESENT MOMENT**

**I, here, now** notice *WHAT* I see, hear, touch, taste, smell, think, feel, do

**SELF-AS-PROCESS**

**I, here, now** notice *THAT* I see, hear, touch, taste, smell, think, feel, do

**DEFUSION**

**I, here, now** notice my thoughts and see them as words and pictures

**COMPASSION**

**I, here, now** notice suffering and respond with kindness

**Self-as-Context**

**ACCEPTANCE**

**I, here, now** notice my thoughts and feelings and allow them to be as they are

**EMPATHY**

**I, here, now** notice what someone else is feeling and feel it too

**TRANSCENDENT SELF or OBSERVING SELF**

**I, here, now** notice *THAT* I am continuous, unchanging, distinct from, & more than *WHAT* I see, hear, touch, taste, smell, think, feel, do

**COMMITTED ACTION**

**I, here, now** notice my actions and take control of them

**VALUES**

**I, here, now** notice what is important and meaningful to me and put it into words



# Defusion - Keep it simple

1. “I am having the thought...”
2. “I notice that I am feeling...”
3. Hands as metaphors
4. “That’s an interesting thought...”
5. “Thanks, mind!”
6. Tabloid Headline
7. Index by topic
8. Short replies: “Nice one”, or “Lovely”, “Great”, “Very creative”, “Ouch”, etc.
9. 6 Slow Breaths (counting inhalation and exhalation)
10. Say it over and over - 30 times

# Defusion

Stuck Place: what does your mind say when you feel stuck?

\*Let's write it down:

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Feelings: \_\_\_\_\_

Stuck place consists of words and feelings (written on card)

Activity: put card in front of your eyes, hold it tightly (now give s/o a hug, go for a swim, bike ride, drive a car, eat dinner)

\*Now let go of the card...can you more easily do those things now?

# Defusion

## IMAGERY:

Sunny day, sitting on a bench, by a river and a large tree near the river, leaves falling...

Sticks floating downstream - every time the mind starts talking negatively, trying to hook you.

Words on a computer screen...different colors, fonts, moving up and down or diagonally...

## LETTING GO:

Clouds, leaves on the ground, foam on the surf

Capsized boat: heavy suitcase full of valuables pulling you down





# Self Concept: Image, Worth and Ideal-Self

