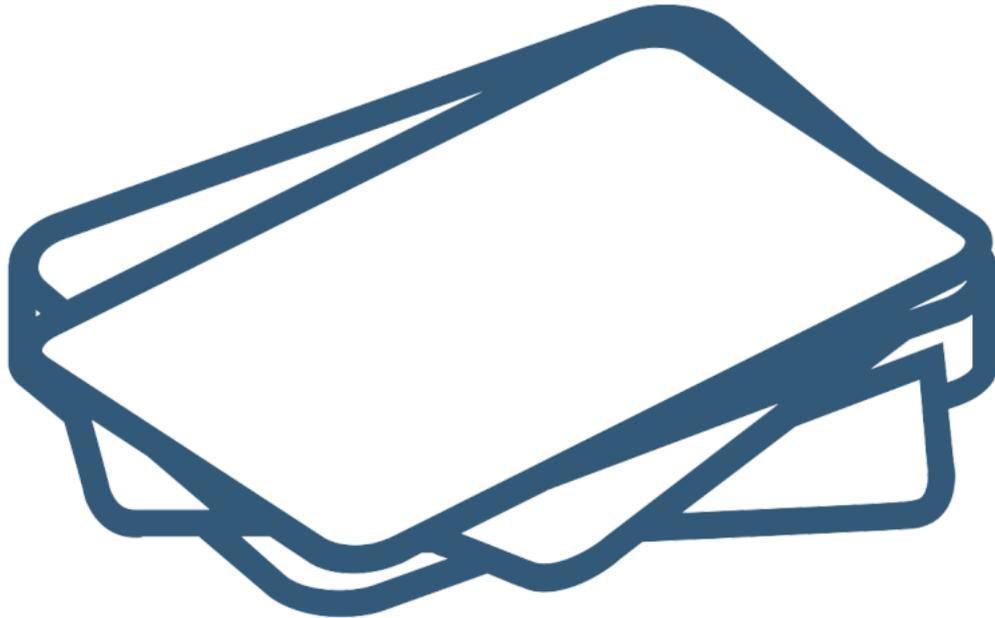


USING THE CARDS



USING THE CARDS

Words and stories can get us stuck, whereas a picture is worth a thousand words.

These cards make ACT more visual and fun. You can use them: to guide your ACT practice, to ask interesting questions, to provide visual cues that will leave a long-lasting impact. Let clients choose which card to work from, or take them home as reminders. Use them to run your ACT groups and workshops, or simply for yourself. If you think of new ways to use them, let us know.

cards@contextpsy.com

I developed these cards around the ACT matrix model, a creation of Kevin Polk, and owe a debt of inspiration to the work of Mark Webster. The cards include a number of metaphors and questions from the broader Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (or Training) 'canon.' Although I can't credit all the people whose ideas and work are reflected in these cards, I invite you to join them and the ACT community at

contextualscience.org

Cards created by Benjamin Schoendorff. Invite me to lead your ACT workshop.

benji@contextpsy.com
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WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS



WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS



**Magic happens outside
of my comfort zone.**

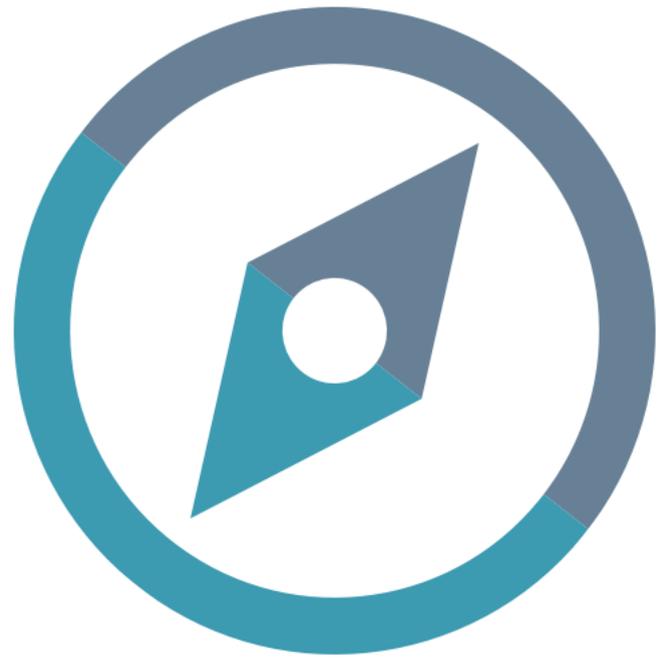
**In addition to my comfort zone
and the zone where the magic
happens, I have a self-care zone.**

**How far outside my comfort
zone can I step, while staying
within my self-care zone, to reach
the zone where the magic happens?**

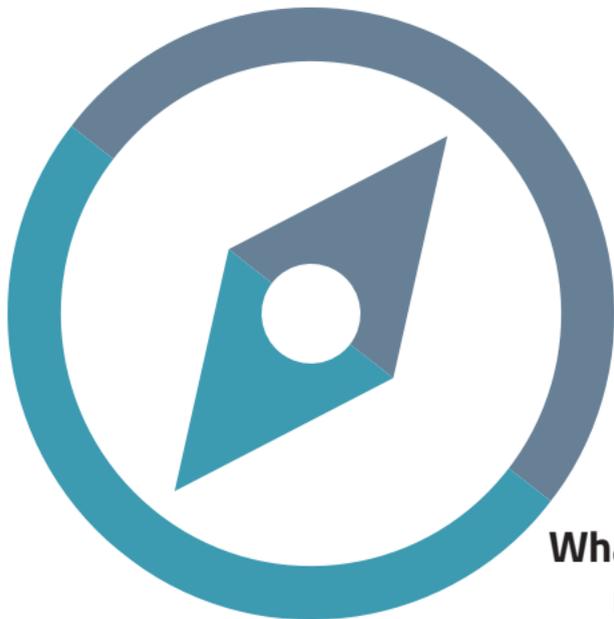
**What steps outside my comfort zone and inside
my self-care zone could I take in the coming week?**

MATRIX CARDS

I M P O R T A N T



I M P O R T A N T



**Who and what are important to me
are the compass that guide my actions.**

Who and/or what is important to me?

What is important to me about these?

How important are these to my life?

**What are some of the things I have done to
move toward who or what is important?**

WHO IS IMPORTANT?



WHO IS IMPORTANT?



Who is important to me?

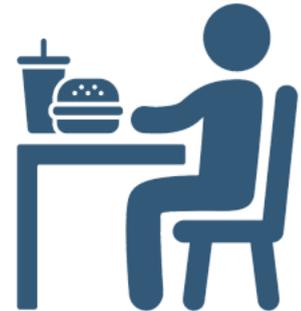
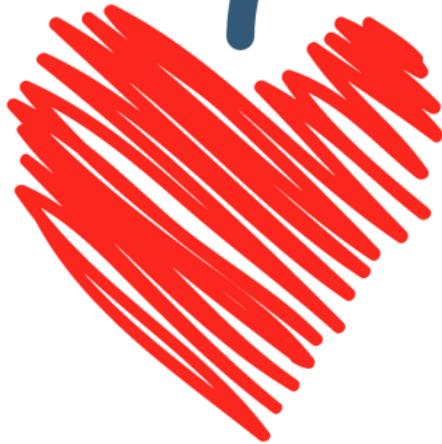
**How are these beings
important to me?**

How important are they to my life?

**What are some of the things I have
done to move toward who is important?**

MATRIX CARDS

S E L F - C A R E



S E L F - C A R E



What does self-care mean to me?

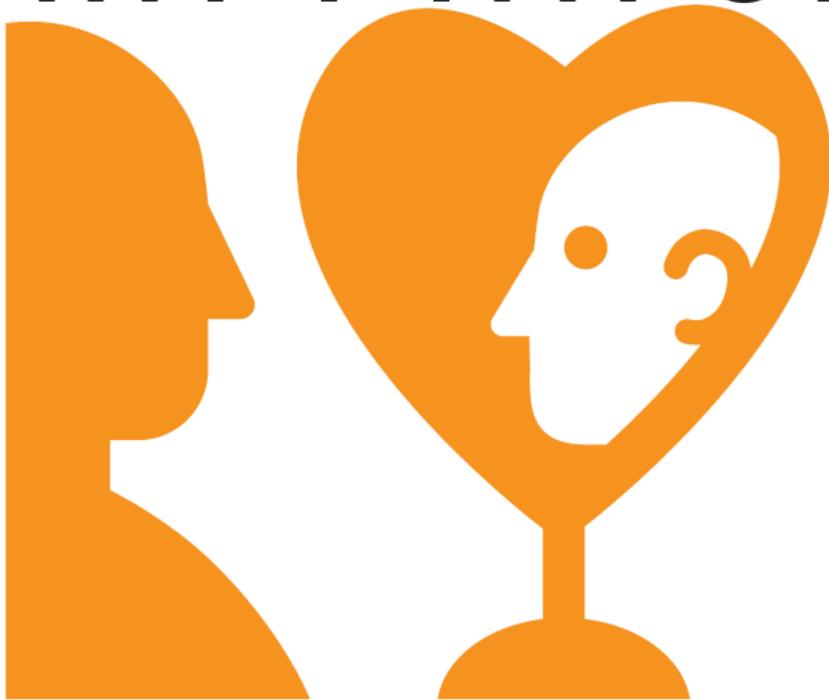
What do I do to take care of myself?

What self-care did I engage in this past week?

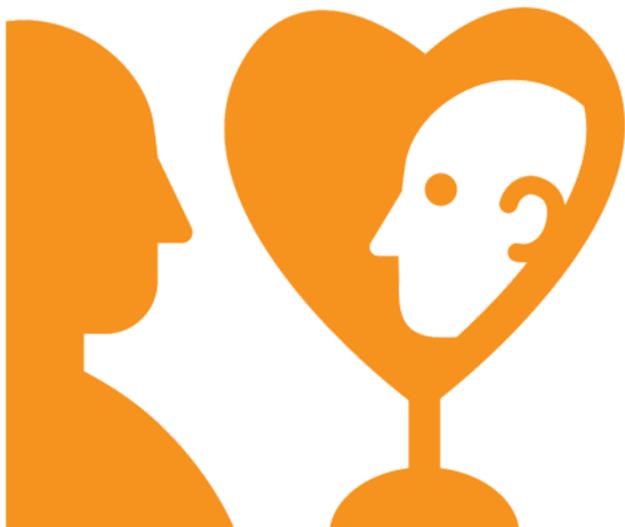
What self-care could I engage in next week?

Who or what can best support my self-care?

AM I IMPORTANT?



AM I IMPORTANT?



Am I important?

**What does it mean for me
to be important?**

**What did i do this past week
to hold myself as important?**

**What could i do this coming
week to treat myself as important?**

MATRIX CARDS

I N T I M A C Y



I N T I M A C Y

In a truly intimate relationship, both partners can share their innermost thoughts and feelings knowing that they will be received just as they are.



Have I ever had a truly intimate relationship?

What difference would a truly intimate relationship make to my life?

What small steps could I take to move toward intimacy?

STUFF THAT SHOWS UP



STUFF THAT SHOWS UP



What I don't want to think and feel can show up at the most inconvenient times.

What stuff can show up that I don't want to think, feel, or remember?

When does this stuff tend to show up?

What can I be seen doing when this stuff shows up?

MATRIX CARDS

A W A Y M O V E S



A W A Y M O V E S

Away Moves are actions I engage in to move away from what I don't want to think or feel, even if they don't work.



What Away Moves have I noticed this week?

What was my biggest Away Move of the week?

What was my smallest Away Move of the week?

What Away Move helped me last week?

What Away Move got me stuck last week?

T O W A R D M O V E S



TOWARD MOVES

Toward Moves are actions I engage in to move toward who or what is important to me, even when these actions don't work out.



What Toward Moves have I noticed last week?

What was my biggest Toward Move of the week?

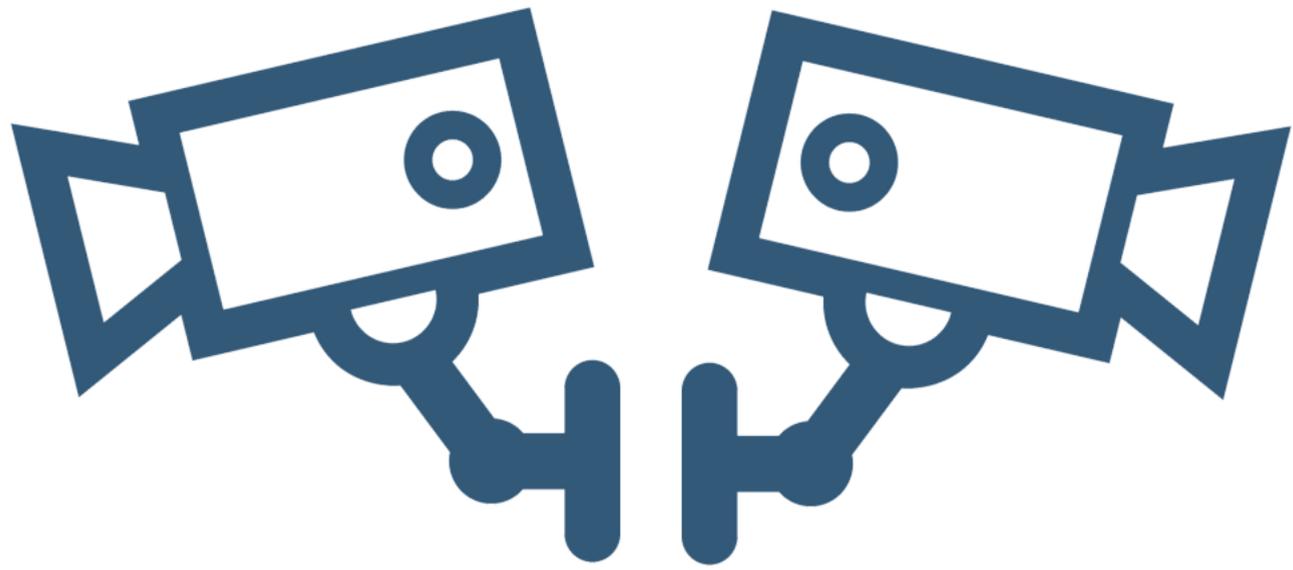
What was my smallest Toward Move of week?

What was the Toward Move that got away last week?

What Toward Move did I notice someone else do last week?

MATRIX CARDS

B E H A V I O R



B E H A V I O R

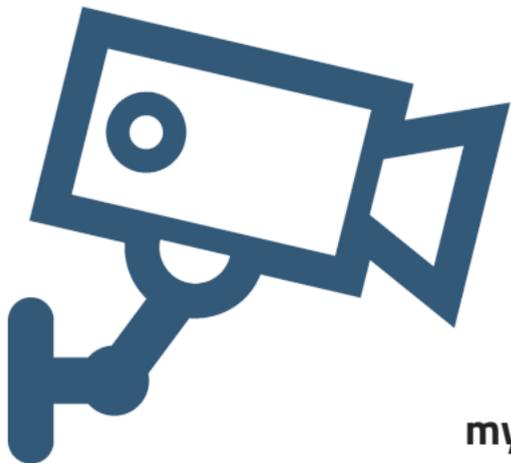
Behavior is everything that I could be filmed doing.

When is it useful to look at behavior?

**What can stop me from
looking at my own behavior?**

**What makes the most difference in
my life, thoughts or behavior?**

**How can I best build the life I want: through
my thoughts & feelings, or through my actions?**



B E H A V I O R

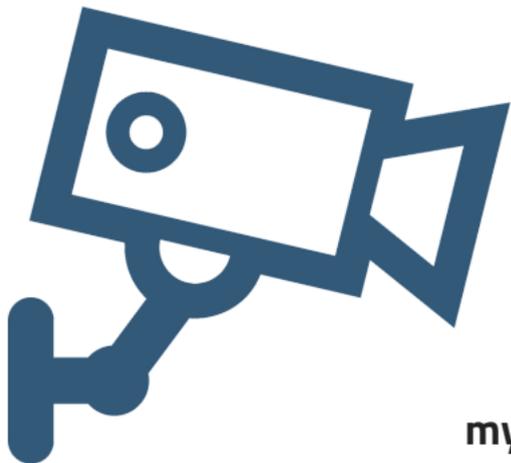
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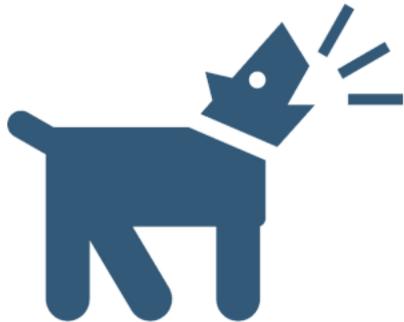
**What makes the most difference in
my life, thoughts or behavior?**

**How can I best build the life I want: through
my thoughts & feelings, or through my actions?**



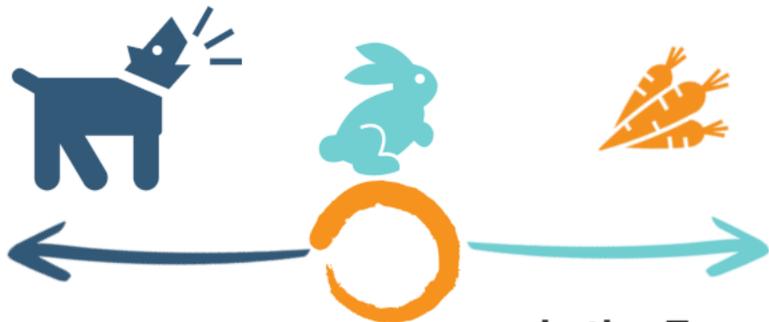
MATRIX CARDS

AWAY & TOWARD



AWAY & TOWARD

I can see everything I do as being either to move toward who or what is important to me, or to move away from what I don't like to think or feel.

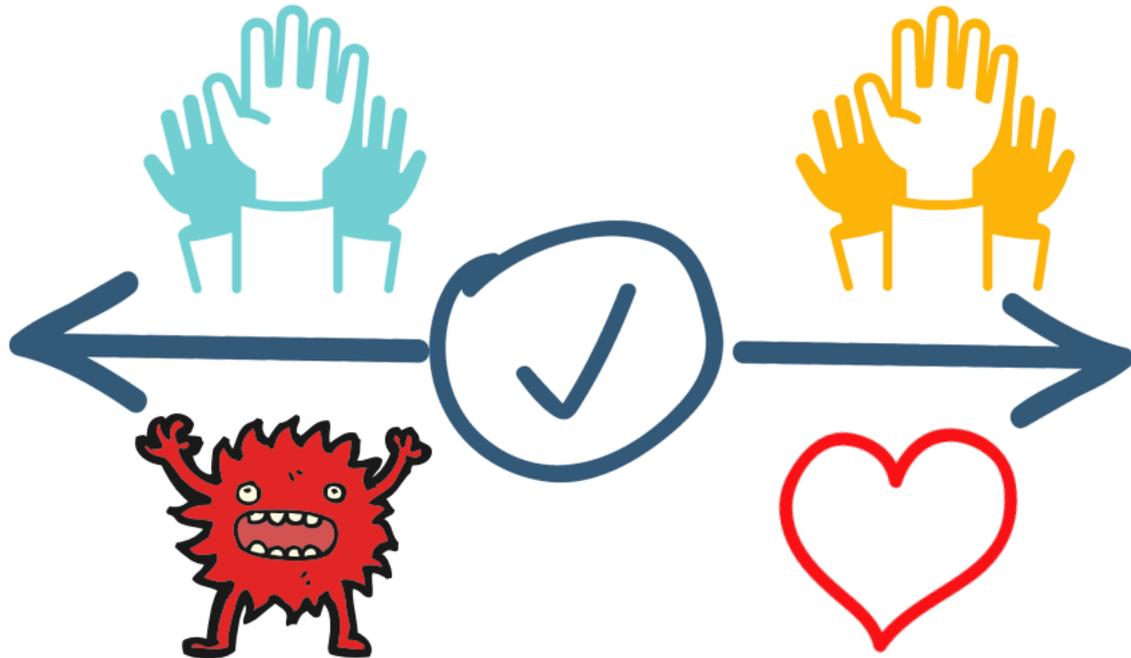


What is one of my
Toward Moves?

What is one of my
Away Moves?

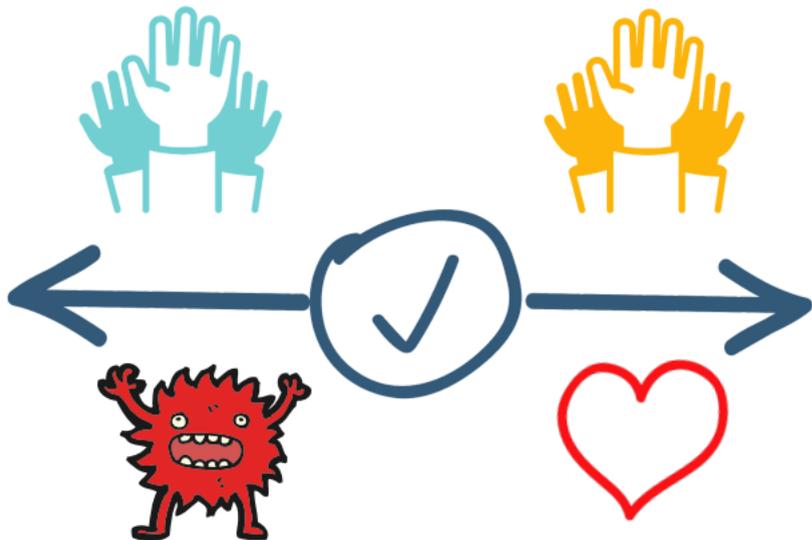
What is one action I can do as
both a Toward Move and as an Away Move?

CHOOSING MY LIFE



CHOOSING MY LIFE

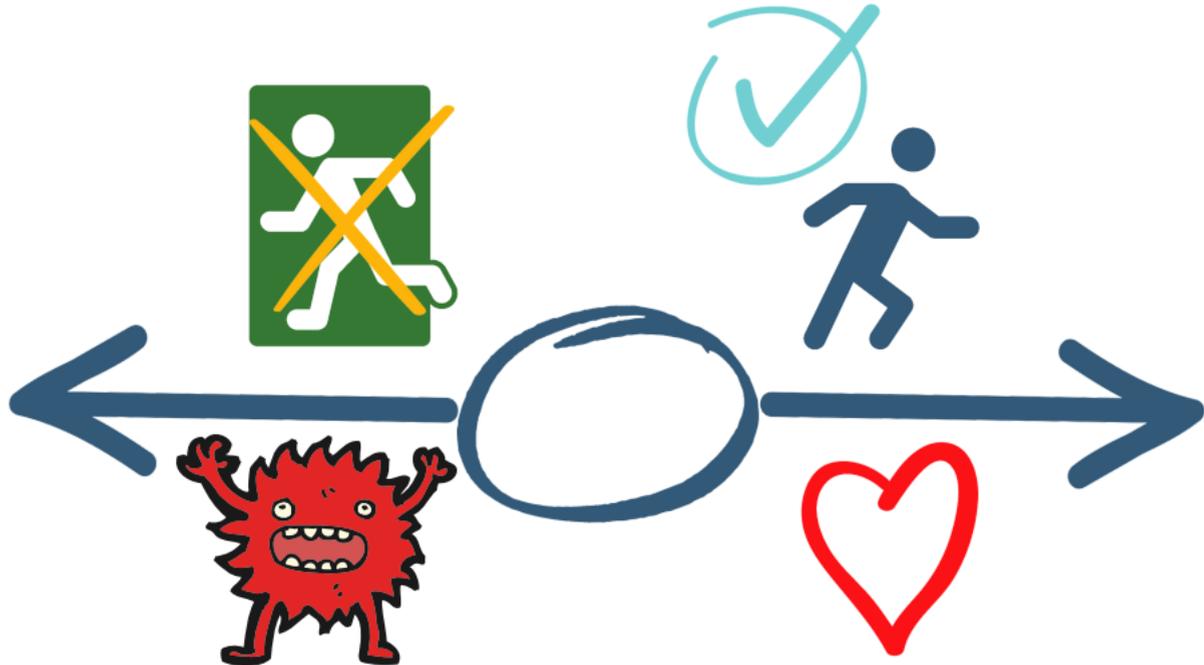
If I could choose,
would I choose:



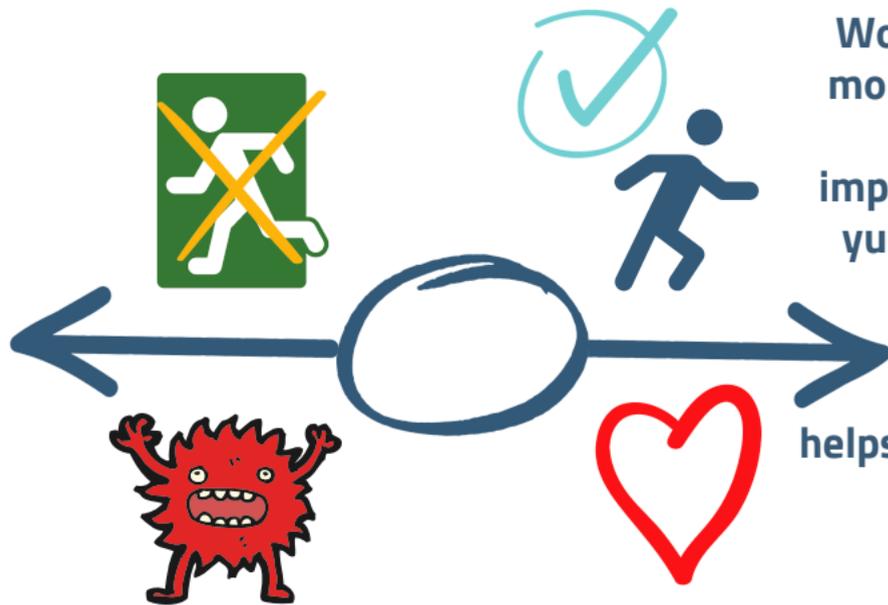
A life in which most (but not all) of my actions are to move away from what I don't want to think or feel?

A life in which most (but not all) of my actions are to move toward who or what is important to me?

PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY



PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY



Would I like to be able to more easily **choose** to move toward who or what is important to me, even when yucky inner stuff shows up and gets in the way?

Psychological flexibility helps me do what matters, no matter what.

It is a skill I can learn.

SURFING THE WAVES



SURFING THE WAVES



Difficult feelings and thoughts can feel like waves that come crashing on me.

Can I hold them back, swim away from them, or make them go away?

If I could learn to surf the waves, would I need to hold them back, swim away from them, or make them disappear?

How will I best learn to surf: by thinking and talking about it, or by surfing?

MATRIX CARDS

S T U C K L O O P S



S T U C K L O O P S



**A Stuck Loop gives me short term relief,
but the uncomfortable stuff
soon comes back, and then
I need to do another Away Move.**

Can I name one of my Stuck Loops?

**How effective is this
Stuck Loop in the long term?**

**Does this Stuck Loop move me toward or
away from who or what is important to me?**

STUCK LOOPS FOR TWO



STUCK LOOPS FOR TWO



I can get hooked by another person's actions and respond by an Away Move.

If that Away Move hooks the other person, we can soon get into a Stuck Loop for Two.

Stuck Loops for Two carry no information about the relationship.

Can I notice when I get in a Stuck Loop for Two?

What Toward Move could I do to get unstuck?

MATRIX CARDS

A U T O P I L O T



A U T O P I L O T



Autopilot is when I act without awareness.

When do I act on autopilot?

**When is it useful for me
to act on autopilot?**

**When did acting on
autopilot get me stuck this week?**

**In what situations could I benefit from
disengaging autopilot in the coming week?**

MATRIX CARDS

P

A

U

S

E



P A U S E



Autopilot can get me into painful crashes.

Pausing autopilot can give me awareness.

When can it be useful to pause Autopilot?

One recent situation in which I paused.

One recent situation in which I did not pause.

In what kind of situations would it be useful to pause?

MATRIX CARDS

P

L

A

Y



P

L

A

Y



I play when I engage in the Toward Moves I choose, regardless of whether I 'win' or 'lose'.

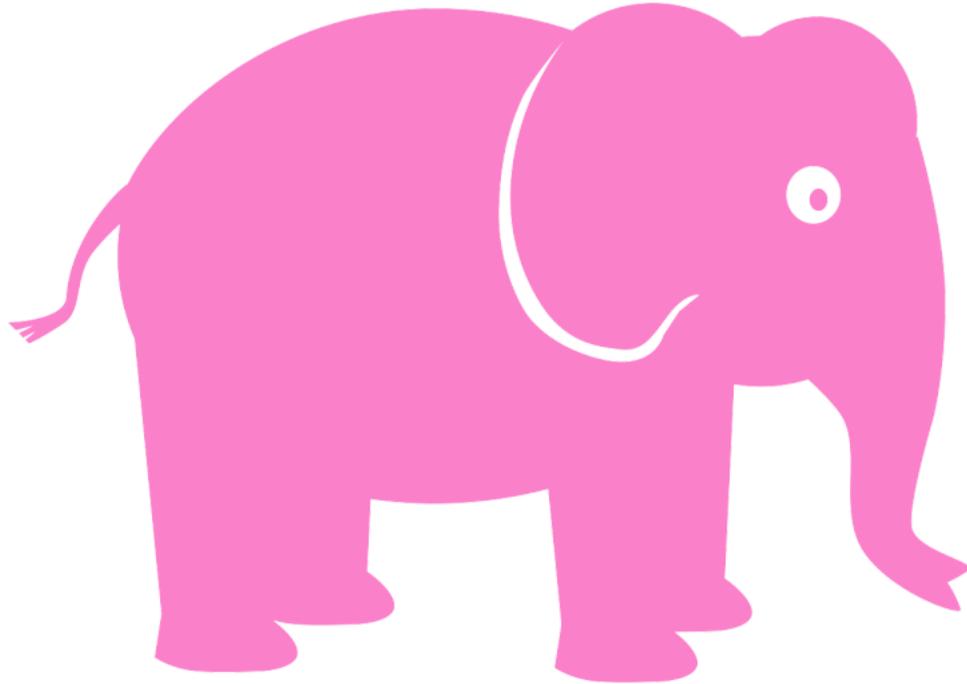
When did I press 'Play' this week?

What did I notice when I pressed "Play" this week?

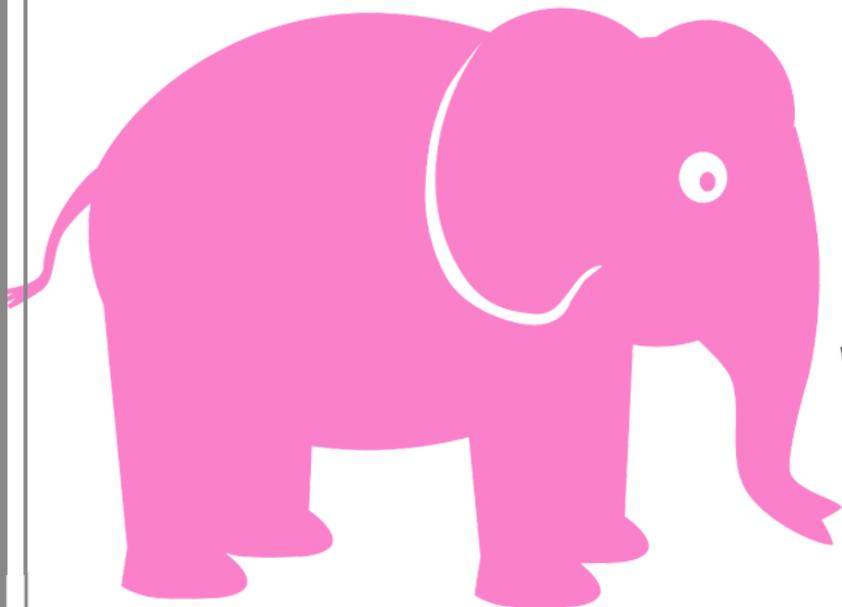
What did I gain from playing, even when I did not win?

MATRIX CARDS

DON'T THINK OF IT!



DON'T THINK OF IT!



Look at this elephant.

Close your eyes
and don't think of it
for the next 30 seconds.

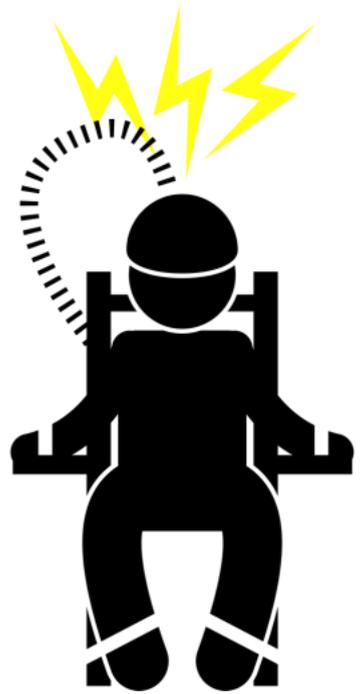
When does your mind tell you
not to think of something?

When does it work?

When does it not work?

MATRIX CARDS

D O N ' T F E E L I T !



DON'T FEEL IT!



Imagine being wired to a polygraph
that detects the slightest stress or anxiety.

Any anxiety and it zaps you with 10,000 volts.

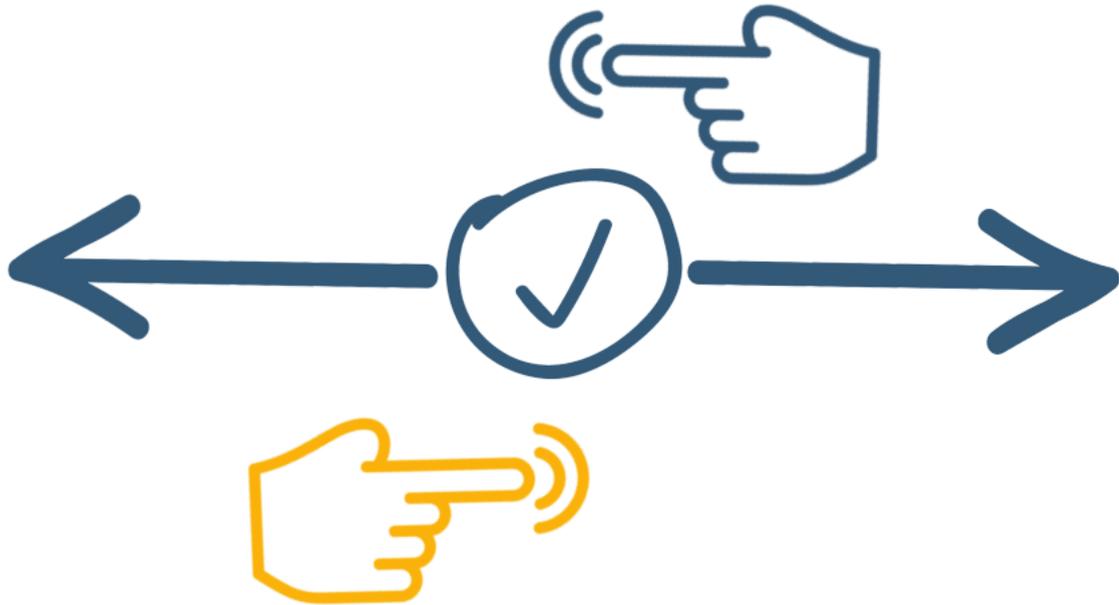
How long would you survive?

When does your mind tell you
not to feel something?

When does it work?

When does it not work?

T H E 2 R U L E S



T H E 2 R U L E S

In the world outside the skin (the world of five-senses experience), if I don't like something, I can try different things and eventually come to control it.



In the world inside the skin (the world of inner experience), the more I try to control it, the more I have it.

5 SENSES vs. MENTAL



5 SENSES VS MENTAL



I can notice the world outside
my skin with one of my five senses.

I can notice my thoughts and feelings
through mental or inner experiencing.

Can I notice the difference between
five senses and mental or inner experiencing?

How could noticing the difference be helpful to me?

MATRIX CARDS

C O N T R O L



C O N T R O L



**What can I best control:
my thoughts & emotions, or my behavior?**

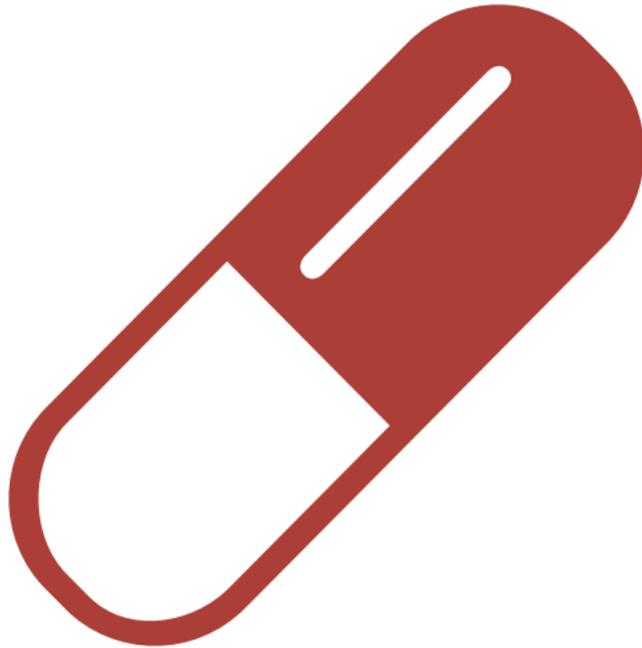
**What are the costs of trying to
control my thoughts & emotions?**

**How much time and energy have I put into
trying to control my thoughts and emotions?**

What do I do to try to control my emotions?

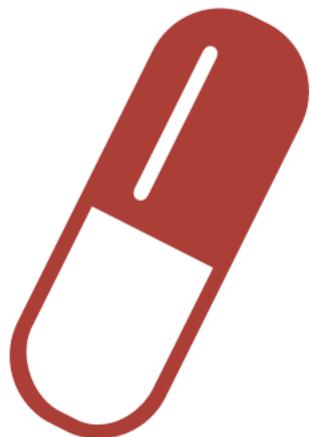
Does it work or do my thoughts & emotions control me?

THE FOREVER HAPPY PILL



THE FOREVER HAPPY PILL

Imagine there was a pill you could take once and you'll always feel good and never feel bad again.

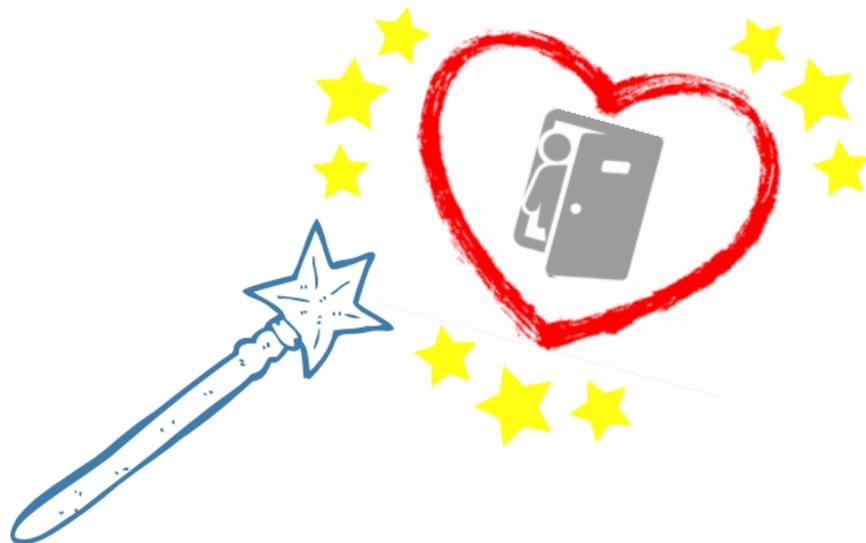


There is only one side effect:
you could never get out of bed again or
interact with anyone until the day you die.

Would you take the 'Forever Happy' pill?

If not, what actions and relationships are more important to you than feeling happy forever?

THE MAGIC WAND



THE MAGIC WAND



If all my bad feelings, thoughts, and memories could disappear as if by magic, what would I do?

What are some of the actions I could be seen doing?

MATRIX CARDS

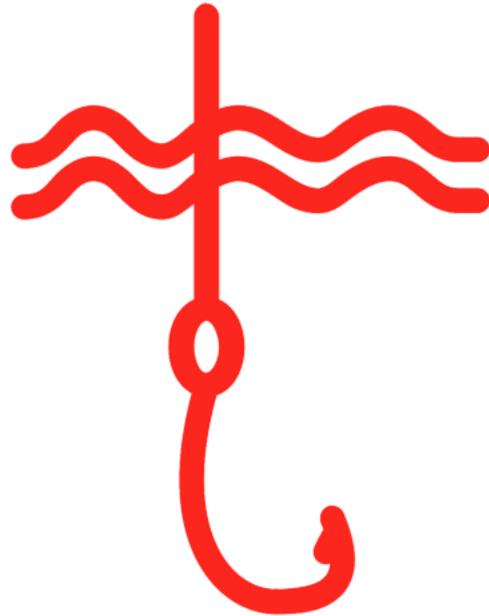
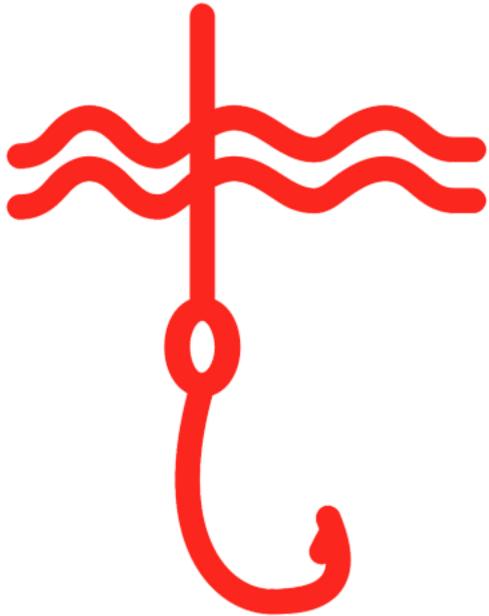
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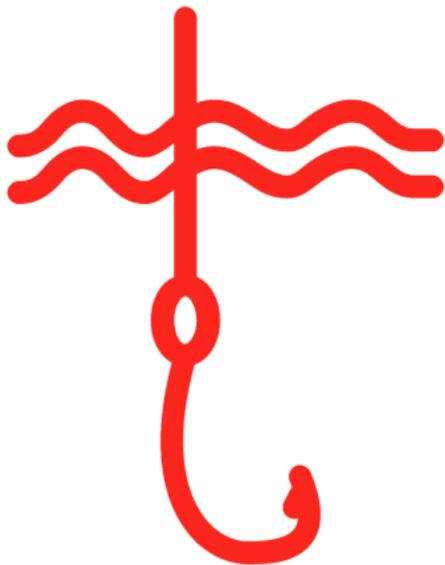
O

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K

S



H**O****O****K****S**

I bite hooks when I get 'pulled' into behaving differently than I would have wanted to.

If fish could notice hooks as hooks, would they need to get rid of hooks?

What hooks did I notice this past week?

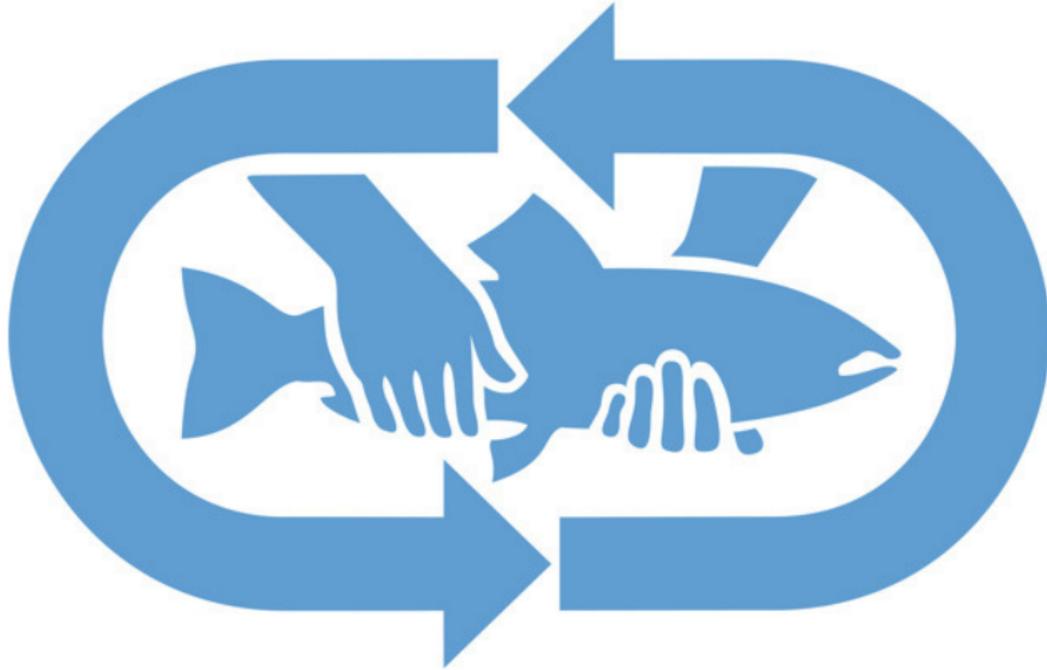
How do I feel when these hooks show up?

Where do these hooks show up in my body?

What are some of the things I do when I get hooked?

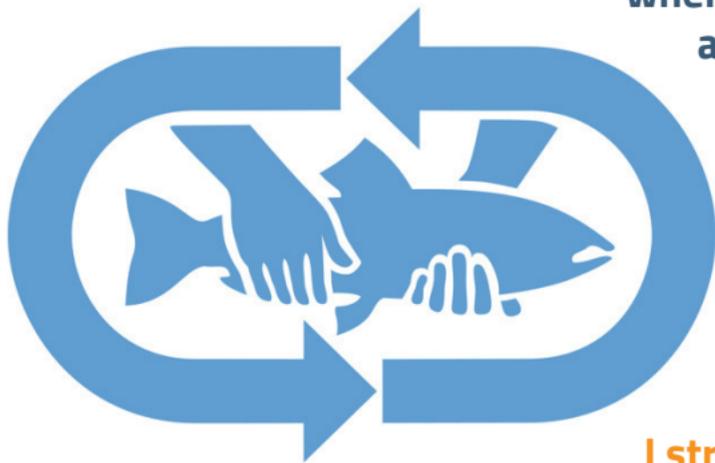
MATRIX CARDS

CATCH & RELEASE



CATCH & RELEASE

With the advent of Catch & Release fishing, fish have learned a new trick: when hooked, don't struggle too much, and you're soon back to swimming.



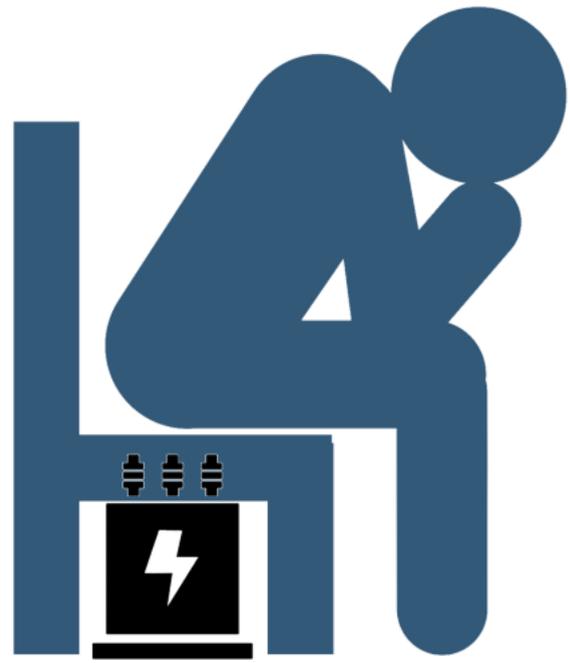
Do I struggle rather more or less when I get hooked?

Do I notice a difference?

What hooks could I struggle less with this coming week?

MATRIX CARDS

T E N S I O N



T E N S I O N

Tension builds up in my body as I react to my mental experiences, feelings, and bodily sensations.

Where in my body does tension build up?

Can I notice any tension in my body right now?

How helpful is it to let tension build up in my body?

How can I relax the tension that I notice?

When could noticing and relaxing tension be useful this coming week?



MATRIX CARDS

W H O P A Y S ?



W H O P A Y S ?



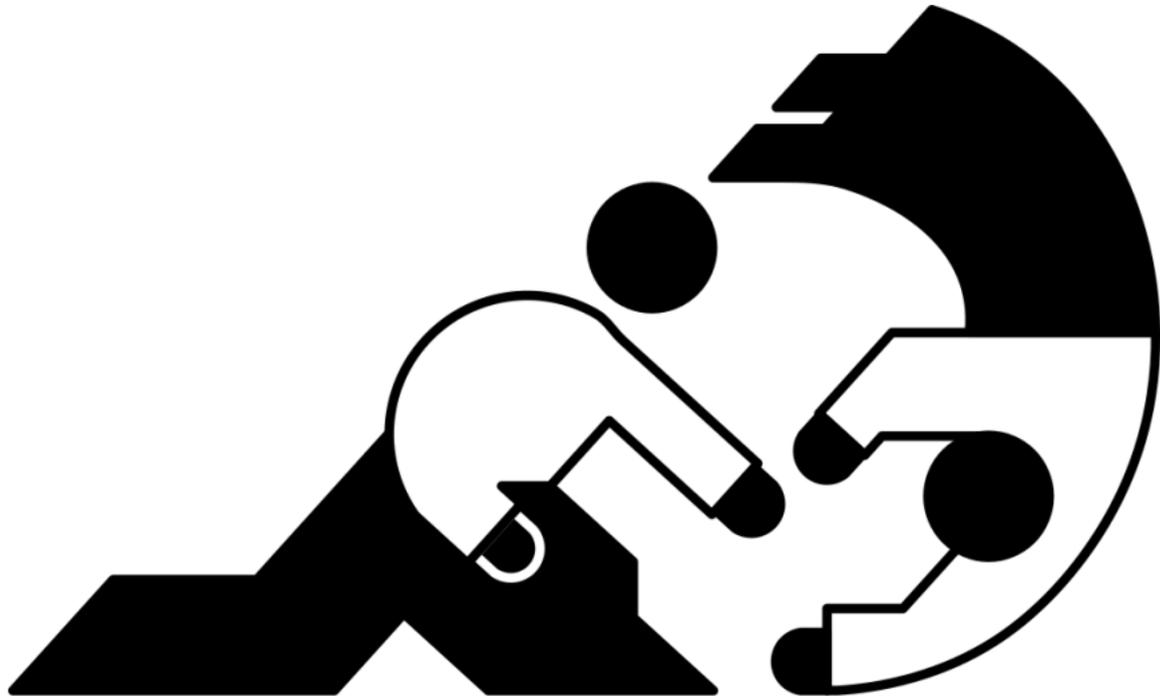
**My mind is like a relentless
and insistent salesperson.**

**When I buy everything it
pitches to me, who pays?**

**Instead of buying what comes
with the most compelling pitch,
what if I only bought
what has proved useful
to get to where I want to get to?**

MATRIX CARDS

V E R B A L A I K I D O



VERBAL AIKIDO

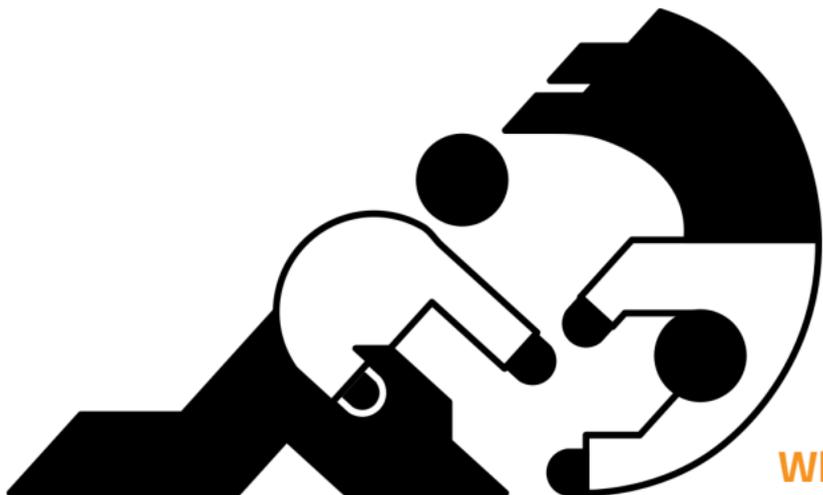
When did I practice Verbal Aikido this week?

What did I notice?

**Did I notice a difference
between the
feel of Away Moves and
the feel of Toward Moves?**

**When could I use Verbal
Aikido this coming week?**

What difference could it make?



MATRIX CARDS

U - T U R N



U - T U R N



**U-turn is when
I catch myself in an Away Move,
then turn around to do a Toward Move.**

What U-turn did I do this week?

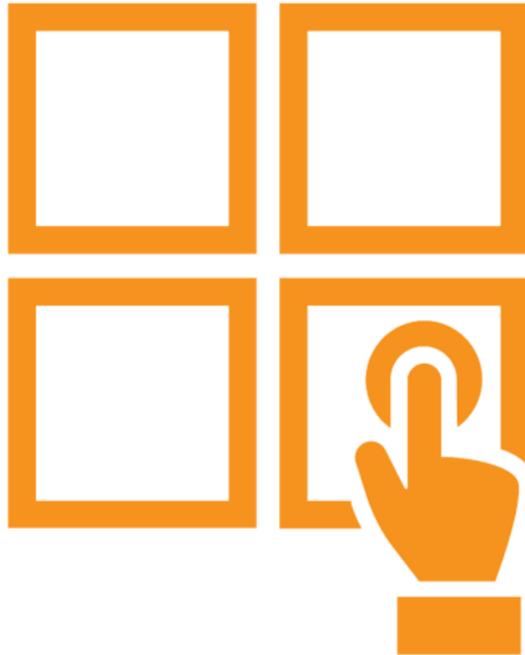
What U-turn did I miss this week?

What U-turn could I do this coming week?

**What I can do to increase my
chances of doing a U-turn this coming week?**

MATRIX CARDS

C H O O S I N G



C H O O S I N G



**With awareness,
I can choose my actions and behavior.**

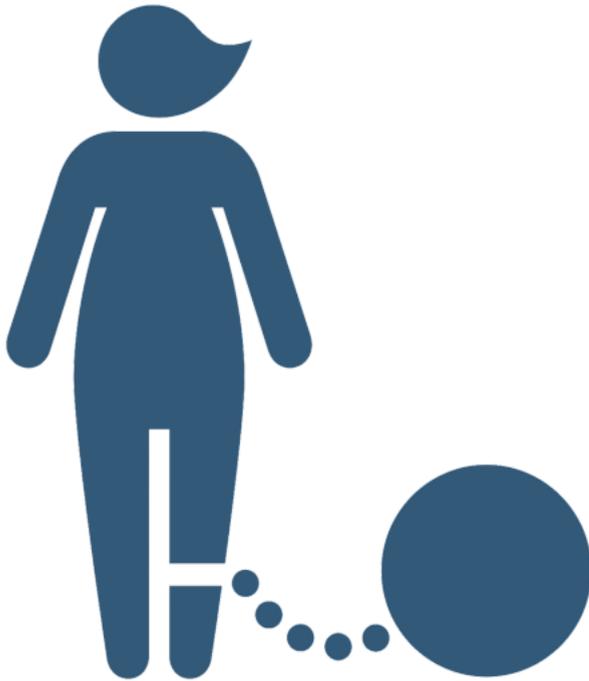
What behavior did I choose this week?

**What behavior did I do this week
while feeling I had no choice?**

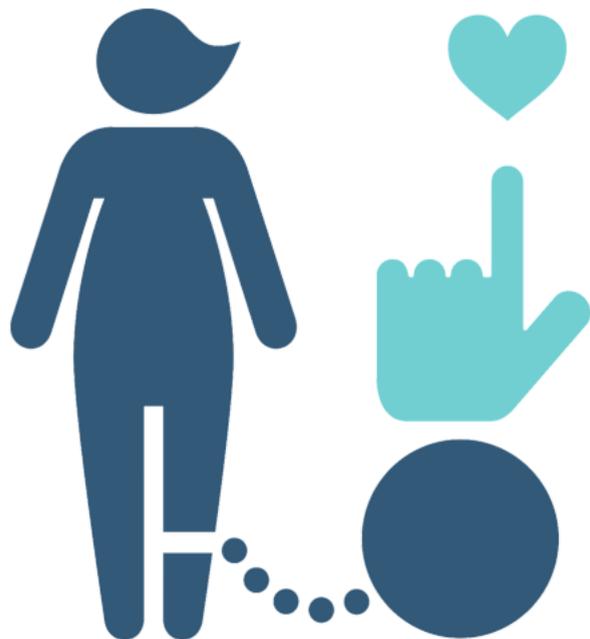
**If I could choose to do
one behavior this week, what would it be?**

What does choosing my life mean to me?

HAVE TO OR CHOOSE TO?



HAVE TO OR CHOOSE TO?



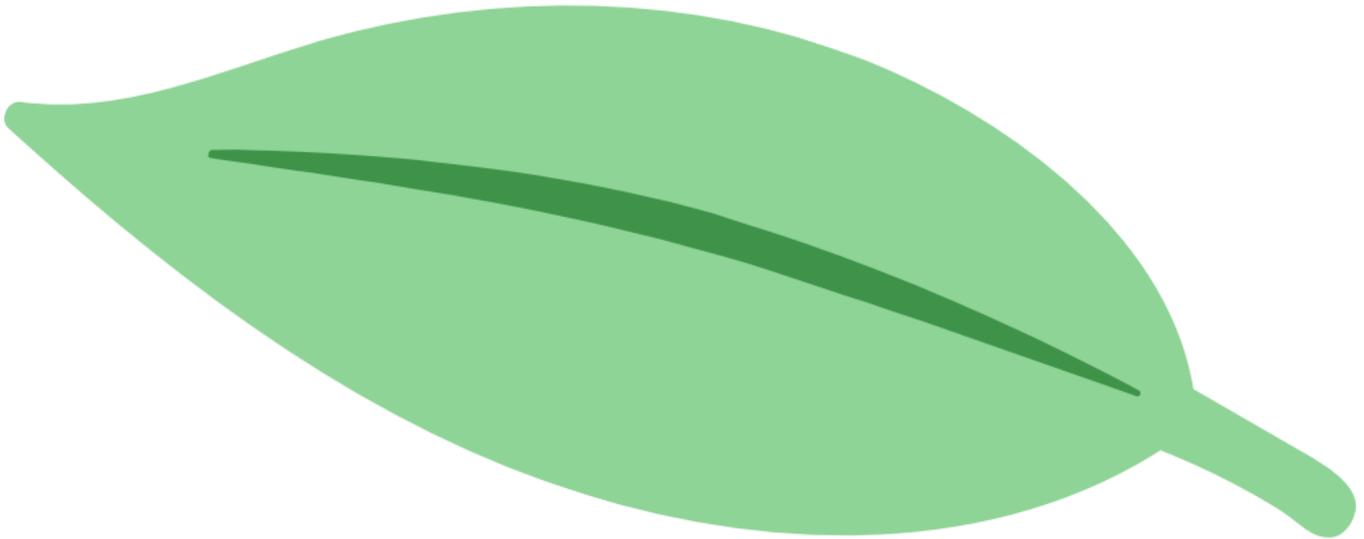
Do I do Toward Moves because I 'have to' or because I choose to?

When does my mind make me believe that I 'have to' do Toward Moves?

If I could choose, would I choose to do my Toward Moves because I 'have to' or because I choose to?

A Toward Move I could choose to do this coming week.

GROWING MY LIFE



GROWING MY LIFE

When I do an action while embodying the qualities that are important to me, I grow the life I want.

What action did I do this week to grow the life I want?

Who or what is important to me behind this action?

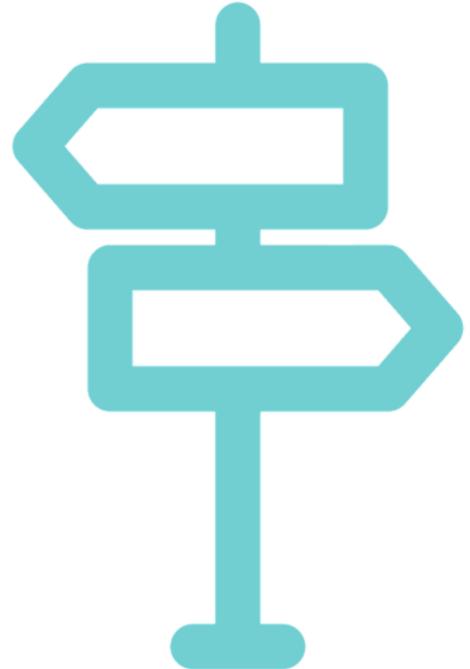
What qualities did I embody when doing this action?

How does this action grow the life I want?

An action I saw someone do this week to grow the life they want.



GOALS & DIRECTIONS



GOALS & DIRECTIONS

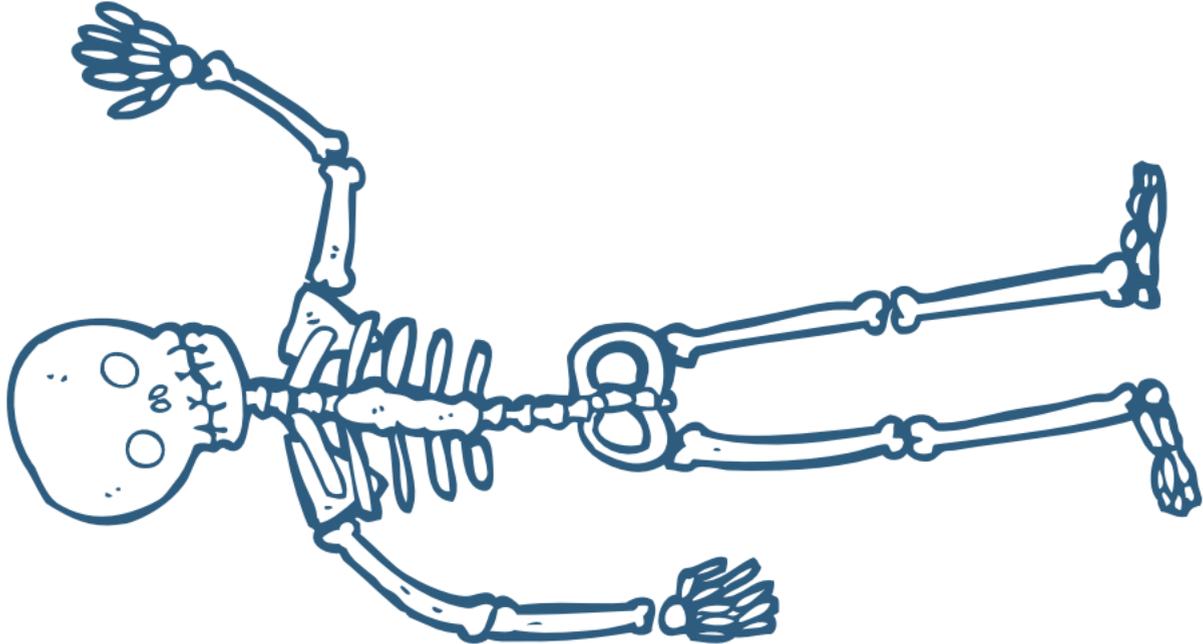


**If I only set goals, I run two big risks:
not reaching them, and reaching them.**

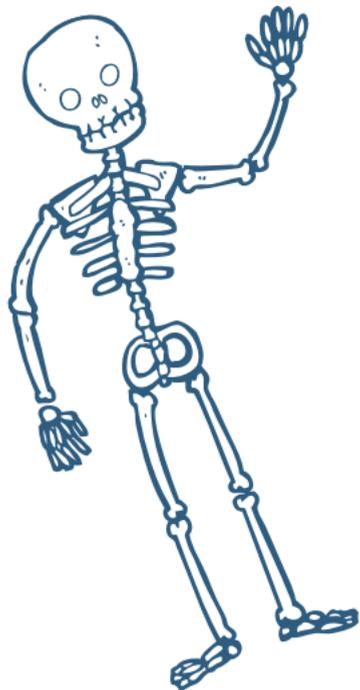
**If I set directions, such as being loving,
present, persistent or supportive, I can never
totally reach them, only move toward them.**

**Can I set goals as steps in directions that are bigger
than my goals and that can last whether I reach them or not?**

DEAD PERSON'S GOALS



DEAD PERSONS' GOALS



If I listen to my mind, it will naturally steer me toward dead persons' goals. 'Not thinking x,' 'not feeling y,' 'not doing z,' are dead persons' goals.

If a dead person could do it more easily than me, it can't be a life goal.

On the other hand, dead people can't do anything, so doing things is a life goal.

MATRIX CARDS

VALUED LIVING



VALUED LIVING



As my actions move me toward who or what is important, I engage in valued living.

What valued living did I do this week?

Do I know anyone who does valued living?

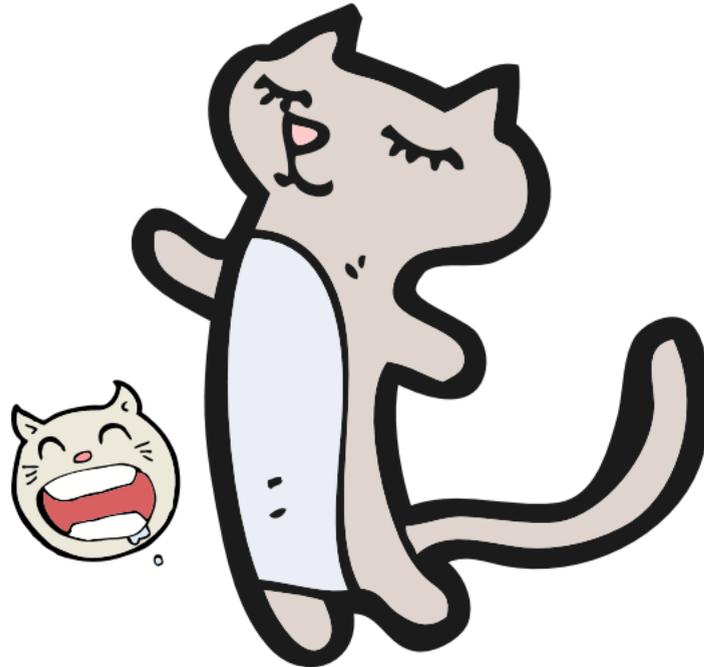
What are this person's main qualities?

What would these qualities look like in my life?

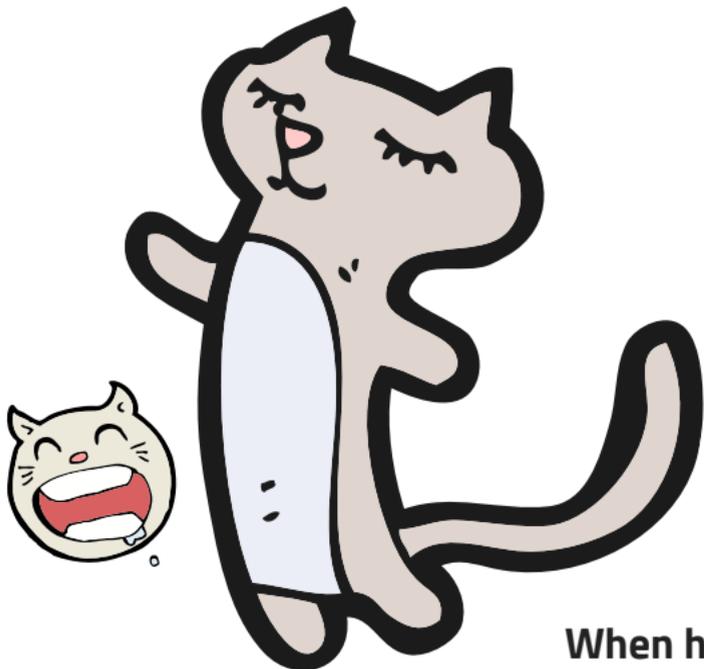
What could I do this coming week that would have these qualities?

MATRIX CARDS

M O T H E R C A T



M O T H E R C A T



If I could see my pain or self-criticism as an inner kitten in distress, what would this kitten need from its mother cat?

How do I treat my inner kittens when they're in distress?

How would the mother cat I want to be treat these kittens?

When have I been a mother cat this week?

TIN CAN MONSTER



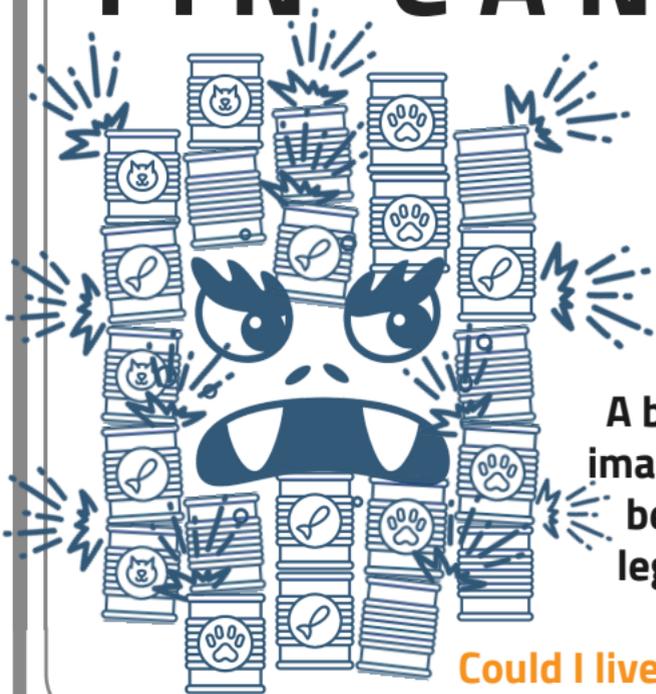
TIN CAN MONSTER

From a distance, my anxiety makes the most terrifying racket.

From up close, it could turn out to be made up of a bunch of tin cans that rattle noisily against one another.

A bodily sensation here, a thought there, an image, a doomsday scenario, a tension in my belly, sweat on my brows, weakness in my legs... What is my tin can monster made of?

Could I live with any of these cans taken separately?



MATRIX CARDS

A

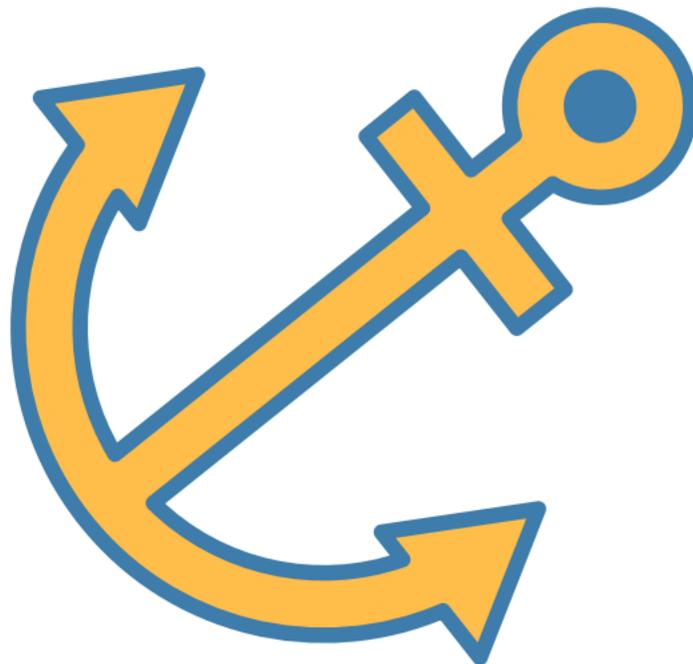
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A N C H O R

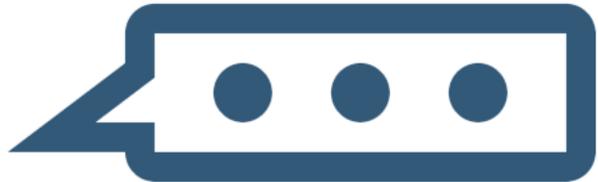
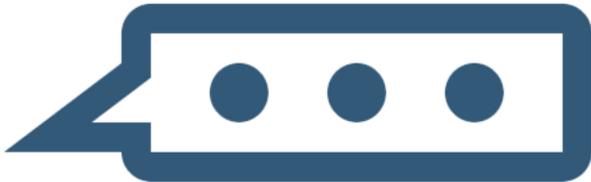
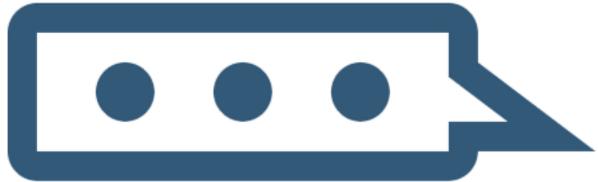
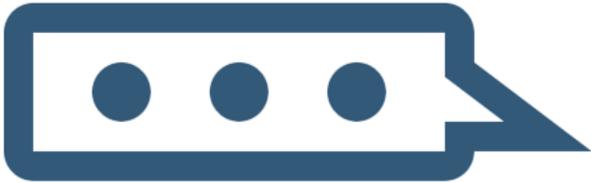
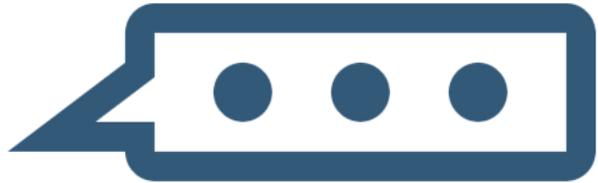
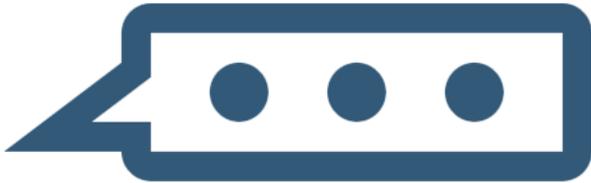


**When in a big storm, dropping anchor
can help me wait for calmer weather.**

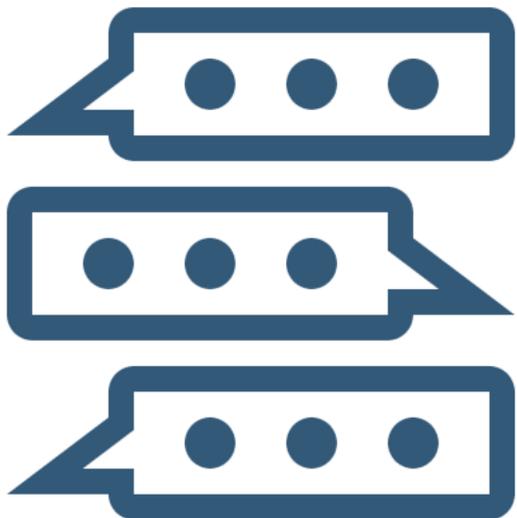
**My breath is always there, I can always
anchor myself to it, just by noticing it.**

**If things get overwhelming,
I can count five seconds on the inhale,
and five seconds on the exhale.**

TEXTING MY FUTURE SELF



TEXTING MY FUTURE SELF



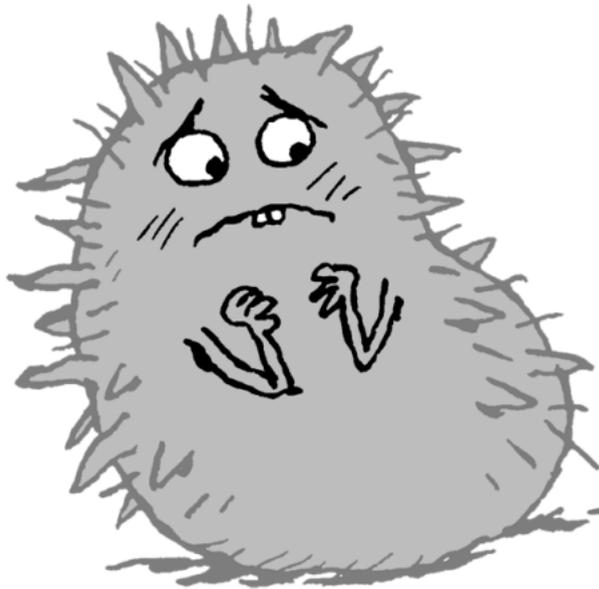
A near future situation in which I anticipate getting stuck in an away move.

If I could text my future self, what would I write?

How would my future self receive that text message?

Could my future self use a text message that simply said: 'I know it's hard and I'm going to be there for you?'

S P I K Y & F L E X I



S P I K Y & F L E X I



**When I move away and get stuck,
I become stiff inside and spiky outside.**

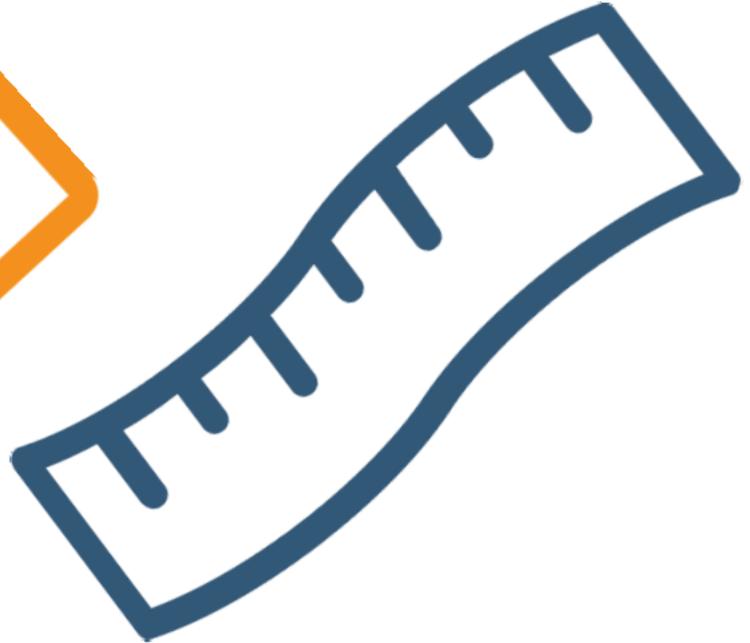
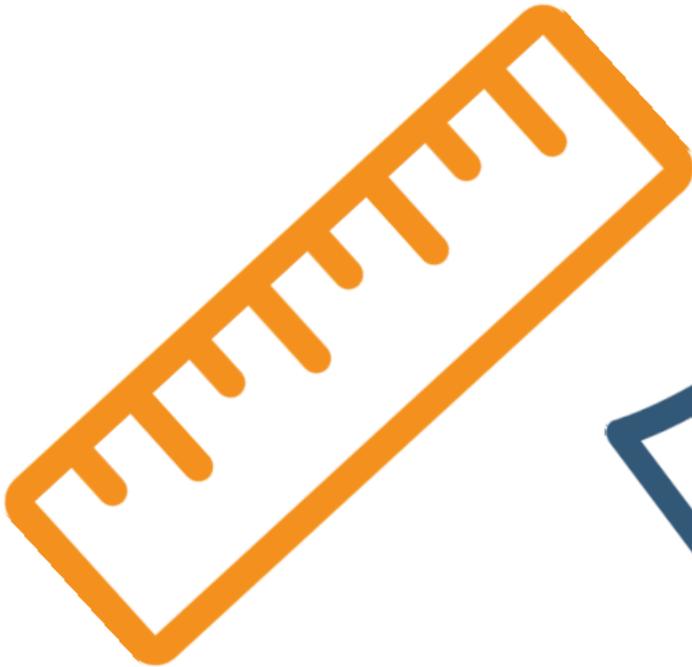
**When I make room for what shows up and
move toward who or what matters, spiky stuff and
spiky people tend to bounce off me more easily.**



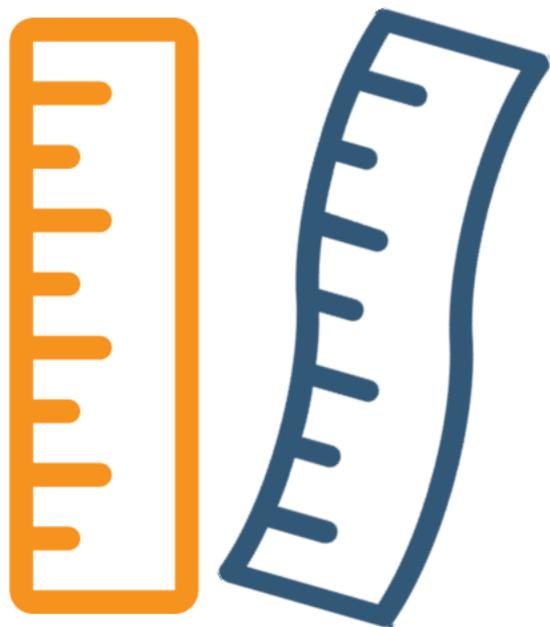
**Can I notice times this week when I was more
like Spiky and times when I was more like Flexi?**

Can I notice the difference in how that felt?

FLEXIBLE vs. RIGID RULES



FLEXIBLE vs. RIGID RULES



Our minds produce rules that are useful for controlling the world outside the skin.

Inside the skin, flexible rules tend to work better than rigid ones.

Can I notice when my mind produces rigid inner rules?

Can I notice a difference between flexible and rigid inner rules?

T H E D I C T A T O R



T H E D I C T A T O R

My mind behaves like a dictator.

**It tells me what I must do,
what I can't do, and claims it's always right.**



What if I disobeyed my mind?

**I can learn to disobey by
bringing to mind the thought
'I can't raise my arm,' and then raising it!**

What can the dictator do to stop me?

RADIO BAD NEWS



RADIO BAD NEWS



It can feel as if
my mind is permanently tuned
in to Radio Bad News.

In spite of all my efforts,
I can't tune out.

Do I have to listen, cover my
ears, or argue with Radio Bad News?

If I just did what I chose to do,
would Radio Bad News control my life?

SATNAV OF THE MIND



SATNAV OF THE MIND

**My mind is like a SatNav GPS system.
A piece of high-tech that can help navigate life.**



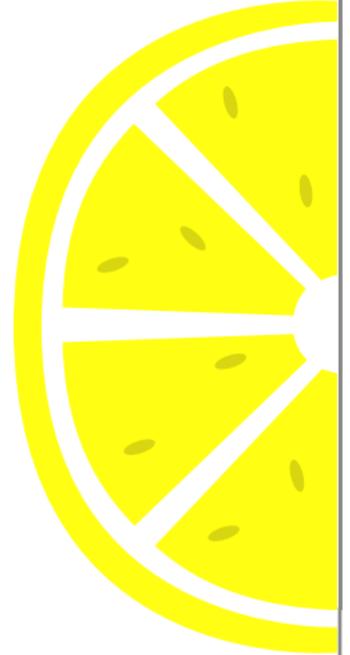
**To drive to where I want to get to,
I need to look at the road through
the windscreen of my experience,
not just at the screen of my mental SatNav.**

**If my mind is my mental SatNav,
who is the driver?**

**Who chooses my life directions,
me or my mental SatNav?**

MATRIX CARDS

LEMON LEMON



LEMON LEMON

Words and thoughts can push me around.

One word or thought that has pushed me around this week.

Can I repeat it aloud for thirty seconds?

Can I notice what happens to the feelings that come with that word or thought when I repeat it aloud for thirty seconds?

What could I do when this word or thought next tries to push me around?



MONSTER TUG-OF-WAR



MONSTER TUG-OF-WAR

Fighting my anxiety, fear, or anger is like playing tug-of-war with a monster above a bottomless hole: the more I pull, the more the monster pulls me toward the hole.



Do I sense my whole body tense up?

How long am I willing to keep struggling?

I can't win, so what if I dropped the rope?

How would the monster try to get me back into this tug-of-war?

THE QUESTION WHY?



THE QUESTION WHY?

We ask kids why they do things when they misbehave.

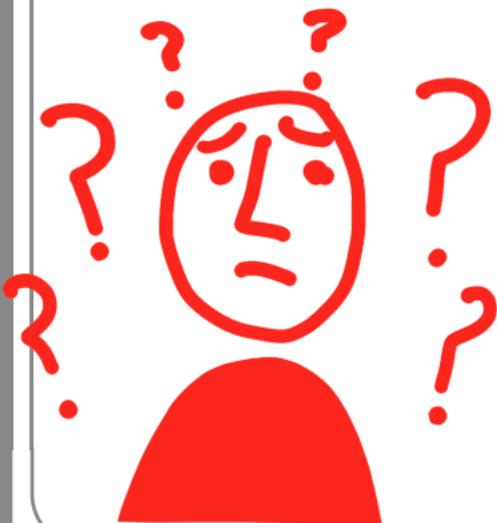
A 'good' answer lets them avoid blame.

When does my mind ask me why I do things?

Does it ever let me avoid blame?

Or does it label me as 'Bad' or 'Defective'?

Do I have to join my mind into the loaded game of asking the question 'Why?'



MONSTERS ON THE BUS



MONSTERS ON THE BUS

Have you noticed how,
when you try to drive the bus of your life
toward who or what matters,
scary monsters come to the front of your bus?

What do your monsters say and do?

Do you fight them, obey them,
or gently acknowledge their
presence and drive on?

How could you receive your
monsters this coming week?



THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION?



THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION?



Minds are problem-solving organs.

When they see our thoughts and feelings as problems they can't solve, they go for the 'Ultimate Solution'.

When does my mind push me toward the 'Ultimate Solution'?

Does my mind need to be 'right' to the point where it would rather I was dead than be wrong?

Who would be made wrong if my life could work?