



Inside This Moment

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Where we live

Sentinel	Native
	

2

The Sentinel Mind

- Evolved as a function of language
 - Instills order and predictability
 - Allows us to create cause and effect relationships
 - Allows us to compare and categorize things
 - Allows us regulate behavior via symbolic means
 - Allows us to evaluate impacts and protect us from damage
 - Did not evolve for purposes of self-reflection!

3

The Impact of Sentinel Mind

- It gobbles up processing space like a memory intensive software program
- It displays “output” at a constant rate
- It is the first message on the screen
- It is incredibly useful much of the time
- IT DOESN'T DO THE PRESENT MOMENT!
 - It regards the present moment as dangerous to survival

4

Native Mind and The Present Moment

- Native mind contains all non-verbal forms of knowing (inspiration, intuition, enlightenment, mysticism)
- Direct contact with self-experience and experiential integration
- A sense of well being and interconnectedness
- Perspective taking
- Compassion for self and others
- Direct contact with behavioral contingencies
- The doorway to radical acceptance and change

5

The Moment to Moment Dialectic of the Moment

- There is an ongoing war for “bandwidth” between sentinel mind and native mind with you as the watcher and listener
- On a daily basis, your attention shifts between these two modes of mind repeatedly and habitually
- One mode of mind “draws” the other mode, therefore, it is not possible to simply “stay” present
- It is best to think of the present moment as the dynamic, flexible allocation of attention between sentinel mind and native mind based upon the goals and best interests of the human at that exact moment

6

Clinical Impact of Present Moment Failures

- Symbolic activity becomes the dominant experience of being (living in your head)
- Symbolically constructed rules govern behavior to an excessive extent (experiential avoidance and rule governed behavior)
- Behavior becomes disconnected from it's real world consequences (inflexibility)
- Behavior becomes excessively regulated by culturally instilled morals, conventions (loss of values connection)
- Hence, being aware (centered) is regarded as the central "pillar" of ACT

7

The Escape Moves

- **Time Traveler**—Getting lost in the future
- **Re-runs**—Thinking about past events
- **Butterfly**—Flitting from thing to thing
- **Breath Holder**—Stop breathing, tighten up, mild hyperventilate
- **House Cleaner**—Engaging in repetitive behaviors to avoid now
- **Lip Biter**—Biting lip to keep emotions from breaking through
- **Lawyer**—Immediate evaluation of now experience relative to rules
- **Disqualifier**—Evaluating being in the now as being selfish
- **Zombie**—Going numb when the moment arrives
- **Graveyard Whistler**—Acting the opposite of where you are
- **Damage Controller**—Focus on possible toxic and painful experience as if it is real

8

Self-Assessment

- Take a few minutes to discuss with a partner
 - Which escape routes do you use?
 - Are there situations in your life that are likely to trigger escape?
 - Are there things you've discovered that help you come back into the present when you notice you are escaping?

9

Moving Toward Moment Processes In Session

- **Strategy One:** Notice signs of “escape”
 - **Non-verbal:** Looking down/away, sighing, sudden change of facial expression, lip curling or biting, watery eyes, nervous movements
 - **Verbal:** Changing the subject, changes in rate of speech, forgetting questions, not answering questions, direct statements about avoidance (“I don’t let myself think about it”; “I just want this to go away”)

10

Using Present Moment Processes in Session

- **Strategy 2:** Gently and compassionately step into the escape route
 - **Non-verbal:** Lean forward in your chair and make commanding eye contact, stay relaxed and look curious and interested
 - **Verbal:** Mention the signs you’ve noticed and ask the client to describe what is going on right now, in this moment (“I just noticed that you looked away, your face seemed to be stressed, that you kind of changed the topic”; When I asked about X, there are tears in your eyes.”)

Using Present Moment Processes in Session

- **Strategy 3:** Ask the client to “hold still” and stay present with what is present without a lot of verbal processing
 - **Non-verbal:** Often, staying silent and maintaining soft eye contact will slow things down and allow the client to stay with you
 - **Verbal:** Don’t use a lot of words as this activates sentinel mind. Mostly, utter words of encouragement (“That’s OK”; “Just notice what’s there; I’m here for you”) or alter the pace or function of what the client is doing (“Say this very slowly”; “Let’s try having you stand up and create a physical posture that represents what is happening”)

12

Using Present Moment Processes in Session

- **Strategy 4:** Experientially deconstruct what has happened
 - **Non-verbal:** Maintain commanding eye contact, forward leaning orientation, sometimes you can move your chair and sit beside the client
 - **Verbal:** Use questions to elicits various aspects of present moment experience (“What was going on for you?”; “How did it feel?”; “What kind of thoughts were you having? Any memories? What was going on in your body?”)

13

Using Present Moment Processes in Session

- **Strategy 5:** Try to encourage contingency shaped learning
 - **Non-verbal:** Soften eye contact a bit; maybe lean back in your chair, assume a relaxed posture
 - **Verbal:** Again, ask questions that requires client to generate perspective (How do you feel about what just happened? Did you see anything new or different? Did staying present make this feel worse? Better? More tolerable? Less tolerable?)

14

Using Present Moment Processes In Session

- **Strategy 6:** Try to get the client to carry some piece of learning forward for further practice in daily life
 - **Non-verbal:** Again, assume a relaxed but focused conversational posture, maintaining soft eye contact
 - **Verbal:** Questions about what the client might be willing to try to extend what has been learned (Would you be willing to practice just holding still and inviting this stuff in for 5 minutes at some pre-set time each day? Willing to do another present moment generating activity like this one?)

15

It's Role Play Time!

Instructions: De-brief in Small Groups

- What escape “macros” do you see happening?
- What *verbal* signs of escape from the present moment do you see?
- What *non-verbal* clinical signs of escape from the present moment do you see?
- Which strategies did the therapist use? How did they work?

16

In search of the present. . .



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17

17
