

# Forms & Exercises Handouts



## The Nuts and Bolts of Exposure-Based Work in --- Acceptance & Commitment Therapy

ACBS 2018 Workshop  
*with John P. Forsyth PhD & Jamie Forsyth PhD*

[www.drjohnforsyth.com](http://www.drjohnforsyth.com)

Email: [john@drjohnforsyth.com](mailto:john@drjohnforsyth.com)



Jamie R. Forsyth & John P. Forsyth

We are a husband and wife team, and together co-lead ACT professional workshops in the United States and abroad. We also do our best to live out ACT in our relationship and our lives.

John also offers talks and keynotes to various groups and organizations, and provides ACT consultation and supervision via Skype.

For more information, or to book a talk or ACT training, please reach us at [contact@drjohnforsyth.com](mailto:contact@drjohnforsyth.com).



[www.drjohnforsyth.com](http://www.drjohnforsyth.com)



Jamie R. Forsyth & John P. Forsyth

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John P. Forsyth

- Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Anxiety  
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- Your Life on Purpose
- ACT for Anxiety – Professional Book
- ACT on Life Not on Anger
- Anxiety Happens: 52 Ways to Find Peace of Mind



Available on Amazon and Elsewhere

**Fear Ladder (Sample)**

**What is my goal?** Touch objects in public places (malls)

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1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10  
No Fear Moderate Fear Extreme Fear

<b>STEP</b>		<b>FEAR RATING</b>
13	<i>Use toilet at mall</i>	<b>10+/10</b>
12	<i>Use hands to open and close stall door</i>	<b>10/10</b>
11	<i>Touch counter and taps in mall bathroom</i>	<b>9/10</b>
10	<i>Touch knob on mall bathroom door</i>	<b>9/10</b>
9	<i>Touch garbage can in the mall</i>	<b>8/10</b>
8	<i>Use public phone at mall</i>	<b>8/10</b>
7	<i>Use hands to push open doors to mall entrance</i>	<b>7/10</b>
6	<i>Touch table in the food court</i>	<b>7/10</b>
5	<i>Sit on bench at mall and touch bench with hands</i>	<b>6/10</b>
4	<i>Touch railing at mall</i>	<b>6/10</b>
3	<i>Touch items in a store</i>	<b>5/10</b>
2	<i>Sit on bench at mall</i>	<b>4/10</b>
1	<i>Walk around public places, such as the mall</i>	<b>2/10</b>



## **The Sphere-a-Flex (Forsyth & Forsyth, 2015)**

If you know ACT, then you've heard of the hexaflex, the instaflex, and the triflex (among others). Now, we bring you the Sphere-a-Flex – a name coined by Jamie Forsyth to describe another way of looking at the ACT intervention model. We developed this model for practical purposes. Within the traditional ACT intervention model, it is easy to lose sight of the context of the work and what we are working toward, namely a life lived in the service of valued actions.

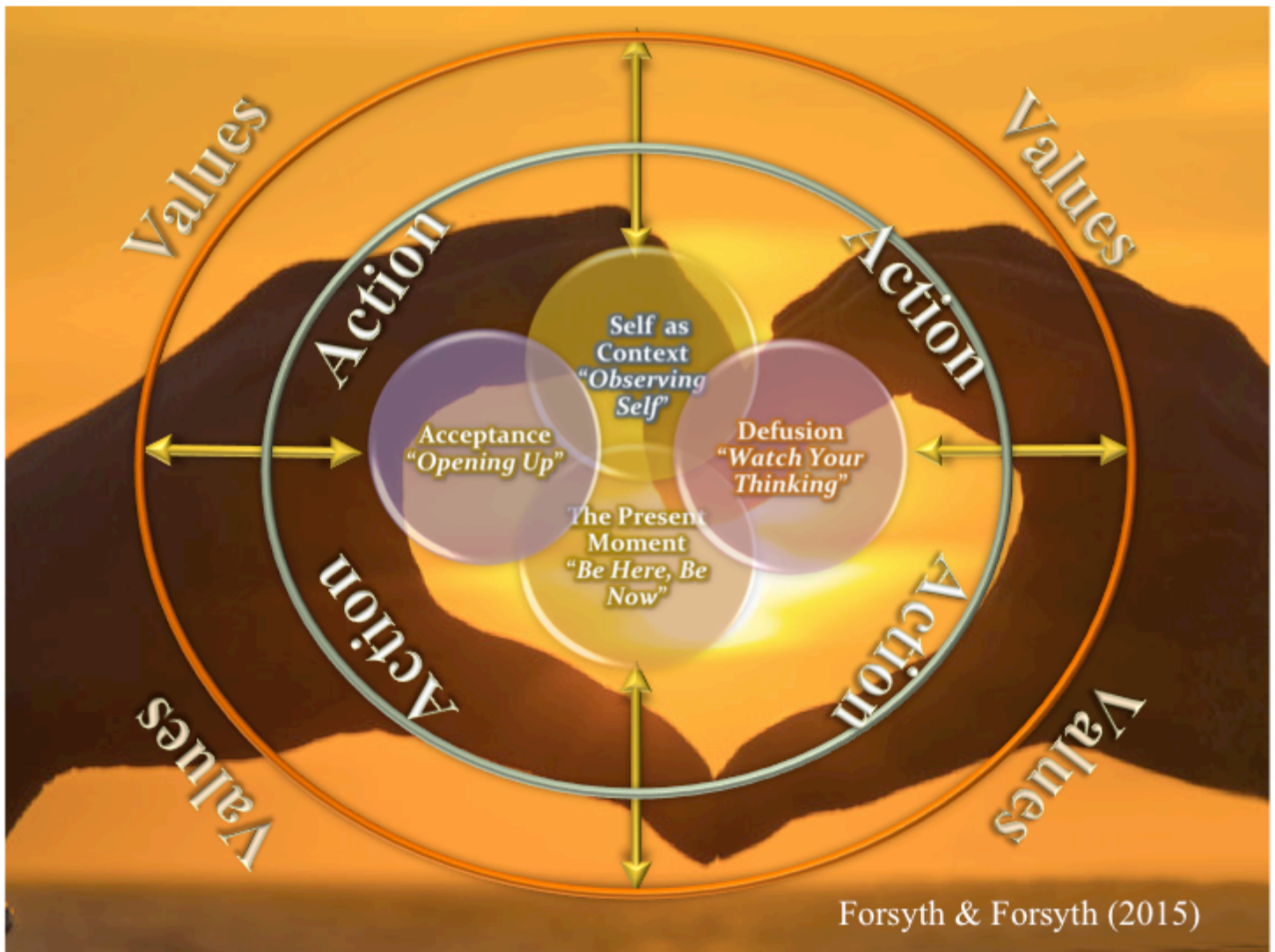
The Sphere-a-Flex retains all processes familiar to the ACT intervention approach. What is new is that it contextualizes the middle processes in the context of the two outer ACTION processes (values action in the service of valued directions). Thus, valued action is the context of the work and what we are working toward.

To simplify things, the center most processes are in place to create the flexibility and space needed to take steps (Actions) in the service of Values. Thus, we do acceptance, defusion, self-as-content, and present moment work not as ends in themselves, but in the service of living ones values. This is a key point that distinguishes ACT from other mindfulness-based approaches.

Thus, when doing work within the center, or nucleus, we are always coming back to purpose – namely, living life consistent with what matters to the person. This point is easily lost when viewing the more traditional ACT models, where values and valued action are set as distinct processes, giving the illusion that they are just part of the work. The Sphere-a-Flex makes values the core context of the work. The central processes then become the path to create the conditions that allows one to move to obstacles, problems, and pain (or difficult psychological and emotional content) and do what matters.

Doing what matters, in turn, loops back to reinforce and strengthen the central processes. In a way, this model can be thought of as an organic, living cell. Within the central nucleus, we have four core processes. These processes often need to be nurtured to alleviate needless suffering and to cultivate the conditions for psychological health and wellness. This work, in turn, creates the flexibility needed to allow life to expand in infinite chosen ways when difficult content shows up.

Permeating the Sphere-a-flex is quality of self-kindness, self-compassion, and dare we say self-love. Thus, the fluid for this work are qualities of kind allowing, gentleness, and friendliness with ourselves, our hurts, and what we hold dear. Nurturing the central processes are in themselves acts of self-kindness. Taking actions that support what one truly cares about are equally acts of self-kindness and love. In fact, two of the kindest things we can do for ourselves is to (a) stop struggling with painful aspects of our history and (b) engage in actions that we deeply care about.



### **The Sphere-a-Flex (Forsyth & Forsyth, 2015)**

1. Values are the Context for ALL the work
2. Processes in the middle serve the outer rings
  - a. This is what distinguishes ACT from other mindfulness-based interventions
3. ACTION with the other rings nurtures processes in the middle
4. Dance around the middle in the service of the outer rings
5. Use flexibly as a guide to your clinical work



## **EXERCISE: The Masks I Wear**

*(What I Allow Others to See)*



## **EXERCISE: The Masks I Wear**

*(What I Keep Hidden Inside)*



## The Common Core Values Guide

*Listed here are common values people find important to them. This list is by no means exhaustive, so feel free to add your own values. This list is a guide to help you identify and clarify what is truly important to you.*

Empathy	Quiet	Kindness	Risk	Appreciation
Parenting	Admiration	Surrender	Action	Excellence
Inspiration	Beauty	Peace	Control	Challenge
Belief	Nurture	Hope	Gratitude	Self-Expression
Sacredness	Calm	Change	Learning	Accomplishment
Nature	Community	Fairness	Partnership	Faithfulness
Adventure	Contribution	Truth	Pleasure	Security
Service	Happiness	Power	Serenity	Enlightenment
Play	Relationship	Inner Strength	Invention	Encouragement
Fun	Equanimity	Reliability	Honor	Work
Order	Connection	Structure	Strength	Intellect
Spirituality	Passion	Self-Respect	Imagination	Planning
Humor	Patience	Friendship	Joy	Honesty
Wholeness	Persuasion	Intuition	Rules	Dignity
Family	Love	Home	Leadership	Dependability
Consistency	Grace	Mastery	Laughter	Integrity
Support	Winning	Growth	Creativity	Loyalty
Health	Tradition	Compassion	Sexuality	Respect
Safety	Attention	Spontaneity	Courage	Understanding
Pride	Rituals	Wealth	Sensuality	Justice
Trust	Discovery	Vitality	Feelings	Self-Control
Freedom	Kindness	Independence	Openness	Curiosity

*Use the spaces below to add your own words:*


In our previous exercises, we have used the breath as the focus of attention. When your mind wandered off and started focusing on thoughts, worries, images, or feelings, you were asked to notice these thoughts and feelings and then gently redirect attention back to your breath.

In this exercise, we're simply building on the skills you've been learning. What's new is the expanded focus of the practice. Here, you'll be actively and openly inviting into your awareness bodily sensations and unwanted thoughts, worries, and images so that you may learn to approach them in a more accepting and compassionate way. Just like the finger trap and tug-of-war exercises, this exercise encourages you to lean into anxiety rather than fight it. This will create space for you to feel your emotions and think your thoughts as they are, not as your mind tells you they are.

You'll practice opening up to uncomfortable feelings and thoughts rather than rushing to fix or change them. As you do that, you're dropping the rope and willingly making space for WAFs when they're present—because they're present anyway. And with that, you'll get more space to do the things with your life that you may have put on hold for a long time. Are you willing to do an exercise to help you do that?

If you are willing, we suggest you select a quiet place where you feel comfortable and distraction is limited. Let's call this your kind space, your peaceful place. Go through the exercise slowly and pause after each section. It will take about fifteen minutes.

The easiest way to do this exercise is by listening to the recording (the male- or female-voice version) on the CD that comes with this book. After practicing with the CD for a week or two, you may prefer to practice at your own pace without the CD. If you'd like, you can occasionally go back and do the exercise while listening to the recording again.



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## EXERCISE: ACCEPTANCE OF ANXIETY



Go ahead and get in a comfortable position in your chair. Sit upright with your feet flat on the floor, your arms and legs uncrossed, and your hands resting in your lap (palms up or down). Allow your eyes to close gently.

Take a few moments to get in touch with the physical sensations in your body, especially the sensations of touch or pressure where your body makes contact with the chair or floor. Notice the gentle rising and falling of your breath in your chest and belly. There's no need to control your breathing in any way—simply let the breath breathe itself. As best you can, also bring this attitude of kind allowing and gentleness to the rest of your experience. There's nothing to be fixed. Simply allow your experience to be your experience, without needing it to be other than what it is.

It's natural for your mind to wander away to thoughts, worries, images, bodily sensations, or feelings. Notice these thoughts and feelings, acknowledge their presence, and stay with them. There's no need to think of something else, make them go away, or resolve anything. As best you can, allow them to be . . . giving yourself space to have whatever you have . . . bringing a quality of kindness and compassion to your experience.

Allow yourself to be present to what you are afraid of. Notice any doubts, reservations, fears, and worries. Just notice them and acknowledge their presence, and don't work on them. As you do that, allow yourself to be present with your values and commitments. Ask yourself, "Why am I here?" "Where do I want to go?" "What do I want to do?"

When you're ready, gently shift your attention to a thought or situation that has been difficult for you. It could be a troubling thought, worry, image, or intense bodily sensation. Gently, directly, and firmly shift your attention on and into the discomfort, no matter how bad it seems. Notice any strong feelings that may arise in your body, allowing them to be as they are rather than what your mind tells you they are. Simply hold them in awareness. Stay with your discomfort and breathe with it. See if you can gently open up to it and make space for it, accepting and allowing it to be while bringing compassionate and focused attention to the discomfort.

If you notice yourself tensing up and resisting, pushing away from the experience, just acknowledge that and see if you can make some space for whatever you're experiencing. Must this feeling or thought be your enemy? Or can you have it, notice it, own it, and let it be? Can you make room for the discomfort, for the tension, for the anxiety? What does it really feel like—moment to moment—to have it all? Is this something you *must* struggle with, or can you invite the discomfort in, saying to yourself, "Let me have it; let me feel what there is to be felt because it is my experience right now"?

If the sensations or discomfort grow stronger, acknowledge that, stay with them, breathing with them, and accepting them. Is this discomfort something you *must not* have, you *cannot* have? Can you open up a space for the discomfort in your heart? Is there room inside you to feel that, with compassion and kindness toward yourself and your experience?

As you open up and embrace your experience, you may notice thoughts coming along with the physical sensations, and you may see thoughts about your thoughts. When that happens, invite them in too . . . softening and opening to them as you become aware of them. You may also notice your mind coming up with judgmental labels such as "dangerous" or "getting worse." If that happens, you can simply thank your mind for the label and return to the present experience as it is, not as your mind says it is, noticing thoughts as thoughts, physical sensations as physical sensations, feelings as feelings—nothing more, nothing less.

Stay with your discomfort for as long as it pulls on your attention. If and when you sense that the anxiety and other discomfort are no longer pulling for your attention, let them go.

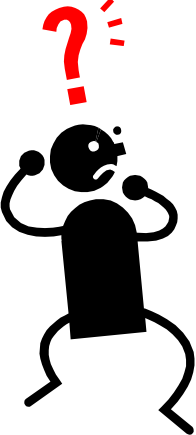
As this time for practice comes to a close, gradually widen your attention to take in the sounds around you. Take a moment to make the intention to bring this sense of gentle allowing and self-acceptance into the present moment and the rest of your day. Then, slowly open your eyes.

This exercise can be challenging. This is the first time you're deliberately welcoming in your WAF experiences and practicing a new response to them. Don't let that challenge (a judgment) stand in the way of you doing the exercise again this week and in the weeks to come. It'll get easier over time.

Remember that mindful acceptance is a skill. Like a seedling, it needs to be cultivated in order to grow. It has many possible results, not just one. You may feel relaxed during or after the exercise, or you may not. You may feel tense and keyed up at some point, or you may not. You may experience sadness or regret, or you may not. These and other responses are just fine.

# MY BARRIERS

Important Value Area (From Values Worksheet: \_\_\_\_\_)

YOU	Barriers	VALUE INTENTIONS
		

# ACT Willingness FEAR Ladder

Valued Direction: \_\_\_\_\_

Willingness

Yes  No

FEAR

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Willingness

Yes  No

FEAR

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Willingness

Yes  No

FEAR

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Willingness

Yes  No

FEAR

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Willingness

Yes  No

FEAR

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Willingness

Yes  No

FEAR

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Willingness

Yes  No

FEAR

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

## Willingness with Physical Discomfort Exposure Exercises

Adapted from the ACT Online for OIF / OEF Veterans Study (Forsyth, Hickling, Kip)

The exercises below will help you practice being with, and moving with, physical barriers that block your path toward your values. The exercises build upon values work, willingness, and practice with mindfulness, defusion, and compassion. This foundational set is then expanded out to other sources of discomfort that show up in real-life situations.

Before going on, take a moment to center yourself and review your *Values* and *Barriers Worksheets*. Look for places where your struggle with unpleasant physical sensations has stood between you and what you want to do—your values.

We've found that people benefit most when they do all of the exercises that apply to the barriers that keep them stuck. Each provides you with skills to weaken the power of physical barriers and gives you a chance to practice developing willingness with bodily discomfort.

### 5 Steps for Developing Willingness with Bodily Sensations

All of the exercises below follow the steps outlined below. Keep these steps handy as you first do the exercises. Then commit them to memory. Remember to apply all of the skills you have been learning up to this point as you do each exercise. Here are the steps:

1. **Identify a physical sensation that is a barrier for you.** Review your *Values* and *Barriers Worksheets* for a physical sensation that blocks your valued path. Take a moment to connect with that value, *flip on your willingness switch*, and keep your value in mind as you do the exercises. Remember, you are doing this for a reason greater than just getting with your barrier. You're doing it for your life.
2. **Select an exercise to practice.** Each of the following exercises will bring up physical sensations in different ways. Select one that may bring up a physical sensation that has been difficult for you. Begin by picking one from the list of exercises below. After you have practiced, find a situation that tends to bring that sensation up for you and practice your new skills in your everyday life.
3. **Start, and stick with, the exercise.** Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed and do the exercise. After you start, stick with it just beyond the point that you first notice sensations of discomfort, which will usually show up within 30 to 60 seconds. Start small, and gradually work up to longer practice sessions with the exercises. Bring a sense of kind allowing and gentleness to your experience during this time.
4. **When finished, apply your mindfulness and self-kindness skills.** After you've noticed the sensations of physical discomfort, stop the exercise. Then, go ahead and sit comfortably and continue opening up and getting present with your experience for 1 to 2 minutes, just noticing your thoughts and sensations as they are. Use your mindfulness and other skills from this program during this time of rest and awareness.
5. **Reflect and repeat.** Take some time to gently reflect on what you learned. Were you willing, or did you experience high levels of unwillingness and struggle? If you struggled, repeat the exercise again more slowly, watching for sticky thoughts like "*This isn't working*" or "*I can't stand this sensation.*" Simply notice these thoughts from the observer perspective of your Wise Mind, and gently remind yourself "*I'm having the thought that ...*" Or simply label them all as "*thinking.*" Aim for two to three repetitions of an exercise per sitting when you start out, allowing yourself a mindful rest period between each repetition. When you are 100% willing to have your experience, move on to another one of the exercises. If you like, you can keep a journal of your reactions and notes as you practice.



## Physical Health Check

If you haven't done so already, check in with your doctor to see that you are physically able to do the exercises. Most involve mild-to-moderate physical activity. If you suffer from any of the following health conditions, we suggest that you not do the exercises until you've talked with your doctor.

- Asthma or lung problems
- A heart condition
- Pregnancy
- Epilepsy
- Physical injuries (neck, joint, back)
- History of fainting/low blood pressure

Should your doctor recommend against you doing one or more of these exercises, then you can still practice them by imagining doing what they say. Remember the goal is to practice being with discomfort in all its forms, whenever and in whatever form it may take.

## Willingness *With Dizziness*

Moving your head and body through space at a rate faster than your brain's balance system can keep up with will produce sensations of dizziness. Some people experience lightheadedness, a sense of imbalance or floating, and nausea while practicing. These are all expected reactions. It's fine if you need to sit down between practice sessions. Just watch that you don't go to sitting or lying flat on the floor as a way to avoid your sensations. If you remain in a standing or sitting position while dizzy, you'll notice that the sensations will pass without you having to do anything about them.

To start, find a space where you won't be disturbed or fall or hurt yourself during the practice. It is best to keep your eyes open as you practice mindful acceptance with sensations of dizziness, unsteadiness, or vertigo. Here are some suggested exercises:

- **Staring at a spot.** Position yourself 1 to 2 feet from a wall. Find a small spot on the wall and stare at it for 2 minutes. Try to resist blinking as much as you can. Then, turn away quickly and focus on something else in the distance.
- **Spinning.** Using a swivel chair, spin yourself around as quickly as you can by pushing off of the floor. You can then vary this by spinning while standing up, then while standing with your arms outstretched.
- **Head between legs.** Get in a sitting position. Place your head between your legs (at the knees) and hold it there for about 30 seconds. Then, sit upright quickly. Do this gently if you have a history of back problems. You can play with this exercise by repeating it from a standing position.
- **Shaking head.** From a standing position, move your head back and forth from side-to-side for at least 30 seconds, or until the sensations are first noticed. Do this in a way that is steady and not too vigorous. Then stop, and focus straight ahead.

## Willingness *With Breathlessness*

Feeling out of breath or short of breath is a common experience. These sensations happen naturally when our normal blood-gas balance gets out of sync, specifically the balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide. Your body is set up to restore this blood-gas balance without effort on your part, and the main way it does this is by getting you to breathe faster or more heavily than you normally would. Along with the sensations of breathlessness, you may also experience lightheadedness, dizziness, a sense of detachment from yourself, blurred vision, tingling, heart flutters and chest tightness, or numbness in areas of the body.

These experiences are normal. They happen as a consequence of what we do—many activities have the potential to bring them on, such doing yard work, working out, or playing with your children. You can willingly bring on these sensations with any of the exercises below.

- **Breath-holding.** Take a deep breath and hold it for as long as you can. Start by doing the exercise while sitting down with your eyes open. Later, vary it by doing it longer while sitting, and then standing with eyes open or closed.
- **Breathing through a small straw.** This is the exercise Kate did during Module 5. You can find straws at your local supermarket or restaurant. Breathe through the straw for at least 30 seconds while you pinch your nostrils closed with your free hand. Gradually lengthen the time you do the breathing from there. The important thing is to take it slow. When you can be with the discomfort without pulling back

from it, you are ready to challenge yourself in terms of length or new variations such as breathing through a straw with eyes closed or open, while standing or sitting, or while walking up and down stairs.

- **Over-breathing.** Breathing too quickly and deeply leads to hyperventilation. You can willingly bring it on yourself by taking rapid inhales and exhales at a pace of about 1 breath every 2 seconds. Start in a sitting position and take in a deep breath and then exhale fully, and repeat. Use a watch with a second hand and see if you can do it for at least 60 seconds at first, and then work your way up to 2 or 3 minutes.

## Willingness *With* General Arousal

Engaging in your life requires that you get out and move. All of the following aerobic exercises get you out and moving. And, all are good for you in more than one way. They'll buy you a renewed sense of freedom, increase your vitality, range of options, and more. Remember to keep your values in view as you move into your discomfort.

Rather than avoiding activities or exercise because of the possibility of physical discomfort, practice willingness by deliberately moving with physical arousal that must happen within your body as you get moving. There are many ways you can do that, and most have the added benefit of being good for your health. Here are a few:

- **Fast walking.** Walking engages your entire body and it's a great way to practice making space for bodily discomfort. Start walking indoors or outside, slowly, and work up to a fast, comfortable pace. Allow enough walking time so that you're able to notice and experience any bodily discomfort. It's best to do this exercise without other distractions (e.g., listening to music). When you can willingly be with your body while walking, you can then add the headphones.
- **Jogging in place.** After you're willing to be with your experience while walking fast, jogging can be an excellent next exercise. Begin by jogging in place, and when you feel that you have let go of the struggle with your sensations, begin taking short runs through your neighborhood, gradually increasing the time you spend jogging. Plan a route that circles back to your house so you won't find yourself too tired to make it back home when you are finished. Jogging will get your heart and respiratory system going.
- **Climbing steps.** Simply go up and down a few steps, over and over again, until you begin to notice bodily discomfort. You can then increase the number and duration of practice (e.g., 2 steps, 5 steps, 10 steps, a flight or several flights of stairs).
- **Other aerobic exercises.** The list of possible aerobic exercises is only limited by your imagination. For instance, you could do aerobic exercises while doing household chores like vacuuming, cleaning, mowing the lawn, raking the yard—anything that gets your body going. You can go swimming, hiking, bike riding, or shopping too. And even running errands or sexual activities are good forms of aerobic exercise.

## Pause and Reflect

Take a moment to reflect on your practice and your progress with the exercises we've covered. Are you making a conscious choice to turn on your willingness switch? Are you meeting the discomfort that you are producing in a new way – more as an observer, with kindness, gentleness, and compassion? Do you have your values and living well in focus? Take stock. There's no need to rush. And, it's ok if this doesn't come easy. Be kind and patient with yourself. These small moments will add up to something new in your life.



## FEEL\* Bodily Discomfort Worksheet

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Low			Moderate				Extreme			

	Sensation's Intensity (0-10)	Anxiety Level (0-10)	Willingness to Experience (yes/no)	Struggle with Experience (0-10)	Avoidance of Experience (0-10)
<b>Exercise</b>					
Staring at a Spot	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Spinning	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Head Between Legs	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Shaking Head	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Breath Holding	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Breathing Through Straw	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fast Breathing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fast Walking	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Jogging in Place	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Climbing Steps	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other Aerobic Exercises	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Staring at Self in Mirror	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

\* Feeling Experience Enriches Living



## FEEL\* Thought and Imagery Worksheet

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Low			Moderate				Extreme			

	Sensation's Intensity (0-10)	Anxiety Level (0-10)	Willingness to Experience (yes/no)	Struggle with Experience (0-10)	Avoidance of Experience (0-10)
<b>Exercise</b>					
Bubble Wand	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Kind Allowing with Images	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Thoughts and Urges Cards	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Stand Silently with Urges	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Leaves on a Stream	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

\* Feeling Experience Enriches Living

## **EXERCISE: Simple Centering**

Go ahead and get in a comfortable position in your chair. Sit upright with your feet flat on the floor, your arms and legs uncrossed, and your hands resting in your lap. [5 secs] Allow your eyes to close gently. [5 secs] Take a couple of gentle breaths—in ... and out ... in ... and out. [10 secs] Notice the sound and feel of your own breath as you breathe in ... and out ... [10 secs]

Now turn your attention to being just where you are. Notice any sounds that you may hear close to you and then farther away. [5 secs] Notice how you're sitting in your chair and feel the place where your body touches the chair. [5 secs] What are the sensations there? [5 secs] How does it feel to sit where you sit? [10 secs]

Next, notice the places where your body touches itself, and bring your awareness to the spot where your hands touch your lap or legs. [5 secs] And now, imagine your awareness pouring down over your hips to where your feet touch the floor. How do your feet feel in the position that they are in? [10 secs] Notice too that your feet are firmly grounded to the floor and earth beneath you. [10 secs]

Now gently expand your awareness and just notice sensations in the rest of your body. [5 secs] If you feel any sensations in your body, just notice them and acknowledge their presence. [5 secs] Also notice how they may, by themselves, change or shift from moment to moment. Do not try to change them. [10 secs]

Now let yourself come back to being just where you are, here with this workbook. See if you can feel the investment of yourself here, right now. What are you here for? [10 secs] If you're thinking this sounds strange, just notice that and come back to the sense of integrity here. Be aware of the value that you are serving by being here. [10 secs]

And, see if you can allow yourself to be present with what you are afraid of. Notice any doubts, reservations, fears, and worries. [5 secs] See if you can just notice them, acknowledge their presence, make some space for them, and allow them to be there. You don't need to make them go away or work on them. [10 secs] With each breath, imagine that you are creating more and more space for them, more space for you to be you, right here where you are. [5 secs] Now see if for just a moment you can be present with your values and commitments. Why are you here, working with this workbook? [5 secs] Where do you want to go? [5 secs] What do you want to do with your life? [10 secs]

Then, when you're ready, let go of those thoughts and gradually widen your attention to take in the sounds around you, and slowly open your eyes with the intention to bring this awareness to the present moment and the rest of the day.

## **EXERCISE: Embracing the “Bad,” Giving Away the “Good”**

Start by getting yourself comfortable in a place where you’ll be undisturbed for five to ten minutes. You may sit on the floor or in a chair. Sit upright with your palms up or down on your lap. [10 secs]

Now, close your eyes and gently guide your attention to the natural rhythm of your breath in your chest and belly. [10 secs] After a few moments, bring to mind something painful or hurtful, perhaps a recent event or a time in which you felt very anxious. [10 secs] Then, with your next inhale, visualize taking in that negativity and painful upset. Breathe in the discomfort with the thought in your mind that what you’re feeling in this very moment is being felt by millions of people all over this world. [10 secs] You’re not alone with this. [5 secs] This anxiety has been felt by countless numbers of people from the beginning of time. [10 secs]

Your intention here, for yourself and others, is for you and them to be free of the suffering, the struggle, blame, and shame that can happen with the pain that you and they experience. [5 secs] With that intention in mind, on each exhale, breathe out relief, joyfulness, and goodwill. Do it slowly with the natural rhythm of your breathing. [10 secs] Continue to connect with your pain as you breathe in, and with each out-breath, expend goodwill and a wish that others may find relief from the suffering they get caught in when they experience hurt and discomfort. [15 secs]

If you find breathing in anxiety gets too heavy or tight, you can imagine breathing into a vast space, or that your heart is an infinite space. Imagine breathing into your heart, making it bigger and bigger with every out-breath until there’s enough space for all the worries, anxieties, and concerns. [15 secs] With each out-breath, you’re opening up your whole being so you no longer have to push the WAFs away—you’re opening your heart to whatever arises. [15 secs]

If you find your mind wandering or you feel distracted, just kindly notice that and return your attention to the intention of welcoming in your pain and hurts, and releasing goodwill and kindness. [15 secs] Continue this practice of giving and receiving for as long as you wish. [15 secs]

Then, when you’re ready, gradually widen your attention and gently open your eyes with the intention of bringing this skill of kind observing to your experiences throughout the day.

## **EXERCISE: Riding the Storm Out**

Get comfortable in your chair and allow your eyes to close gently ... [5 secs] take a few moments to notice the natural rhythm of your breath as you breathe in ... and out. [10 secs]

As you settle, bring to mind a recent situation where you felt the strong urge to cut and run from your fear and anxiety. [10 secs] Take a few slow deep breaths and bring the situation alive in your mind as best you can ... where were you? ... who else was there? ... what happened ...? [5 secs] What did you experience then and what are you experiencing again right now? [10 secs]

As you bring the situation to mind, you may notice the storm of anxiety or fear rolling in. You can hear the thunder, or even feel the rumble of physical sensations. [10 secs] Notice any stormy physical changes in your body, including pain, pressure, or other scary sensation that is kicking up and blowing around. [5 secs] There may be lightning strikes of thoughts, perhaps about your sensations and feelings. What's your mind telling you about them? [5 secs] about the situation? [5 secs] about you? [10 secs]

Next, bring your attention to the physical experience of the urge to act. Notice the wild energy there, as the pounding rain tries to wash away your resolve and all that you care about [5 secs] Is there pressure, tightness, or tension? If so, where is it located? [5 secs] Does it have a shape? [5 secs] a color? [15 secs]

Now, choose to ride the storm out ... imagine opening up, arms wide open, and staying with the wild energy below the surface of your experience. [5 secs] If you can, go ahead and open your arms as wide as you know how. This time you're not doing what you've always done. [5 secs] Look deeply into your experience without trying to fix it, fight it, or suppress it, and without acting on it. [5 secs] Find the pain and hurt driving the storm to new heights ... gently look at it, breathe with it, and bring kindness to it ... ride it and let it be. [15 secs] Notice how the storm is trying to throw you off track and push you to act in unhelpful ways [5 secs] Just stay there, your arms still wide open, bringing kindness and curiosity to the energy and pain, as you would do for a dear friend or loved one who is in pain and needs your help. [15 secs]

See if you can notice as the storm front within you starts to move on. Notice as things begin to quiet down and become still. [10 secs] And, as you rest in that stillness, notice what is new or different for you ... [10 secs] See if you can connect with having done something good for yourself [5 secs] your life [5 secs] even if you were scared, feeling the strong urge to run or lash out. [10 secs]

As this time for practice comes to an end, acknowledge and honor the step you took with this exercise and commit to practice riding out your difficult urges in the service of your life. [10 secs] When you hear the bell, bring yourself back to the present and slowly open your eyes. [5 secs] Take a moment to reflect on what you've experienced and learned.

# Emotional Contact Exercise

A less Nefarious Way to Speak About Exposure

Adapted from the *ACT Online OIF / OEF Veterans Study* (Forsyth, Hickling, Kip)

## Script / Rationale:

When you make full contact with something you can touch it, look at it, and savor it just as it is. Basically, you're opening up and taking it all in. Like right now, you're watching me, listening. AND, right now, you're also in contact with many other things in your environment; maybe the computer, the lighting or temperature, a desk, the chair you're sitting in, or even your mood and how you're feeling physically. You already have plenty of practice contacting people and objects in your world. And you can learn to do the same with your emotional life.

Now, in a moment, we're going to walk you through an exercise to help you open up to emotional barriers that get in your way. Just like you saw with the finger trap and tug of war, this exercise will help you lean into difficult emotions. As you do that, you'll create space to do things with your life that have been put on hold for a long time.

Be mindful that this exercise will teach you skills, AND it may be challenging at first, especially if you're not used to being open to what you feel. That's ok. There's no right or wrong way to do this. Just follow along as best you can, and practice just being with what shows up, noticing your experience as it is.

It's perfectly ok to approach contacting difficult feelings in small, gradual steps too. With each step, you'll get closer to knowing what it's like to feel what you feel – what it's really like to just be with yourself ... AND, you'll learn to lean in when you'd normally pull away.

Before we get started, you may want to go back and review the values that you care about but struggle to act on. These are the areas of your life that are probably obstructed by barriers. Then, allow yourself to imagine acting in ways that support each blocked value until you notice a value that triggers an emotion or feeling that you'd rather not have, or tend to avoid quite a bit ... This is the value you'll start with and we'd like you to keep it in mind as you do the exercise. Now, it's on the long side, about 10-15 minutes, but it's well worth the time ... So, when you're ready and have your willingness switch turned ON, click below to start the exercise.

## Emotional Contact Exercise (10-15 min):

Get in a comfortable position in your chair. Sit upright with your feet flat on the floor, your arms and legs uncrossed, and your hands resting in your lap (palms up or down). It's best to close your eyes for this exercise, but if you'd rather keep your eyes open, you can do that too by focusing on a spot on the floor just in front of you. The exercise will end with a small chime to tell you when to open your eyes and move on. [pause]

- Notice the gentle rising and falling of your breath in your chest and belly. There's no need to control your breathing in any way—simply let the breath breathe itself. As best you can, also bring this attitude of kind allowing and gentleness to the rest of your experience. There's nothing to be fixed. Simply allow your experience to be your experience, without needing it to be other than what it is. [longer pause]
- Take a few moments to get in touch with the physical sensations in your body, especially the sensations of touch or pressure where your body makes contact with the chair or floor. [pause]
- It's natural for your mind to wander away to thoughts, worries, images, unpleasant sensations, or feelings. Notice and acknowledge their presence, and stay with them. There's no need to think of something else, make them go away, or resolve anything. As best you can, allow them to be . . . giving yourself space to have whatever you have . . . bringing a quality of kindness and compassion to your experience. [longer pause]
- When you're ready, gently shift your attention to a value you've had difficulty with because of a strong emotion. In your mind's eye, visualize the situation and bring it to life as vividly as you can.

Where are you? Notice all the details of your environment. See who's present and what's being said.

- Continue to watch the scene slowly unfold, as if it's being projected on a movie screen one frame at a time. As the scene unfolds, pay attention to your feelings – hurt, anger, shame, sadness, and especially FEAR. See yourself in that situation, wanting to act but getting stopped by emotional blocks, troubling thoughts, worries, images, or intense bodily sensations. See if you can find words to describe what you feel ... notice the strength of your feelings ... slowly ... Notice any impulse to escape, shut down, or push the feelings away. Be aware of any desire to retreat from your valued actions in this situation .... [pause]
- As you imagine the scene, notice what's showing up inside of you ... and notice any strong feelings that may arise in your body, allowing them to be as they are ... Hold them in your awareness and see if you can really make contact with the feeling. Notice how you're experiencing the feeling in your body. Then, gently, directly, and firmly shift your attention on and into the discomfort.
- Stay with your discomfort and breathe... See if you can gently open up and make space for it, accepting and allowing it to be while bringing a sense of kindness and focused attention to the discomfort. [pause]
- If you notice yourself resisting, pushing away from the experience, just acknowledge that and see if you can make some space for whatever you're experiencing. Notice that you can notice your thoughts, sensations, feelings and urges from the shores of your wise observer self ... You may even silently say to yourself "I'm having the thought that ..." or "I'm experiencing a sensation in my body," or "I'm feeling the urge to ..."
- As you continue to watch, gently ask yourself if this feeling or thought is really your enemy. Can you have it, notice it, own it, and let it be? Can you make room for the discomfort, for the tension, for the anxiety, for the sadness, for the unease? What does it really feel like—moment to moment—to have it all? [pause]
- Is this something you must struggle with, or can you invite the discomfort in? ... See if you can make a choice to meet each automatic response with something that goes against the grain ... If you notice the urge to pull back, then gently lean in ... if the urge is to freeze, then kindly move ... to frown, smile ... or if the urge is to lash out in anger, be still and silent ...
- If the feelings or sensations in your body grow stronger, acknowledge that, stay with them, breathing with them, and open up to them. Is there room inside you to feel what you feel, with compassion and kindness toward yourself and your experience? See if you can soften to it. [pause]
- As you open up and welcome your experience, you may notice thoughts coming along with the physical sensations and feelings, and you may notice thoughts about your thoughts. When that happens, invite them in too . . . softening and opening to them as you become aware of them. [pause] Are these really your enemies? [pause]
- Your mind may come up with judgmental labels such as "bad," "getting worse," or "can't stand this." Simply thank your mind for the label and return to the present experience, just noticing what's there as it is -- thoughts as thoughts, physical sensations as physical sensations, feelings as feelings—nothing more, nothing less. [pause]
- Stay with your discomfort for as long as it pulls on your attention. If and when you sense that the strong emotion and other discomfort are no longer pulling for your attention, let them go. [pause]
- As this time for practice comes to a close, gently bring yourself back to the room you're in and gradually widen your attention to take in the sounds around you. Take a moment to make the intention to bring this sense of gentle allowing and self-acceptance into the present moment and the rest of your day. Then, slowly open your eyes. [pause]

### **Post Exercise Reflections:**

Now that you've finished the exercise, take a minute or two to relax, perhaps bringing to mind a scene that fills you with a sense of peace and joy. Take a moment to reflect on what you learned about yourself.



Do you notice anything that seems new or different? Is there anything in your experience that you absolutely cannot have, cannot feel, or cannot think? Look around the edges for any sticky spots, name them, and be mindful of them the next time you practice. By sticky I mean places where you may have switched off your willingness, or got all tangled up in your judgmental mind proclaiming things like “it’s not working,” “you can’t do this,” or “You’re not really going to do it, are you?”

You’ll get the most out of this exercise if you repeat it several times in a row. Are you willing to do that? As you practice, it’s important to notice changes in the quality and intensity of your feelings. And especially when you notice urges to pull back, avoid, shut down, or turn away. These urges are great clues to do the opposite – to go in when your mind tells you to turn away ... That’s how you take back control over your life. With practice, difficult emotions will lose their power to steer you off course.

And, you’re doing something else too. You’re learning that your emotions aren’t enemies – that you can have them just as they are, even the painful ones. You have lots of freedom in how you do this exercise. You can do it for longer stretches, or repeat the exercise three or more times, do it with different emotions that get in your way. You can even vary the setting by practicing at home, in the park, in your car, or on a plane.

But here’s what you can’t do: You can’t hold back from the experience. You must choose to be willing to have and experience whatever your mind and body does. Remember the point of the exercise is to empower you to act on your life and values regardless of the current pattern of emotional waves that you’re experiencing. That’s how you get something new in your life ...

So, however you decide to practice the exercise, be sure you’re doing it with arms wide open, willing to embrace your experience with your life and values in mind ...

## Kindness Script and Exercises

Adapted from *ACT Online for OIF / OEF Veterans Study* (Forsyth, Hickling, Kipp)

### Script / Rationale:

I'd like to start off here by acknowledging something that has to do with you and me and life in general ... There are countless people, all over the world, and from all walks of life, who have suffered and continue to suffer. Some can't see. Others can't walk. Some can't speak or hear. Many more are hungry, thirsty, cold and struggle to make it to another day. Others suffer day in and day out with incurable illnesses or disease, and live with physical pain and emotional discomfort almost daily. And many more have lived through extraordinary circumstances ... like war and violence, trauma, abuse, losses, hardship ... Countless souls wake up each day with many good reasons to give up and walk away from life... but they don't. They go on and find a way to make the most of the time they've been given ... You may have heard stories of such people. You might be one yourself. Or, you may know someone that fits this profile.

And, you may ask yourself this – what little secret do they have that allows them to go forward and live their lives with all the pain and hardship that they carry?

Well, their secret's really no secret at all. What they've learned to do is to be kinder and more compassionate with themselves. They've learned to drop the rope and treat themselves – body, mind, and soul – just as they would something precious, like a newborn baby. Take a second and imagine that ...

Suppose I were to hand you a newborn infant. If you're willing, go ahead and put your arms out as if I were passing a baby off to you to hold. Now take it in your arms ... and notice ... How are you holding it? Are you holding the baby lightly and with the greatest of care? Did you bring your arms closer to your chest and body? Are you being careful, kind, and gentle? And notice that even if you think of yourself as someone who is tough and strong, you're still capable of acting in ways that are kind and gentle. Notice too, you may not have to FEEL kindness toward the baby in order to ACT kindly ...

That's what we're talking about here ... when you learn to treat your mind and body with kindness and compassion you are doing something that is directly opposite of unkindness and warfare ... You are giving yourself a gift and letting yourself off the hook ...

Consider that for a moment. What does your experience tell you about how you tend to respond to the discomfort you feel in your body? Do you hold it like that newborn, or something fragile that you don't want to break? Or, do you harden, resist, grab the rope and struggle, and let your physical discomfort take over your life bus? This is the difference between kindness and warfare ... And, when people get caught up in warfare with themselves, they tend to do lots of things to buy themselves some relief. But the relief never seems to last for very long, and so they're right back at it again in what can seem like a never-ending struggle. You may feel that way too, like you're stuck, living a life that doesn't give you much satisfaction or joy. And, if that's true of your experience, then maybe it's time to explore what kindness might offer you.

Before we go further, I'd like to invite you to practice an exercise that will help you bring a bit of kindness and gentleness to your bodily sensations ... and anything else your mind throws into the mix about them ... If you're willing, approach the exercise just as you might holding that newborn infant ... with a sense of softness and gentleness ... See if you can allow yourself to open up to your experience and treat it with the greatest of care, whatever that might be for you. As we do the exercise, follow along as best you can, eyes closed or open.

### The Exercise -- A Kind and Gentle Hand (4-5 min):

Begin by getting yourself in a comfortable position. Sit upright and allow yourself to get centered with a few slow breaths in ... and out ... in ... and out.

- Now bring to mind a situation that you've been struggling with [select something from the client's experience, an area linked with their values]. See if you can put yourself in that situation ... Where were you? What happened? What were you doing? What were others saying or doing? See if you can give yourself permission to be present with this experience as fully as you can. Notice how you reacted then. [pause] And, notice how you may be reacting now. [pause]

- Slow things down as best you can ... and notice difficult thoughts and physical sensations that may be showing up right now. Just stay with this experience as best you can ... [pause]
- Now pick one of your hands and imagine that this is the hand of a person that leaves you feeling good, understood, loved, and cared for ... It may be someone from your distant past, or someone in your life now ... Just allow your hand to be filled with the feelings you have when you're around that kind and caring person ... [pause]
- When you're ready, place this hand, slowly and gently, on whichever part of your body that hurts most ... You may feel more pain in your chest, or perhaps you feel discomfort in your stomach, head, or neck. Or, you may notice physical changes like tensing, or your heartbeat picking up ... Just pick one part of your body where the feelings and physical sensations are most intense and place that hand there.
- And, if you feel numb anywhere, you can place the hand on that part of your body that feels numb. Or, if you're not feeling much of anything that's hard for you to have, just go ahead and place that loving hand on your chest.
- Allow that kind and loving hand to rest gently on you ... Feel it against your skin and clothes ... And notice the warmth flowing from the palm of your hand into your body and to the place of discomfort... Imagine that hand as a hand of healing ... that it's opening your heart to be present with you, to be kind to yourself.
- Just hold that hand of kindness on you gently ... Allow yourself to open up to this gentle action, feeling waves of caring and warmth penetrating your body ... Notice any softening ... spaciousness ... as you do that ... [longer pause]
- Go on now to make one last gesture of kindness with both hands ... Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly .... Let them gently rest there as you hold yourself kindly ... Take as long as you wish to sit this way .... Just caring for yourself, being with yourself, giving yourself comfort, caring, and support ... This is something you can do for yourself ... anytime, anywhere. [longer pause]
- As we end of this practice, allow yourself to come back to the present, with the intention to bring kindness to yourself, your barriers, and your life.

### Post Exercise Debrief

This exercise can be hard to do. Your mind may have been judging this as some “weak” or “touchy feely” kind of exercise. And, if those thoughts showed up and got in your way, just notice that ... Learning to be kind toward ourselves is a skill – it's not something we're born with ... You don't need anyone else to provide it for you either – you give it to yourself like you were doing in the exercise a moment ago! But that requires practice, and for many, it doesn't come naturally.

So, allow yourself time to repeat this exercise. As you practice, bring up other situations that call out your physical discomfort and other barriers ... And then apply that kind and caring hand to areas of your body where the discomfort is strongest ... With practice, kindness and self-compassion will become a habit in your life ... In a way, the practice is like working to build muscle, but here you're building your kindness muscles. With that newfound strength, you'll be able to give yourself kindness anytime, anywhere....

And remember, kindness and compassion aren't feelings, they're actions. They're something you do with your hands, feet, and mouth. In fact, you may have already made the connection between kindness and your values. Like, whenever you do something that moves you closer to one of your values, you're also being kind to yourself. And, when you make the choice to let go of struggling with yourself and allow yourself to be as you are, you're also doing something kind for yourself. So, this isn't some “far out” woo woo stuff we're talking about. This is about your life!

And, these skills may not come naturally to you either ... Your mind may tell you that being kind and compassionate are signs of weakness, or being soft ... But let me tell you something ... It takes commitment and courage to be kind and compassionate with yourself... In fact, the easy path is to just turn and walk away from the pain and challenges life offers. Or, to get tangled up in a tug of war with

your mind, body, memories, and life ... The harder path is to open yourself up, totally present with the experience, aware, gentle, caring... this is the stance I'd like to help you develop towards your bodily sensations and other forms of discomfort that get in the way of the life you want to lead.

### **Exercise for Traumatic/Painful Memories -- Being Kind With Your Old Wounds (10 min):**

Begin by getting yourself in a comfortable position. Sit upright and allow yourself to get grounded with a few slow breaths in ... and out.

- Now bring to mind a memory that you've been struggling with [again, link memory to client's values]. Or, maybe it's a memory that you've been struggling with for a very long time. See if you can put yourself in that situation. Where were you? What happened? What were you doing? What were others saying or doing? Watch it as if it was unfolding on a movie screen. See if you can give yourself permission to be present with this experience as fully as you can. Notice how you reacted then. [pause] And, notice how you may be reacting to the memory now. [pause]
- Slow things down as best you can ... and notice the thoughts as thoughts, images as images, physical sensations as sensations, emotions as emotions ... just as they are. Watch and gently observe parts of your experience as they come and go as you take the perspective of the chessboard. There's nothing to do but notice. You don't have to take sides...just stay with this experience as best you can and breathe [pause]
- Now release that difficult image with a large grounding breath in and out through your feet, and then imagine an earlier time in your life – one long before the difficult memory. Go back as far as you can remember ... to a time in your early childhood when you remember feeling good. See if you can visualize that younger you then – notice your face and eyes as a child, your hair, what you were wearing, and how small you were. And, notice where you were, what you were doing, what you were experiencing that left you feeling whole and complete, even if that was brief.
- Now, imagine that younger you is standing in front of you now, and comes over to sit on your lap. That younger you has no idea what the future holds. Only you know. And, you know what that child will eventually experience in life because you've lived through it.
- As you hold that younger you on your lap, what advice would you share with them, knowing all that you know about what they'll face in the future? How would you respond to that younger you, knowing what you know about what they'll live through? What does that little child need from you? What do they need to hear from you? Take a moment to hear your words as you look into the eyes of the younger you from very long ago. And notice that YOU were there then and YOU here now too.
- Linger with this experience for a few moments. When you're ready, allow yourself to slowly come back to an awareness of sitting where you are right now ... see if you can bring a sense of kindness to your experience now and to any old wounds that you remember. As you do, hear the words that you shared with the smaller you and extend them to your experience now. Sense any gentleness and compassion you may have felt with the younger you and bring that to yourself and your experience now. What do you need from yourself right now?
- As this exercise comes to a close, make one last gesture of kindness with both hands. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. Let them gently rest there as you hold yourself kindly ... Take as long as you wish to sit this way .... Just caring for yourself, being with yourself, giving yourself comfort, caring, and support ... Gently remind yourself that you are more than what you lived through, however difficult or painful it may be to remember. [longer pause]
- As this time for practice comes to a close, allow yourself to come back to the present, with the intention to bring kindness to yourself, your history and old wounds, and your life.

## VALUE AND GOALS WORKSHEET

<b>My Value:</b> _____			
<b>Goal I want to achieve:</b> _____			
Steps toward achieving my goal	Barriers	Strategies	Date(s) achieved
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

## **EXERCISE: Grounding in the NOW**

Start by removing your shoes if you can, and get in a comfortable position, sitting upright and breathing naturally. [10 secs] Or, if you prefer, you can do this exercise standing, with knees slightly bent. [10 secs]

Once you're ready, close your eyes and bring your attention to your breath. [10 secs] Notice where you feel your breath most strongly. [5 secs] Perhaps it's in your chest, abdomen, or nostrils. [10 secs]

Now bring your attention to your feet. Feel them contacting the floor and ground beneath you. [5 secs] Notice the sense of pressure of your body against the earth below. [10 secs]

Go ahead and wiggle your toes for a moment, and then scrunch your feet into balls by curling your toes downward toward the ground. [5 secs] Notice the movement of the small bones of your feet, and the soft tissue between the bones. [5 secs] Allow yourself to bring all of your attention to these movements. [5 secs] And notice that you can notice them. [10 secs]

Next, bring your awareness to how your feet feel, and notice any sensations there, like tension, relaxation, pain, pressure, warmth or coolness, or even no sensation. [10 secs] Again, noticing that you can notice them. [10 secs]

Go ahead and gently press your feet into the ground beneath you. [5 secs] Become aware of feeling a strong contact with the ground. Then ease up, allowing your feet to contact the floor naturally. [10 secs]

Now, imagine that your breath is passing in and out through your feet as you take a deep, rich inhale ... and then a slow exhale. [10 secs] On the next in-breath visualize the pores of the soles of your feet breathing in and filling your body with the solid foundational energy of the earth beneath you. [5 secs] On your out-breath, feel your feet discharging this energy back into the earth, creating strong roots. [15 secs]

Continue on like this—grounding to the earth and where you are now. Notice the dynamic connection between you and the earth and your surroundings. [10 secs] And, if you find your attention wandering, bring it back to your feet, deeply breathing in and out through them and feeling the grounding earth connection. [15 secs]

As this time for practice comes to a close, direct your attention back to the room. [5 secs] Notice the sounds in the room, the feeling of your body as you sit or stand, the temperature of the air, the position of your body, the smells in the room, the feeling of the air on your skin. [5 secs]

And notice that you're here in the now—present, alert, and alive. [5 secs] When you're ready, gently open your eyes and carry this grounding presence with you into the present moment and the rest of your day.

## **EXERCISE: Being Kind with Your Old Wounds**

Begin by getting yourself in a comfortable position. Sit upright and allow yourself to get grounded with a few slow breaths in ... and out, from the earth below you, up your torso, and then back out through the soles of your feet, rooting strongly in the earth below. [15 secs]

Now bring to mind a memory that you've been struggling with for a very long time. See if you can put yourself in that situation. [10 secs] Where were you? What happened? What were you doing? [10 secs] What were others saying or doing? [5 secs] Watch it as if it was unfolding on a giant movie screen. [10 secs] See if you can give yourself permission to be present with this experience as fully as you can. [10 secs] Notice how you reacted then. [5 secs] And, notice how you may be reacting to the memory now. [10 secs]

Slow things down as best you can ... and notice the thoughts as thoughts, images as images, physical sensations as sensations, emotions as emotions ... just as they are. [10 secs] Watch and gently observe parts of your experience as they come and go, as you take the perspective of the chessboard. [10 secs] There's nothing to do but notice. You don't have to take sides ... just stay with this experience as best you can and breathe. [10 secs]

When you're ready, release that difficult image with a large grounding breath in and out through your feet, and then imagine an earlier time in your life—one long before the difficult memory. [10 secs] Go back as far as you can remember ... to a time in your childhood when you remember feeling good. [5 secs] See if you can visualize that younger you—notice your face and eyes as a child, your hair, what you were wearing, and how small you were. [10 secs] And, notice where you were, what you were doing, what you were experiencing that left you feeling whole and complete, even if that sense of feeling good was short-lived. [10 secs]

Now, imagine that younger you is standing in front of you now, and comes over to sit on your lap. [5 secs] That younger you has no idea what the future holds. Only you know. And, you know what that child will eventually experience in life because you've lived through it. [10 secs]

As you hold that younger you on your lap, you pause and notice each of you looking into the other's eyes and heart. [10 secs] As you look, what advice would you share with him or her, knowing all that you know about what this younger you will face in the future? [10 secs] How would you respond to that younger you? What does that little child need from you? What does he or she need to hear from you? [15 secs] Take a moment to hear your words as you look into the eyes of the younger you from very long ago. [10 secs] And notice that you were there then, and that you are here now too. [10 secs]

Linger with this experience for a few moments. [10 secs] When you're ready, allow yourself to slowly come back to an awareness of sitting where you are right now ... see if you can bring a sense of kindness to your experience now and to any old wounds that you remember. [10 secs] As you do, hear the words that you shared with the smaller you and extend them to your

experience now. [10 secs] Sense any gentleness and compassion you may have felt with the younger you and bring that to yourself and your experience now. What do you need to give yourself right now? [15 secs]

As this exercise comes to a close, make one last gesture of kindness with both hands. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. [10 secs] Let them gently rest there as you hold yourself kindly. [15 secs] Sit this way as long as you wish—just caring for yourself, being with yourself, giving yourself comfort, rest, and support. [15 secs] Gently remind yourself that you're more than what you lived through, however difficult or painful it may be to remember. [15 secs] Stay in this moment as long as you wish. [15 secs]

Then, when you're ready, take a final grounding breath or two and gently open your eyes, with or without tears, it does not matter. [5 secs] Simply allow yourself to come back to the present, with the intention to bring kindness to yourself, your history and old wounds, and your life.