

ACT for Social Anxiety: An Evidence-based Group and Individual Approach

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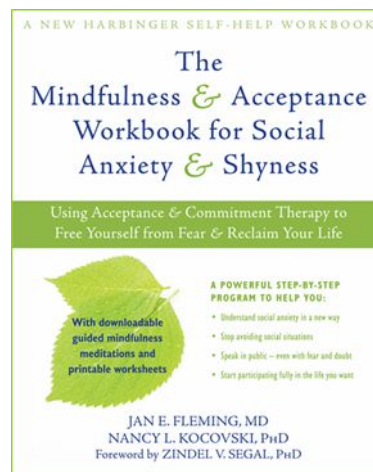


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Disclosure

Nancy Kocovski and Jan Fleming receive royalties from New Harbinger publications for *The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness*, (Fleming & Kocovski, 2013).



Workshop Outline

- Brief Intro to Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD)
 - Our Research on ACT for SAD
 - Other Evidence
- Ten-week protocol
 - Summary of the protocol
 - Practice Acceptance-based Exposure
 - Questions



Intro to Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD)



Social Interactions

- Conversations
- Meeting People



Being Observed

- Eating in front of others
- Walking down a busy street



Performing

- Giving a speech
- Playing an instrument

**Fear of
Negative
Evaluation**



Our Research on ACT for SAD

- Group: Mindfulness and Acceptance-based Group Therapy (MAGT)
 - Pilot study: Open Trial (Kocovski, Fleming, & Rector, 2009)
 - RCT: ACT vs tCBT
 - Outcomes (Kocovski et al., 2013)
 - Mechanisms (Kocovski et al., 2015)
 - Clinic study
- Individual Workbook RCT (Kocovski et al., submitted)
- Treatment Manual (Fleming & Kocovski, 2009, 2014, 2018)



Other Evidence for Mindfulness and Acceptance Approaches for SAD

- **ACT: Individual** (Craske et al., 2014; Dalrymple & Herbert, 2007)
- **ACT: Group** (Ossman et al., 2006; England et al., 2012)
- **ACT: Internet** (Ivanova et al., 2016; Gershkowitz et al., 2016)
- **MBSR** (Goldin & Gross, 2010; Goldin et al., 2016; Jazaieri et al., 2012; Koszycki et al., 2007)
- **MBCT** (Bögels et al., 2006; Piet et al., 2010)
- **Mindfulness/Self-Compassion** (Koszycki et al., 2016)



Reviews of ACT for Anxiety, SAD

- ACT for Anxiety (Bluett et al., 2014; Landy et al., 2015; Swain et al., 2013)
- ACT for Social Anxiety (Norton et al., 2015)

“Rigorous studies suggest that ACT is a viable alternative to established treatments, **specifically to tCBT for SAD** and mixed anxiety disorder samples, and to applied relaxation for GAD.”

(Landy et al., 2015, p. 73)



10-week MAGT Protocol

- Sessions 1-5
 - Learn and practice the basic skills
- Sessions 6-10
 - Apply the skills to social situations that matter
- Each Session has 4 parts

Opening
Mindfulness
Exercise



Homework
Review
(individual
or in pairs)



Theme-bas
ed
Concepts
and Skills



Set
Homework
(Reading,
Skills)



Group Protocol-1st half

Learning and Practicing the Skills

Week	Session Theme	Mindfulness Practice
1	Introduction to Safety Mode	Mindful Eating Compassionate mindfulness of the breath
2	Acceptance/Willingness	Observing Mountain
3	Values and Goals	Body Scan
4	Defusion	Mindfulness of Breath, Sound & Thoughts
5	More on Acceptance	Mindful Stretching



Session 1

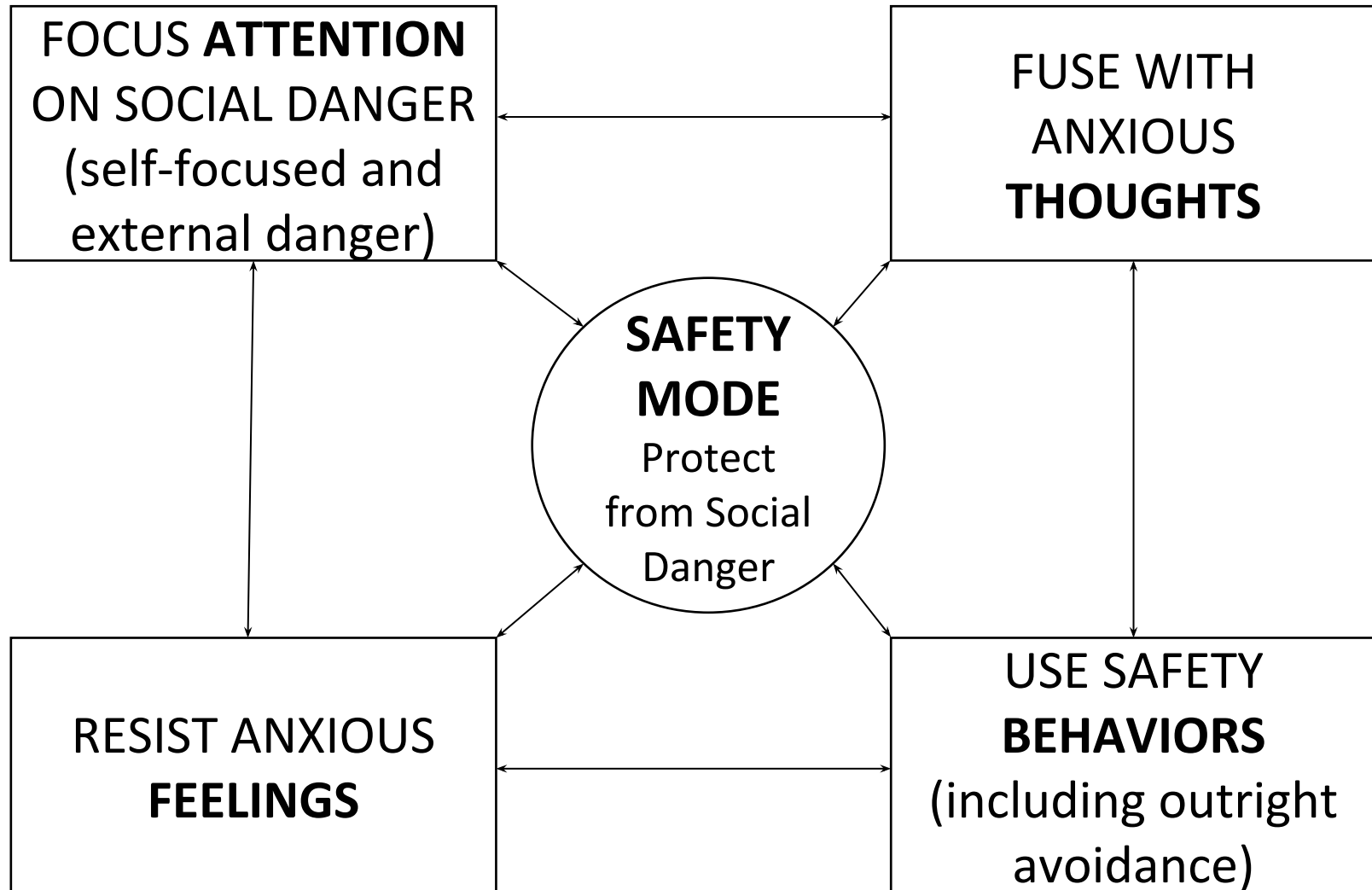
- Opening Remarks
- Introductions
- Overview of the Model: Safety and VITAL Action Modes
- Mindful Eating and Introduction to Self-Compassion
- Homework



Safety Mode



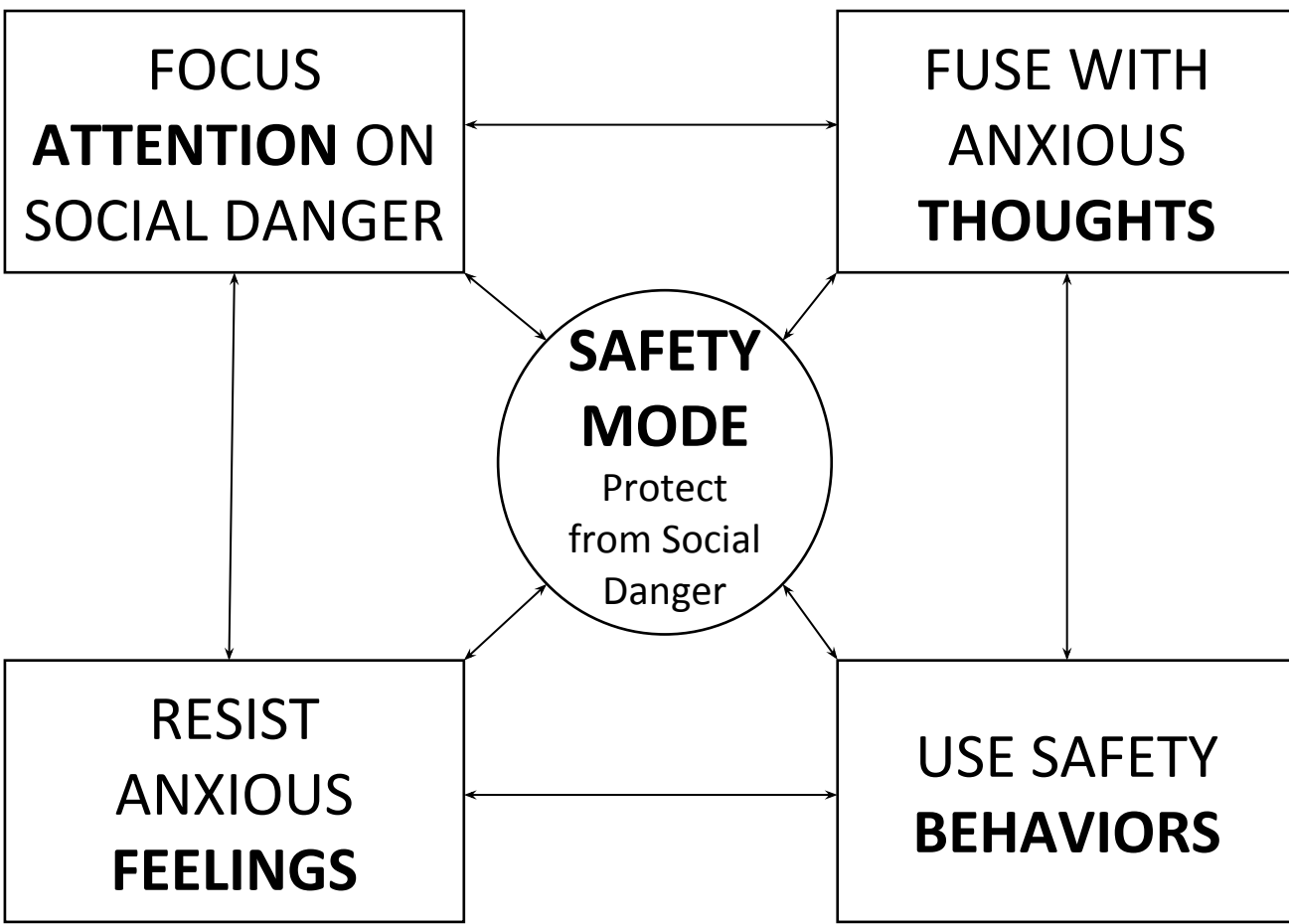
Session 1: 'Going to a Party' Exercise



Session 1: 'Going to a Party' Exercise

- Find a partner and work through safety mode for going to a party, for a client or yourself:

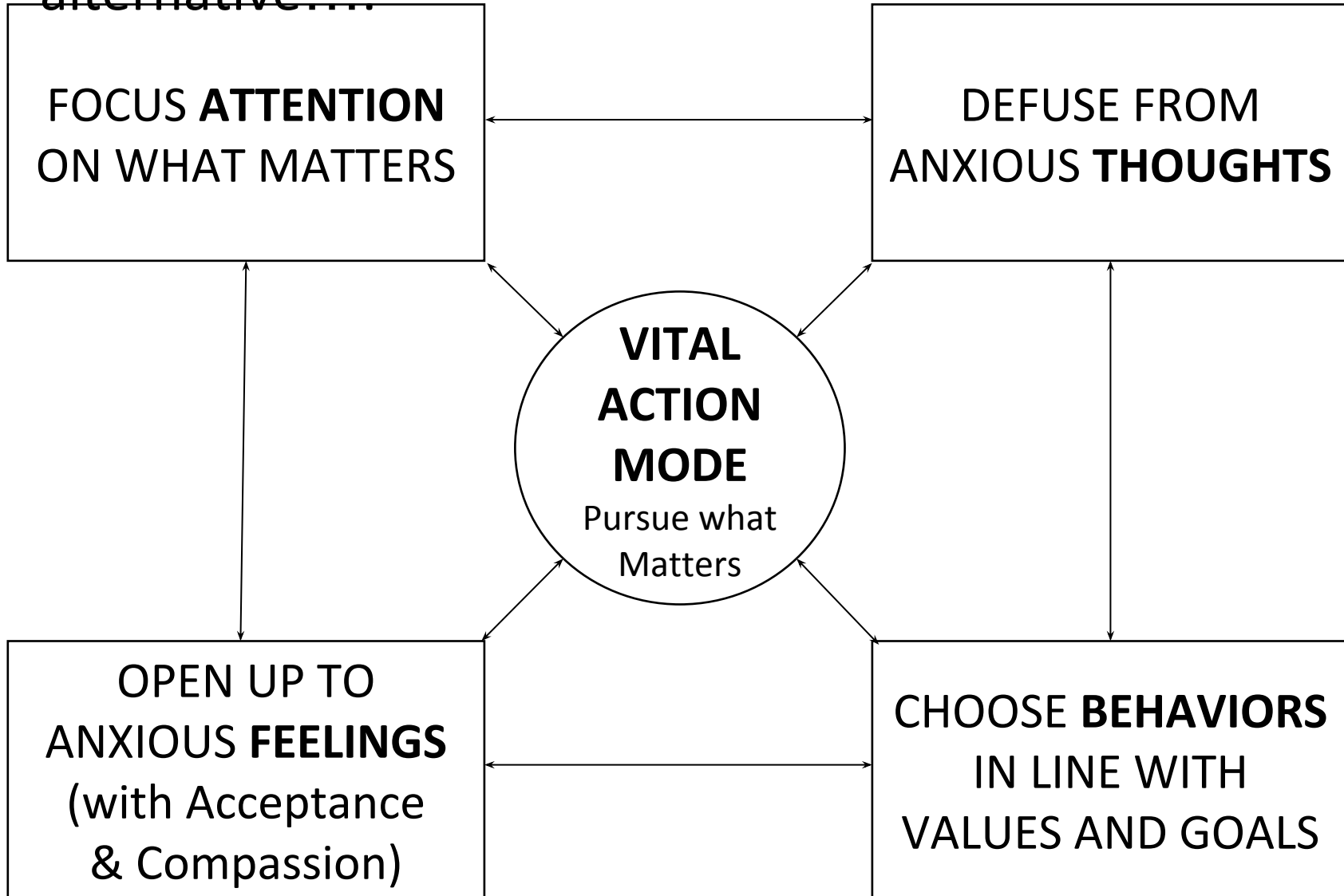
- What is the “social danger”?
- Which thoughts would show up and how would you relate to them?
- Which feelings would be experienced?
- Which safety behaviours would be used?
- How would they/you pay attention to yourself and others?



- What are the consequences of being in safety mode?



Session 1 brief intro to the alternative....



**SAFETY
Mode**

Pay
Attention to
Social Danger

Use Safety
Behaviors

Resist
Anxious
Feelings

Fuse with
Anxious
Thoughts

**VITAL
Action
Mode**

Pay
Attention to
What
Matters

Choose
Values-Based
Action

Open Up to
Anxious
Feelings

Defuse from
Anxious
Thoughts

Mindfulness/
Acceptance-b
ased Model –
Social Anxiety



Session 2

- Mindfulness Exercise – The Observing Mountain
- Homework Review
- Theme: Acceptance/Willingness
 - Niagara Falls Metaphor
 - Finger Traps
 - Tug of War with Anxiety Monster
 - Welcome Uncle Leo Metaphor
- Imagine your social anxiety is gone exercise
- Homework
 - Includes reading and exercises on values and goals



Session 3

- Mindfulness Exercise – Body Scan
 - Prong 1 of 3-pronged approach to strengthening Acceptance of Bodily Sensations (ABS)
- Homework Review
- Theme: Values and Goals
 - Values and Goals Worksheet
 - Choosing Goals Worksheet
- Homework



Choosing Goals Worksheet

Life Area

Goals (and underlying values)

Health

Work out on the treadmill at the gym
(Value: overall fitness)

Social
Relationships

Get to know neighbors/co-workers better
(Value: connect with others)

Leisure

Join a hiking group
(Value: explore nature with others)

Career

Find a new job
(Value: contribute to protecting environment)



Session 4

- Mindfulness Exercise – Mindfulness of breath, sound and thoughts
- Homework Review
- Theme: Defusion and Goal Stepping
 - Defusion
 - Illustrations
 - Anxiety Mind Volleyball
 - Defusion exercises: word repetition, singing thoughts, voice-changing app...
 - Goal Stepping Worksheet
- Homework



Anxiety Mind Volleyball

Anxious Thoughts

I don't have anything to say

I'm blushing

My opinion is stupid

I'm not good at small talk

My voice sounds shaky

How can I get off the phone?

Silences are so awkward

Everyone's looking at me



Safety Thoughts

Don't say anything

Hide your face

Keep it to yourself

Stay in the kitchen

Don't say anything

Make up an excuse

Don't pause, keep talking

Get out of there!



Sample Goal-Stepping Worksheet for a long-term goal

My goal is: *to find a new job*

Step 1: *Attend workshop on résumé writing held at my local employment center.*

Step 2: *Update résumé and show it to my parents for feedback.*

Step 3: *Show résumé to Maggie and Bill for feedback.*

Step 4: *Send résumé to four potential employers.*

Step 5: *Call Aunt Sylvia/Cousin Charlie, and share that my goal is to find a new job.*

Step 6: *Call former colleagues (Jennifer and Dave) to “network.”*

Step 7: *Call two potential employers about getting an interview.*

Step 8: *Practice interview in front of the mirror.*

Step 9: *Practice interview with my parents.*

Step 10: *Attend interview.*



Sample Goal-Stepping Worksheet for a short-term goal

My goal is: *talk to one person at least once a day*

Step 1: *Make comment to next-door neighbor about the weather.*

Step 2: *Ask clerk at grocery store how her day is going.*

Step 3: *Ask receptionist at the gym about spinning classes.*

Step 4: *Initiate conversation with Maggie at coffee break (5 min).*

Step 5: *Chat with co-worker in the lunchroom (10 min).*

Step 6: *Call Andrea after work (talk for 15 min).*



Session 5

- Mindfulness Exercise – Mindful Stretching
 - Prong 2 of strengthening ABS
- Homework Review
- Theme: More on Willingness
 - Breath Holding
 - Willingness Switch
 - Jumping Metaphor
 - Being with your Anxiety
 - Prong 3 of strengthening ABS
- Homework



Being with your Anxiety

- Pay mindful attention to your body as you purposely bring on bodily sensations of anxiety in order to practice “being with” these sensations with an attitude of willingness

How?

- Be a friendly scientist
 - Observe your experience with curiosity
- Use metaphors
 - Drop the rope
 - Lean in
 - Welcome Uncle Leo



Being with your Anxiety Exercises

Bodily Sensation

Suggested Actions

Dizziness or vertigo

Head lift; Hyperventilation;
Spin in a chair

Palpitations

Run on the spot; Step up and
down

Muscle tension

Hold a push-up position

Shortness of breath

Breathe through straw with nose
plugged; Hyperventilation

Sweating

Heavy clothing;
Warm space



Group Protocol-2nd half

Applying the skills to social situations that matter

Week	Session Theme	Mindfulness Practice
6	Taking Vital Action Being Observed	Mindful Seeing Cultivating Self-Compassion
7	Taking Vital Action Social interaction situations	Imagining Vital Action
8	Taking Vital Action Idiosyncratic Exercises	Taking a Self-Compassion Break-Preparation
9	Taking Vital Action Idiosyncratic Exercises	Taking a Self-Compassion Break
10	Taking Vital Action & Stepping Forward	Lovingkindness



Session 6

- Mindfulness Exercise – Mindful Seeing, Cultivating Self-Compassion, Guest House poem
- Homework Review
- Theme: VITAL
 - Taking VITAL Action Exercises: Being Observed
 - Taking VITAL Action Worksheet
 - Four-Part Plan
- Homework



VITAL

V – identify **V**alues and goals

I – remain **I**n the Present Moment

T – **T**ake notice of your experience
from your observer perspective

AL – **A**llow experience to be
exactly as it is



VITAL

V – identify **V**alues and goals

Values guide your actions and are never finished

Goals can be checked off and you can be done with them

I – remain **I**n the present moment

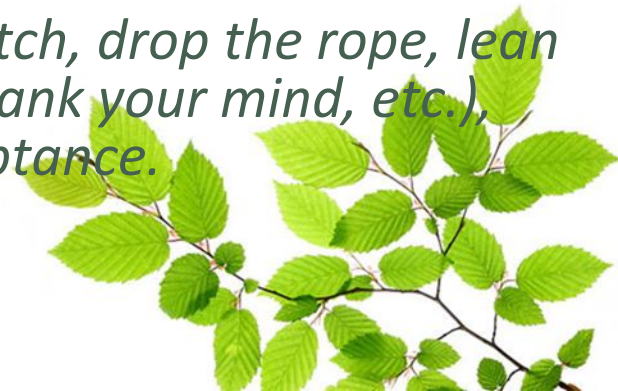
anchor your attention to the breath or the feeling of your feet touching the floor, then shift your focus to what really matters in the situation; revisit your anchor as needed

T – **T**ake notice of your experience

from your observer perspective (inner mountain or lake), noticing thoughts, feelings, and urges to use safety behaviors (including avoidance)

AL – **AL**low your experience to be exactly as it is

with the help of metaphors (flip on willingness switch, drop the rope, lean in to finger traps), defusion strategies (labeling, thank your mind, etc.), and an attitude of curiosity, compassion and acceptance.



Taking VITAL Action Exercise: Being Observed

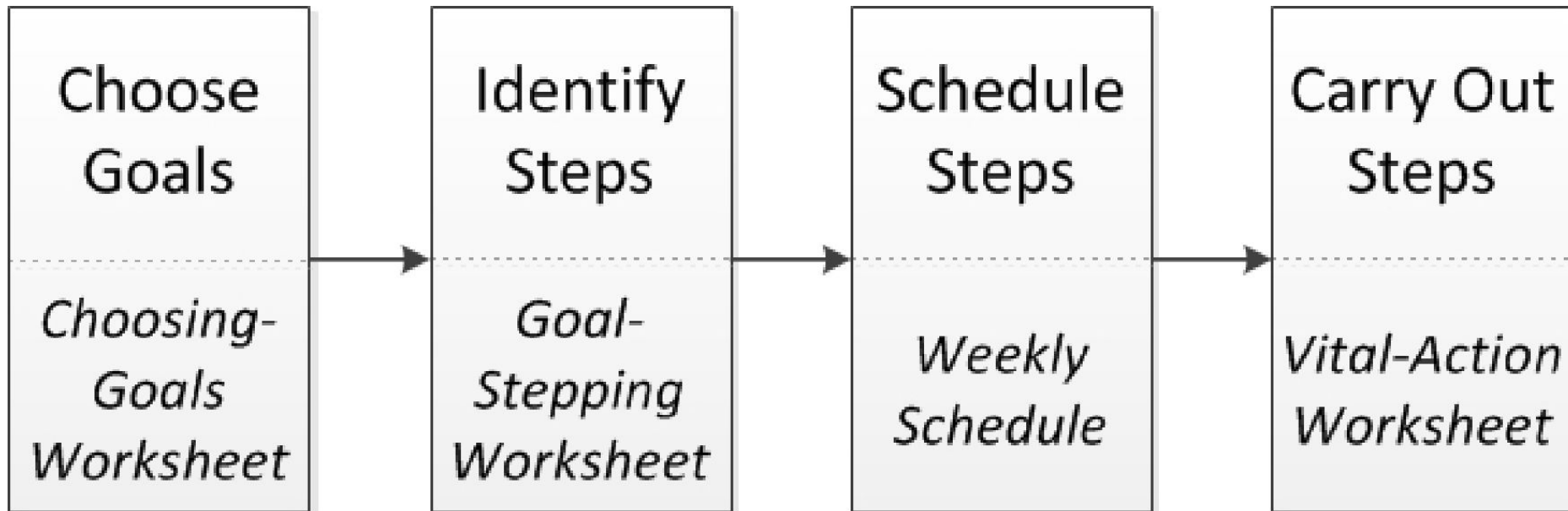
- Walking into a room
- Making eye contact
- Working in front of others
- Waiting in line
- Taking public transportation
- Walking in public
- Eating, drinking, or writing in front of others
- Dancing or exercising in front of others
- Serving food or drinks



Demonstration of VITAL Action Exercise – Walking into a crowded room



Four-Part Plan for Taking VITAL Action



Session 7

- Mindfulness Exercise – Imagining VITAL Action
- Homework Review
- Theme: Taking VITAL Action Exercises – Social Interactions
- Homework



Social Interaction Situations

- Engaging in small talk/get-to-know you conversations
- Beginning, maintaining, and ending conversations
- Sharing information about self
- Expressing an opinion or disagreement
- Asking for assistance
- Asking someone to change their behavior
- Asking someone on a date
- Speaking on the phone



The Dreaded Conversation!



Group Role Play

Planning **VITAL** Action exercise for a get-to-know you conversation.

V – Values and Goals

- What matters to you about a get-to-know you conversation?
- What is/are your specific goal(s) for this exercise?
- Any safety behaviors?



Valuing connection



Planning **VITAL** Action Exercise

I – remain In the Present Moment

- How will you remain in the present moment?
- Example: return to the breath or notice feet on floor as anchors, then return focus to what really matters in the situation



Planning **VITAL** Action Exercise

T,AL – Take Notice (from observer perspective) and Allow

- What will show up for your situation?
 - Which Feelings?
 - What Physical Sensations?
 - Thoughts?
 - Urges to use Safety Behaviors?
- How will you Allow it to be exactly as it is?
 - Any Defusion Strategies?
 - Metaphors?
 - Self-Compassion?



Eyes-Closed VITAL

Values and Goals

- Get in touch with what is important to you about having a conversation. What valued goal are you working toward?

Into the Present Moment

- Coming into the present moment and anchoring attention to the breath, following each inbreath and each outbreath. And when you are talking with your partner, shifting your focus to what really matters; revisiting your anchor as needed when your focus drifts from the present moment.

Take Notice

- Taking notice of your inner experience from your observer perspective (perhaps embodying your inner mountain or another observer image).
- Noticing physical sensations, such as sweating or blushing.
- Noticing emotions, such as fear.
- Noticing thoughts (*perhaps “I don’t have anything to say” or other thoughts*).
- Noticing urges to protect yourself with safety behaviors (*perhaps asking a lot of questions or being quiet*)

Allow

- Allowing your experience to be exactly as it is.
- Bringing a gentle curiosity, openness, and compassion to your thoughts and feelings.
- Leaning into the anxiety, as you leaned into the finger trap.
- Dropping the rope in your struggle with anxiety.
- Using defusion strategies (labeling, thanking your mind, and so on).
- Putting your willingness switch to “On”.



Debriefing VITAL Action Exercises

Willingness
Switch Stayed On

Repeat
Practice

Harder Step

Willingness
Switch Went Off

Easier Step

More Skills
Practice



Discussion of **VITAL** Action Exercises

- Comments about your Partner Experience?
- Questions?
- Barriers?
- VITAL Action in Individual Therapy
 - Role play with client
 - Enlist assistance from clinic staff
 - Accompany client outside the office
 - Enlist assistance from friends/family



VITAL-Action Worksheet – Social Interaction

-connecting with others

-initiate conversation with a parent at hockey

V: What are the values and goals underlying the action?

Value(s): _____ **Goal(s):** _____

-pay attention to my breathing; then focus on conversation—listen to what they're saying

I: How will you remain in the present moment?

T: What internal experiences are you likely to take notice of during the action? *and*

AL: What strategies can you use to allow your experience to be while taking action?

-anxiety, heart racing; lean in, allow it to be there

observer image: ~~I'm boring, they don't like me; stand behind waterfall~~ _____

feelings: _____ -urges=end it, plan what to say _____

thoughts: _____ -shift focus to talking/listening _____

urges to use safety behaviors: ~~-continue practicing defusion-ditch meaning~~ _____

Other preparation: _____



Session 8

- Mindfulness Exercise – Self-Compassion
Break Preparation
- Homework Review
- Theme: Taking VITAL Action Exercises –
Idiosyncratic
 - Being Observed
 - Social Interaction
 - Performing
- Homework



Performing in Front of Others

- Public speaking
- Introducing yourself to a group
- Speaking up at a meeting
- Asking a question in class
- Singing or dancing in front of people
- Playing a musical instrument
- Acting in a play, etc.
- Playing a sport
- Taking a test
- Being interviewed for a job



Session 9

- Mindfulness Exercise – Self-Compassion Break
- Homework Review
- Theme: Taking VITAL Action Exercises – Idiosyncratic
 - Being Observed
 - Social Interaction
 - Performing
- Homework



Session 10

- Mindfulness Exercise – Loving Kindness
 - Extending compassion to self and others
- Homework Review
 - including group members' progress over all sessions
- Theme: Stepping Forward
 - Resources
 - Remaining VITAL Action Exercises
- Feedback about group



QUESTIONS?



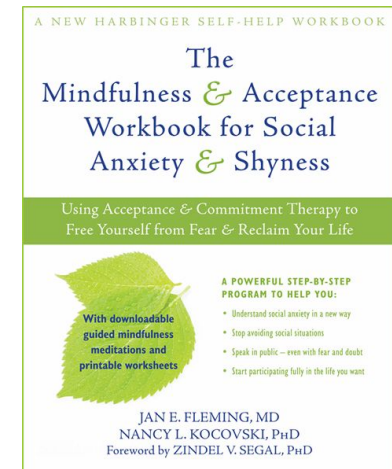
Thank you



- Please contact us with any questions
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- www.actonsocialanxiety.com
 - Treatment Manual available (under “For Professionals” tab)

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