


Acceptance and
Commitment Therapy for
Anxiety Disorders:
*Transforming Anxious Suffering
Into a More Vital Life*

with John P. Forsyth and Jamie R. Forsyth
Fellow Travelers on this life journey
Contact & Web: www.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.



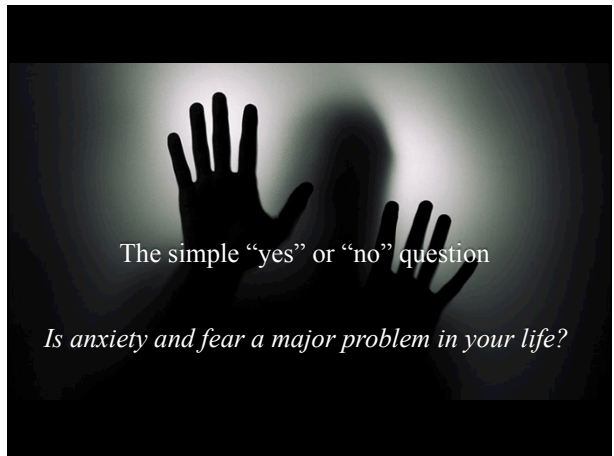
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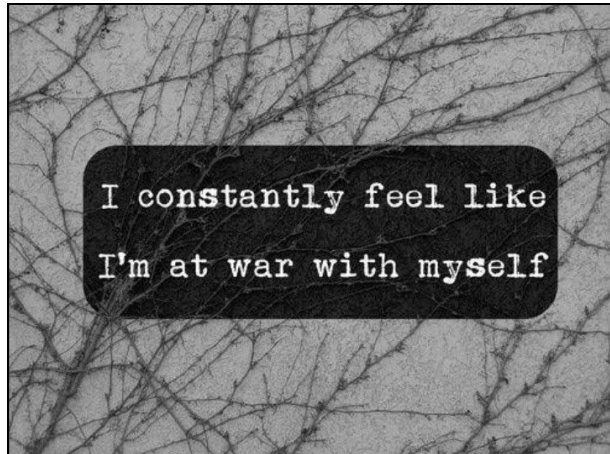
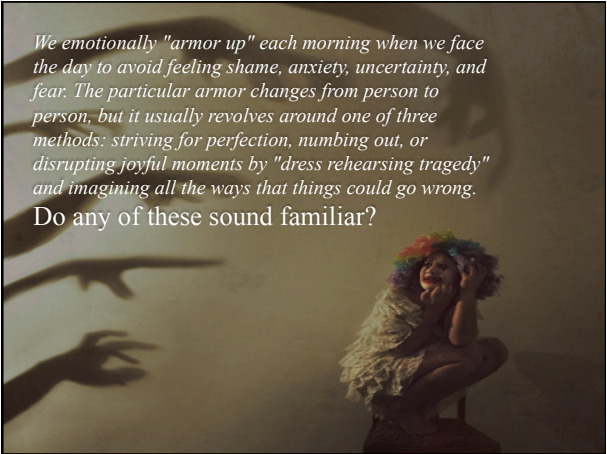
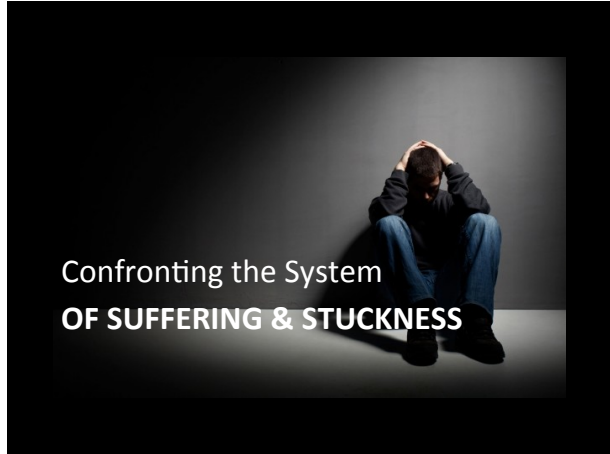


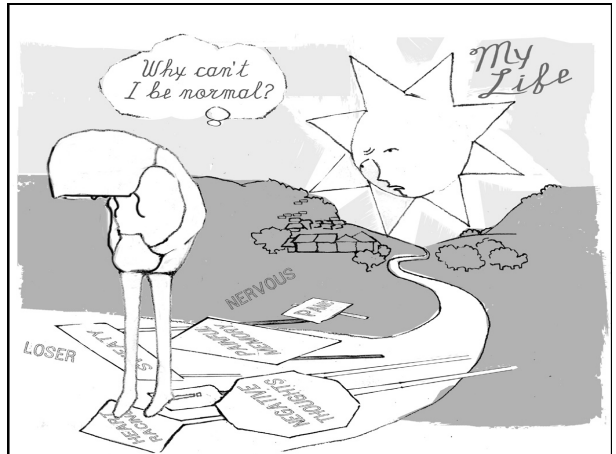
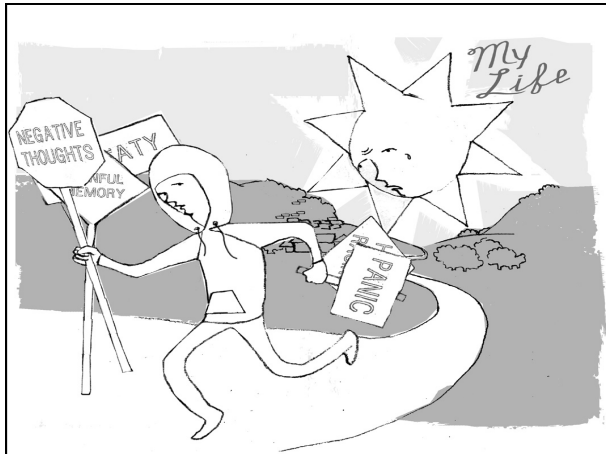
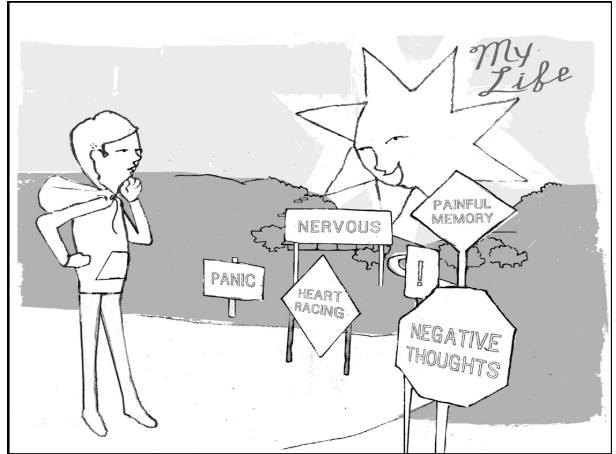
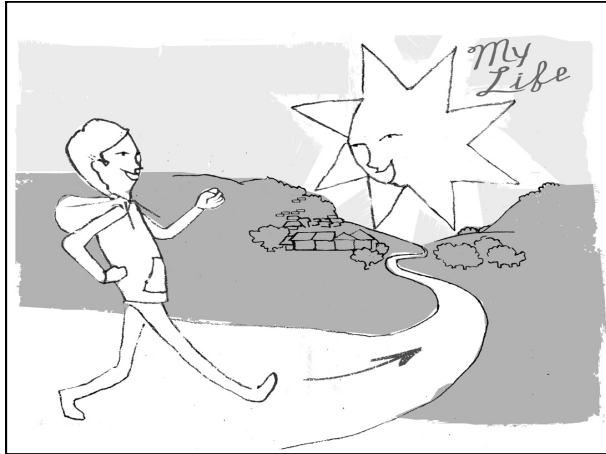
Our Intentions & Yours
and, an invitation ...
if for only 2 days



CENTERING

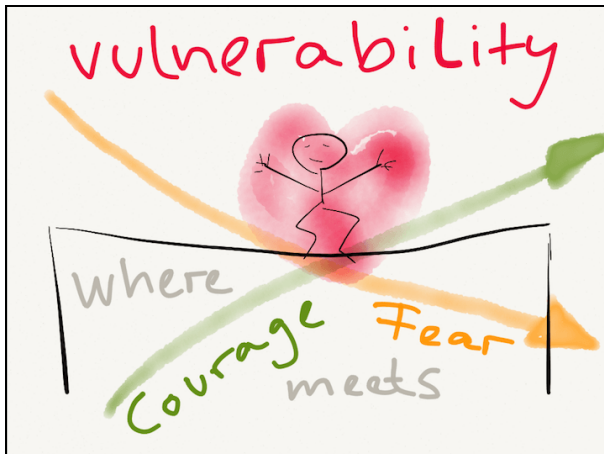




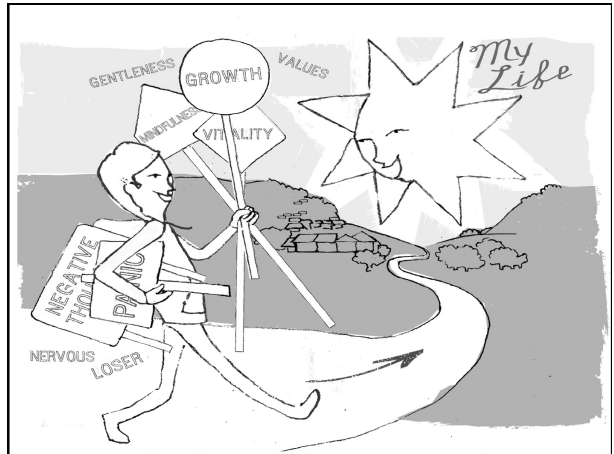
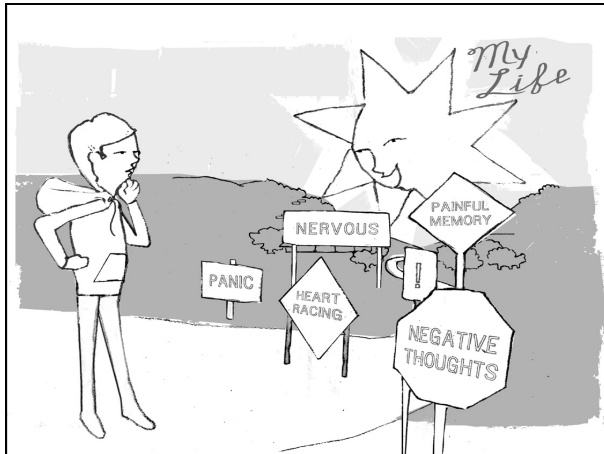
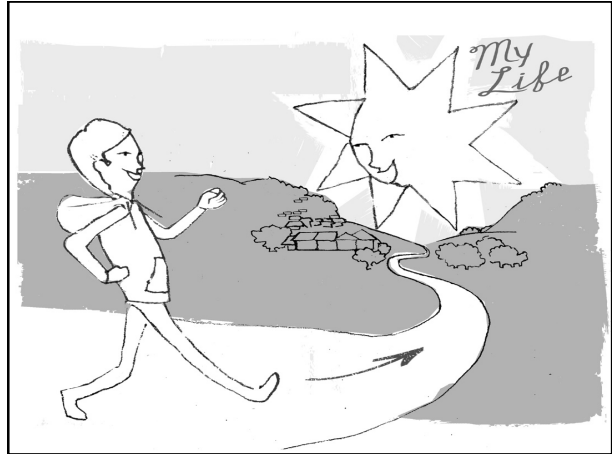




The Mask I Wear



*Compare what we saw
before to this...*



But this
is so hard
for us to do



We take the
products of
thinking too
seriously and fuse
with them

1
Fusion

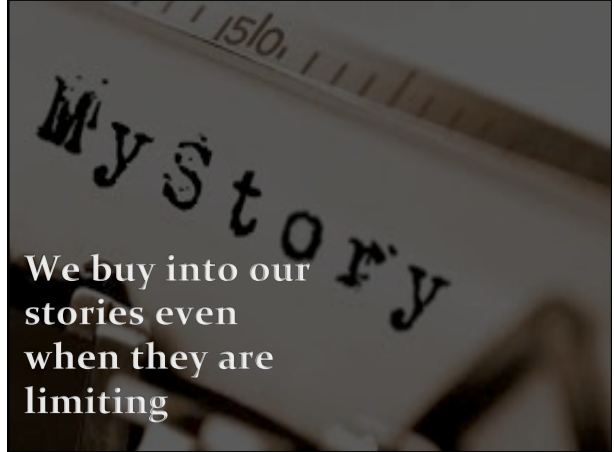


*Psychological
equivalent of a
hungry lion
following us
wherever we go*



2
Self-as-Content

We fail to see
that we are
historical
creatures



We buy into our
stories even
when they are
limiting



3
*Experiential
Avoidance*

We struggle
with painful
aspects of our
histories



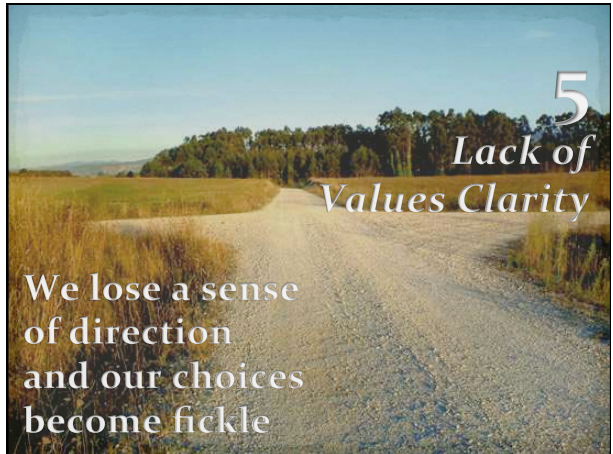
*The struggle
with anxiety is
the common
thread that
binds all
anxiety
problems.*



4

*Conceptualized
Past or Future*

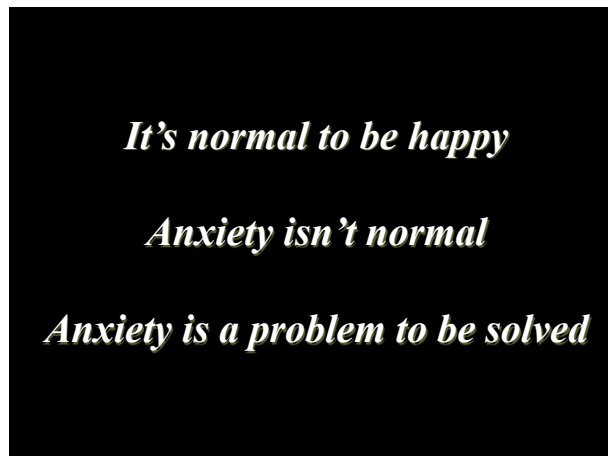
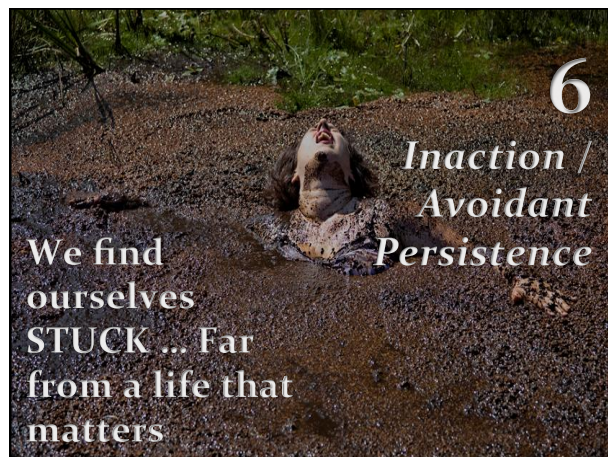
We lose
contact
with
the present moment



5

*Lack of
Values Clarity*

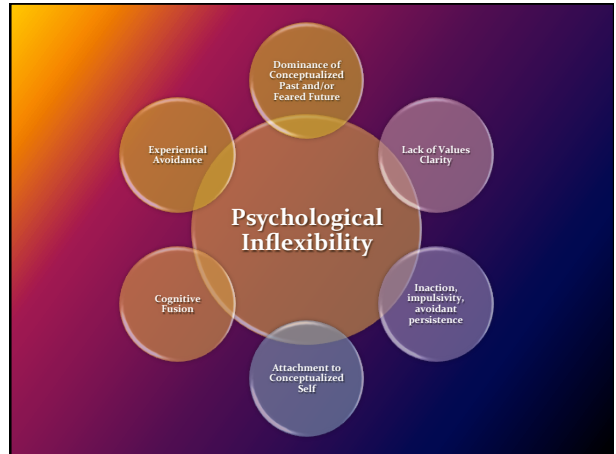
We lose a sense
of direction
and our choices
become fickle



And when it doesn't work?



**We do
more of the same & keep running
(from ourselves!)**



So, what can
we do about this?



Humans Can be Happy...
If We Only Stopped Looking in All the Wrong Places!



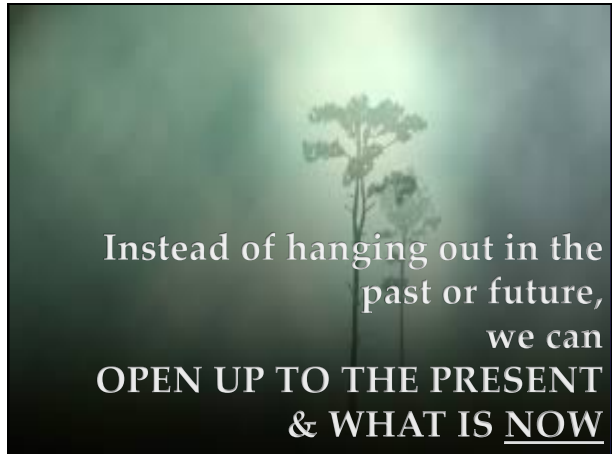
Instead of buying into
and struggling with what
we think
we can
DEFUSE

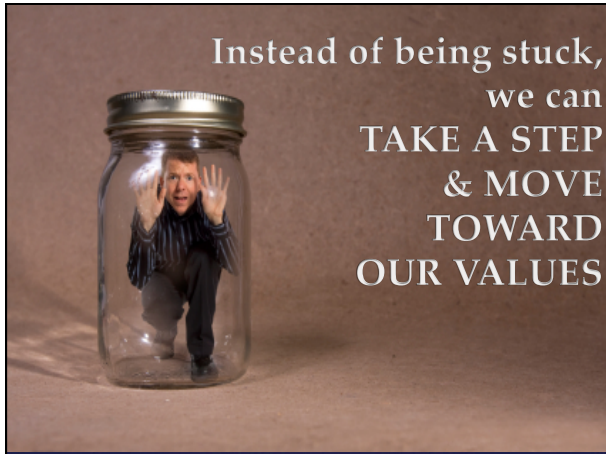
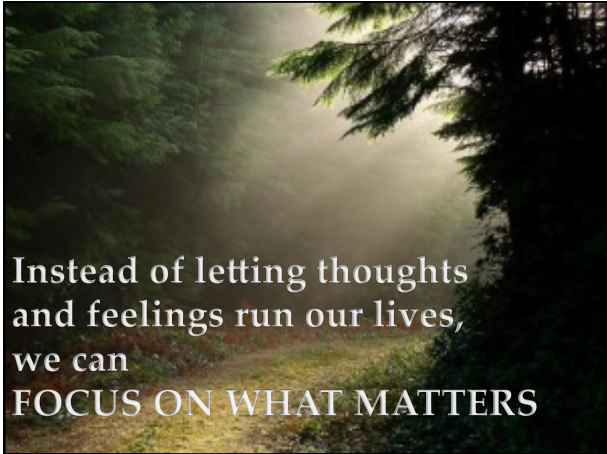


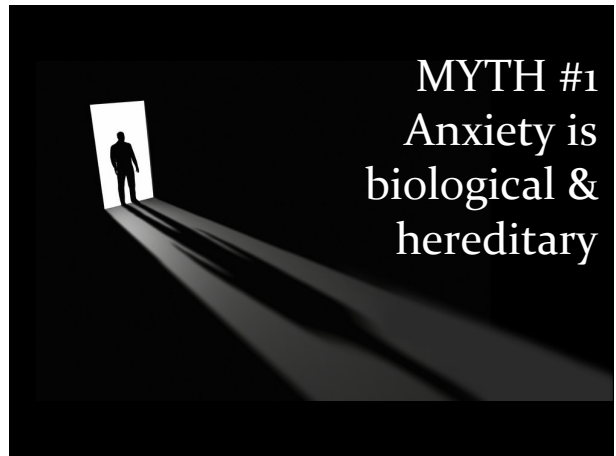
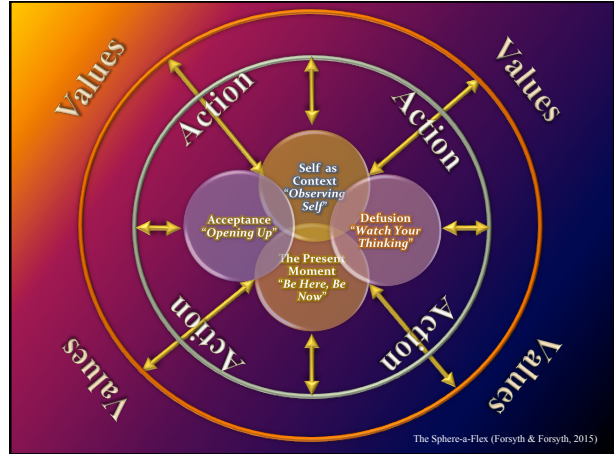
Instead of
running from our
thoughts and feelings,
we can
**ACCEPT AND
OPEN UP AND LET IT BE**

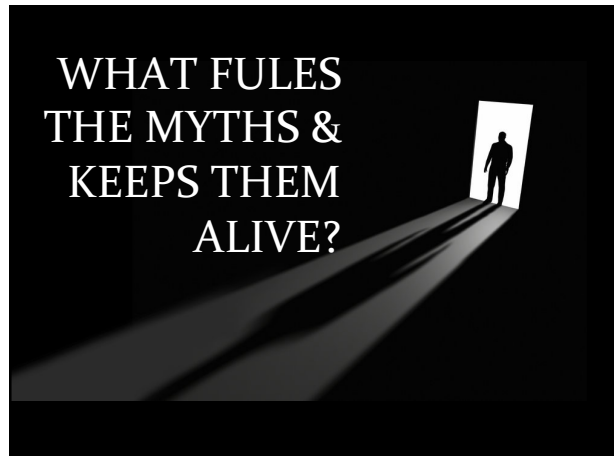
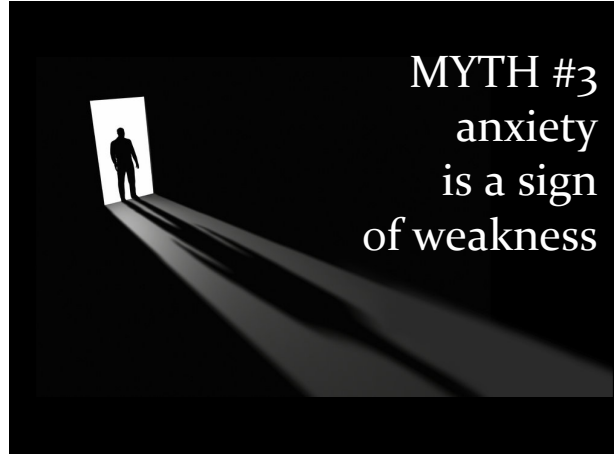


Instead of hanging out in the
past or future,
we can
**OPEN UP TO THE PRESENT
& WHAT IS NOW**











Fusion



<p><u>My Experience</u> <i>Panic/strong anxiety</i></p>	<p><u>What Comes to Mind</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jittery and shaky 2. Can't think clearly 3. Heart races, sweaty 4. Can't be in a crowd, drive a car, go near heights 5. Think I might be going crazy
---	--

Fusion

Evaluation



<p><u>My Experience</u> <i>Panic/strong anxiety</i></p>	<p><u>Evaluations that come to mind</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____
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Fusion

Evaluation

Avoidance




Fusion

Evaluation

Avoidance

I can't do _____
because of _____

Reason giving



The Core of the FEAR – What Reasons Can Reveal

- What are you afraid of? *I'm afraid of getting fired.*
- Why are you afraid of getting fired? *Because the money is good.*
- Why are you afraid of getting fired? *Because competition in my industry is tough.*
- Why are you afraid of getting fired? *Because I'd be humiliated.*
- Why are you afraid of getting fired? *Because I'd have to tell my father.*
- Why are you afraid of getting fired? *Because my dad would have one more reason to think I'll never amount to anything.*
- Why are you afraid of getting fired? *Because I'll never get the love I want from my father. EUREKA!*



For a long time it had seemed to me that life was about to begin – real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time to be served, a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life.

~ Alfred D'Souza

Seeds of Creative Hopelessness Facing the Costs of Anxiety Management & Control

Anxiety Management Strategies

- Running away from situations
- Avoiding activities or situations
- Suppressing or pushing out disturbing thoughts and feelings
- Distracting myself
- Changing how I think
- Talking myself out of anxiety, panic, fear, or worry
- Sticking close to "safe" people
- Carrying objects or performing rituals
- Talking or venting with a friend or family member
- Joining online support groups for people with anxiety problems
- Educating myself by reading books written by experts on anxiety disorders
- Turning to self-help books offering "better" ways to control anxiety & fear
- Taking medications, herbal supplements, or alcohol to dull the pain
- Going to psychotherapy

1. What have you done?
2. How has it worked for you?
3. What were the costs?
(short and long-term)
4. What does your experience tell you?

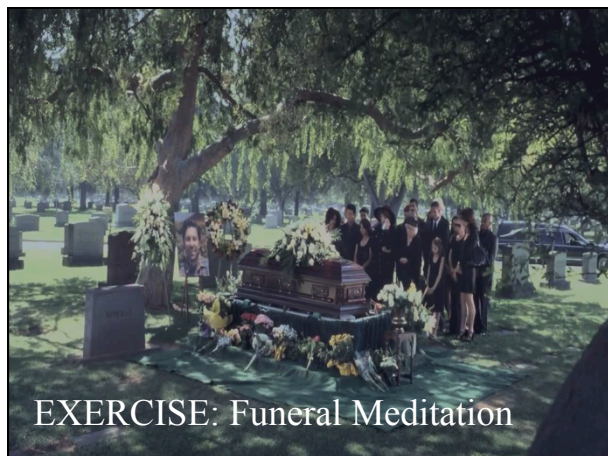
3 Simple Questions (and 1 BIG ONE)

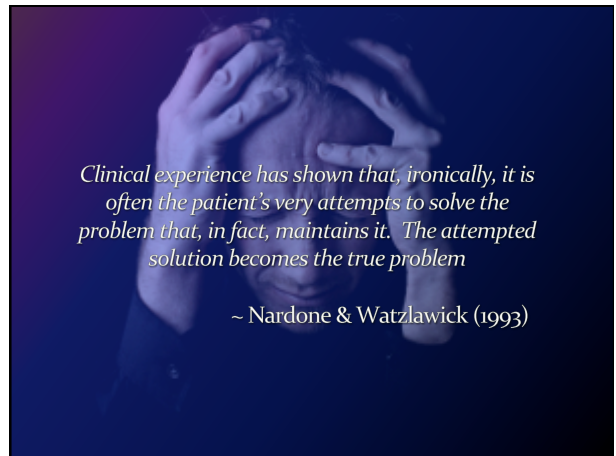
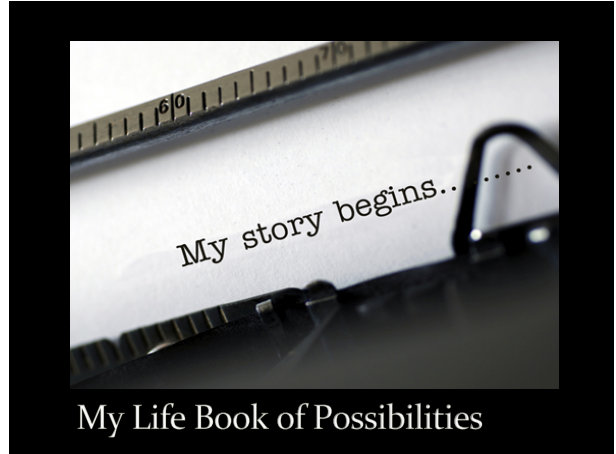
⌘ Career Costs
⌘ Health Costs
⌘ Energy Costs
⌘ Emotional Costs
⌘ Financial Costs
⌘ Costs to Freedom

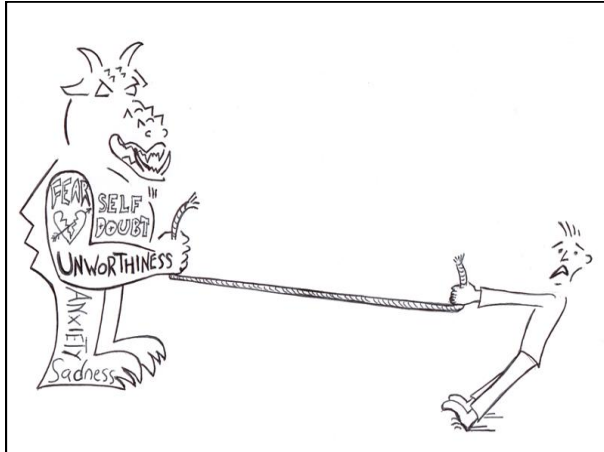
The Costs

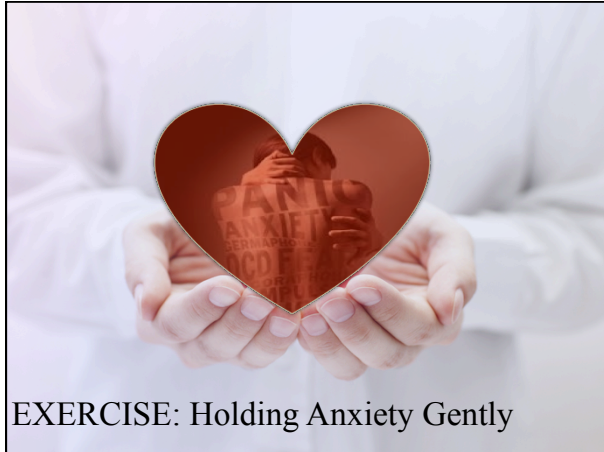
WHAT MATTERS MOST?

Anxiety Management?
Or, Living a Good Life?









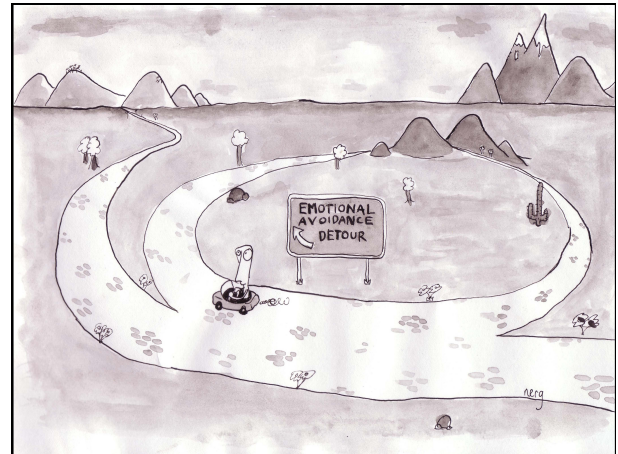
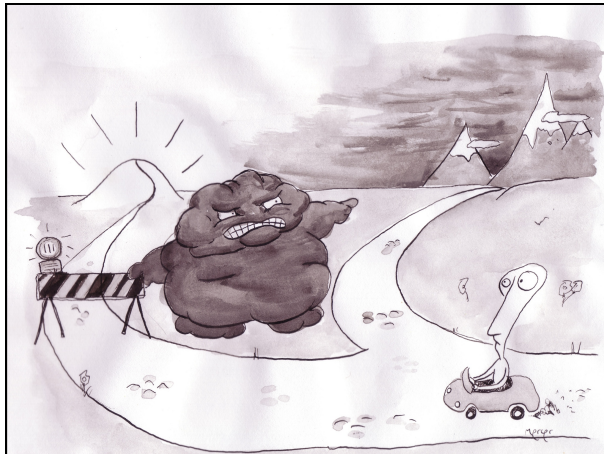
Typical Response to Anxiety

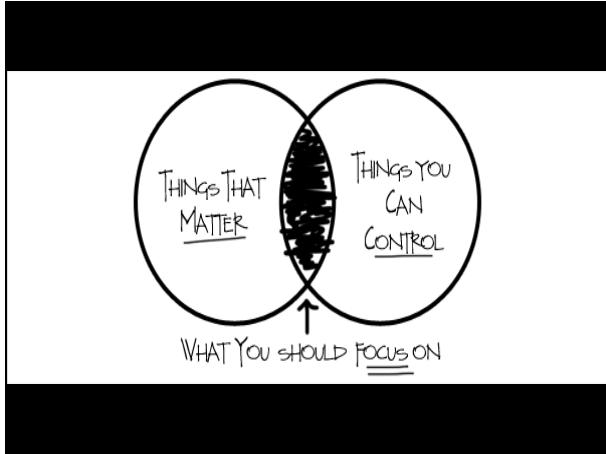
- ✓ *My anxious thoughts, feelings sensations?*
- ✓ *My coping impulse?*
- ✓ *Consequences of my response?*
- ✓ *How do I treat my anxiety and anxious impulse? (e.g., enemy)*
- ✓ *What is the tone of my relationship with anxiety? (e.g., unkind)*

Fresh Alternatives

- ✓ *Other life affirming responses?*
- ✓ *Potential consequences of my new responses (what I may gain in life)*
- ✓ *How would I treat my anxious feelings and impulses?*
- ✓ *What is the tone of my relationship with anxiety?*

EXERCISE:
Fresh Alternatives to Old Impulses





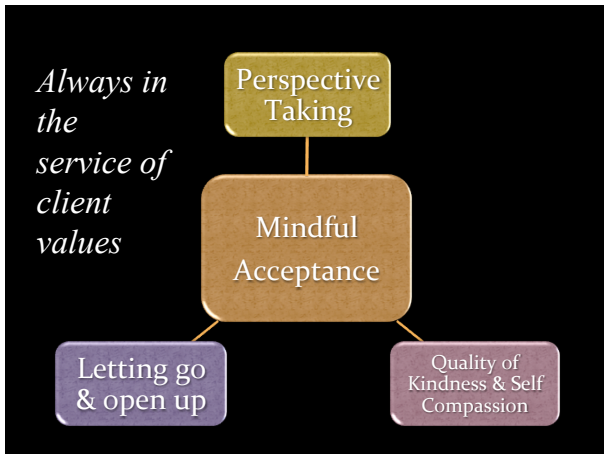
There is only
Action
 one thing required
Changes
 to change your LIFE:
Things
WILLINGNESS

"Vulnerability becomes the door to intimacy, to being ourselves, to being real, to being where we are. But for that to happen, we have to be willing to be vulnerable to what is. Being vulnerable means that our soul is open for things to arise in it. It is not defended."
 -A.H. Almaas

InnerChange ec

"DO. Or do not.
 There is
NO TRY."

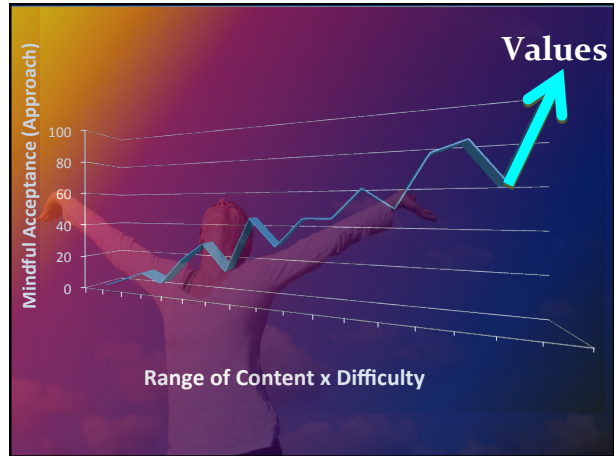
Yoda
 The Empire Strikes Back



Path to Acceptance

- **Aversion** – resistance, avoidance, rumination
- **Curiosity** – turning toward discomfort with interest
- **Tolerance** – enduring, gutting it out, keeping at safe distance
- **Allowing** – letting feelings come and go
- **Friendship** – compassionate stance, embracing, kindness

Germer. Mindful path to self-compassion



The **Power**
of the **Pause**



*It can be
difficult to do...Let's see*

EXERCISE:
Acceptance of Thoughts and Feelings



Cultivating
an Observer Perspective
Distinguishing YOU from YOUR Anxieties





During an Anxiety Episode, ASK ...

- ✓ What am I feeling besides anxiety, panic, fear, or tension?
- ✓ What am I saying to myself?
- ✓ What am I driven to do now? Where's the urge to avoid trying to take me?
- ✓ What do I want to be about right now?
- ✓ What do I want my life to be about now?
- ✓ How can I honor myself NOW?

Triggers and judgment are signs to come back to self-care and kindness!

Who Am I?

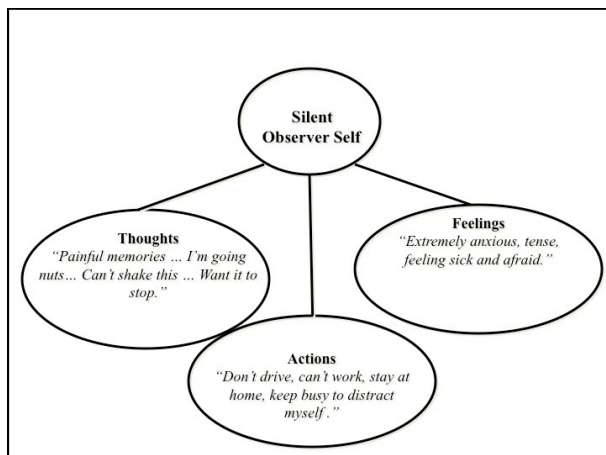


Silent Observer Self

Thoughts
"Painful memories ... I'm going nuts... Can't shake this ... Want it to stop."

Feelings
"Extremely anxious, tense, feeling sick and afraid."

Actions
"Don't drive, can't work, stay at home, keep busy to distract myself."

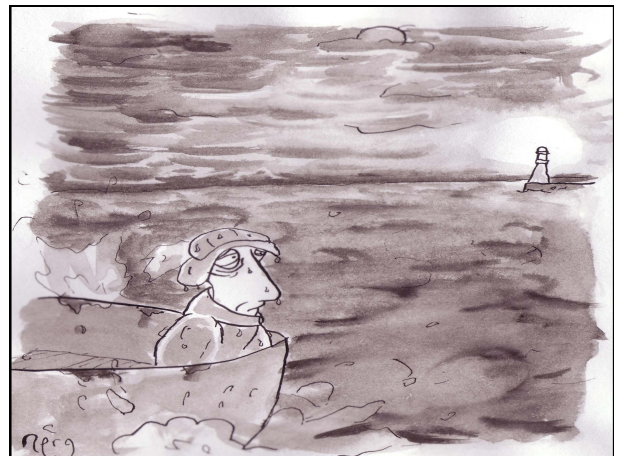
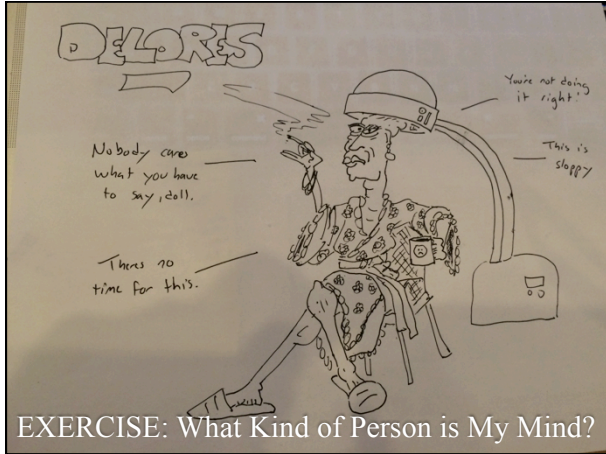


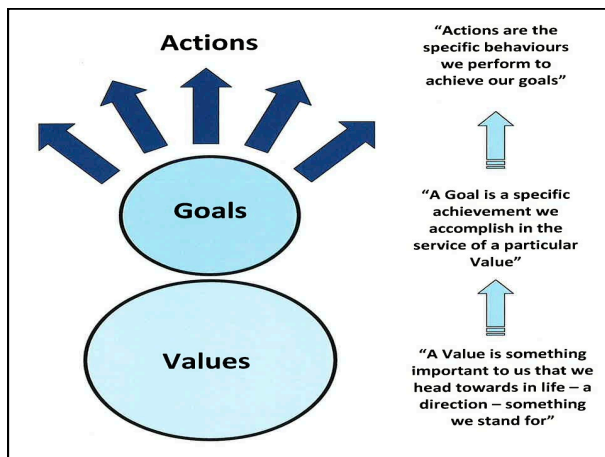
"you never change thoughts in ACT" meme is over-simplified ACT.
 It doesn't fit the canonical texts, which are far more nuanced.

Traditional ACT methods ask
"what is that in the service of?"
 and
"how is that working for you?"

S. C. Hayes







PROBLEMS
Finding
VALUES

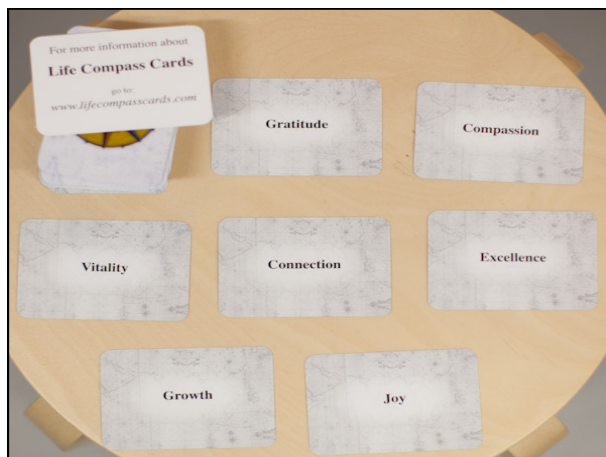
LIVE LIFE ON PURPOSE!

- ✓ I don't have any!
- ✓ Look to pain for clues
- ✓ Too much focus on outcomes
- ✓ Connect with the heart
- ✓ Look to vitality and aliveness
- ✓ Focus on the process and doing

Connecting With Your Values

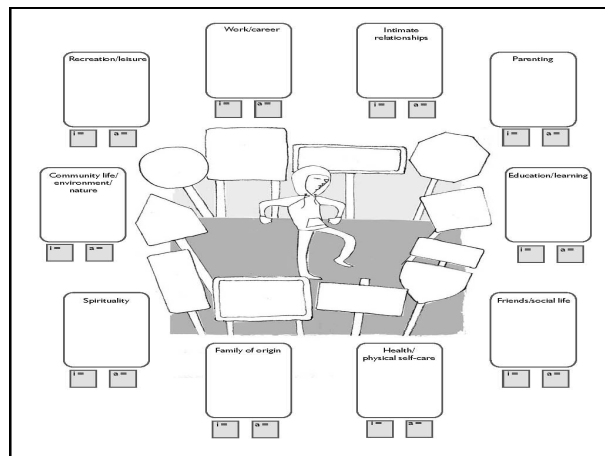
- What do you want to be about?
- What do you want your life to be about?
- What really matters to you?
 - If _____ wasn't such a problem for me, then I would _____?
- Experiential Exercises
 - Listen To Your Heart
 - Review Epitaphs

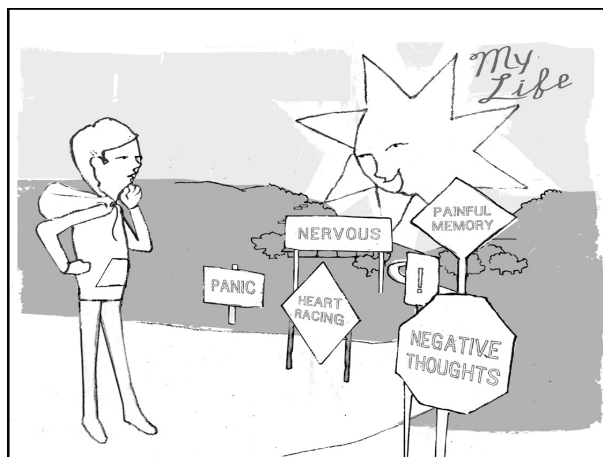
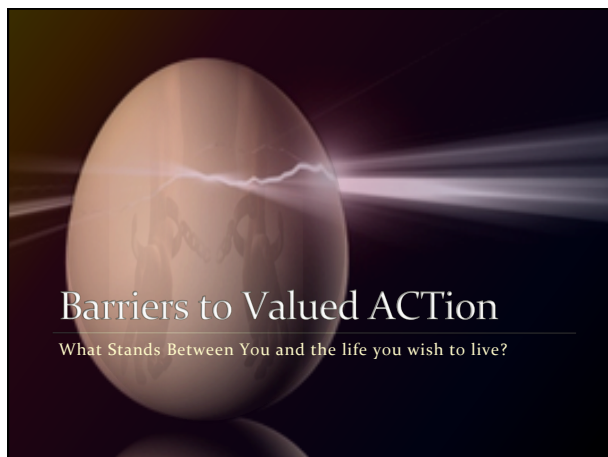
Life Compass Cards



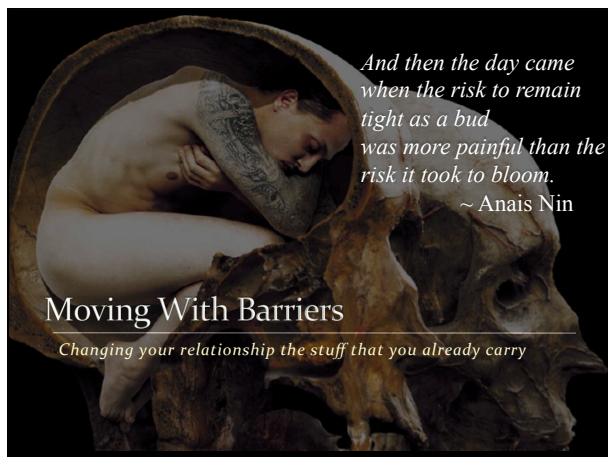
Completing The Life Compass

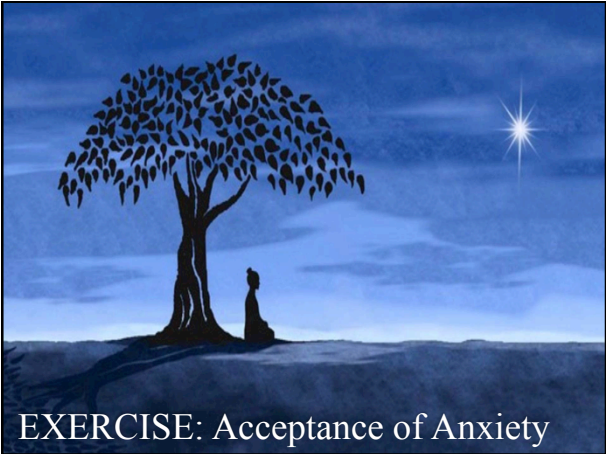
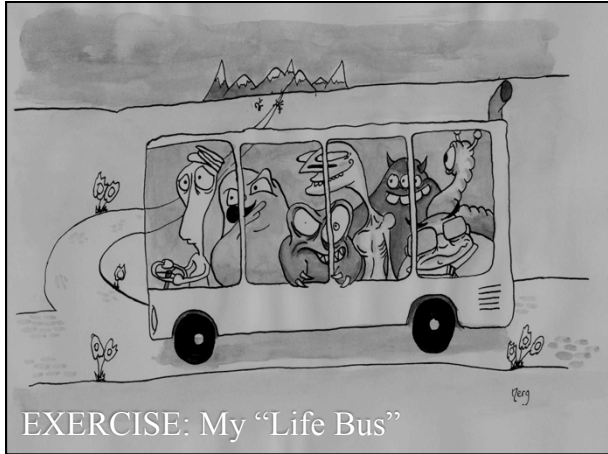
1. Rate importance of areas (YES or No)
2. Write down intentions
3. Rate ACTion (Yes, Sometimes, or NO)
 - Y = Yes (nothing stands in my way)
 - S = Sometimes (values conflict, priorities?)
 - N = NO (Stuck, stalled, no action or moving in fits/jerks with resistance, white knuckling)
4. Notice inconsistencies
 - Look for YES this is an important area of my life and NO. I'm not living my intentions
5. Barriers: What stands in your way?

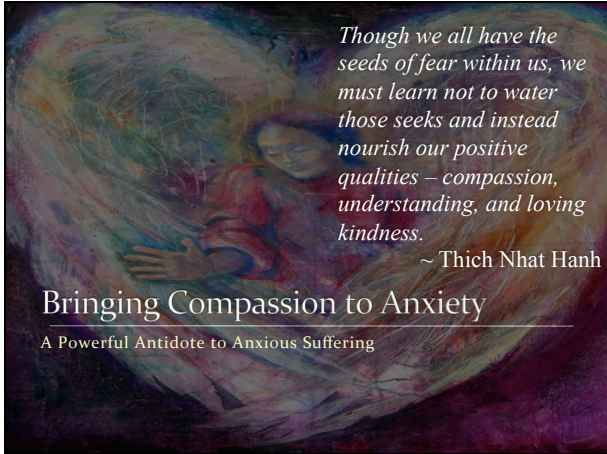




MY BARRIERS		
Important Value Area (From Values Worksheet: _____)		
YOU	Barriers	VALUE INTENTIONS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thoughts - Feelings & urges - Memories - Physical sensations • External <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problem solving - Brainstorming - Task analysis (small units) 	







Though we all have the seeds of fear within us, we must learn not to water those seeds and instead nourish our positive qualities – compassion, understanding, and loving kindness.
~ Thich Nhat Hanh

Bringing Compassion to Anxiety

A Powerful Antidote to Anxious Suffering



EXERCISE: Kindness Walking Meditation



**YOU ARE NOW LEAVING
THE COMFORT
ZONE**

Developing Comfort in Your Own Skin
Cultivating Willingness and Compassion Guided Exposure

EXERCISE:
Embracing the “bad,” Giving Away the “Good”

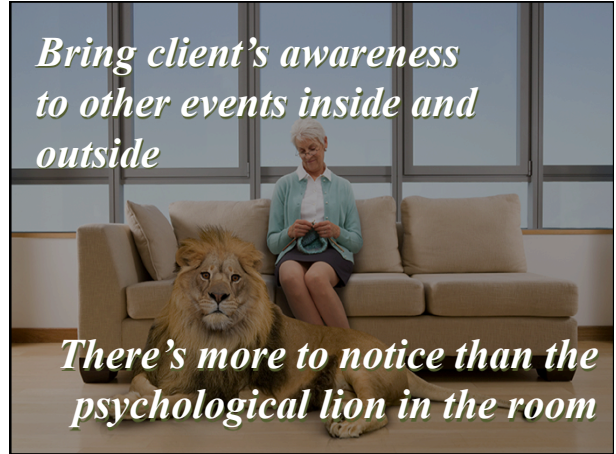
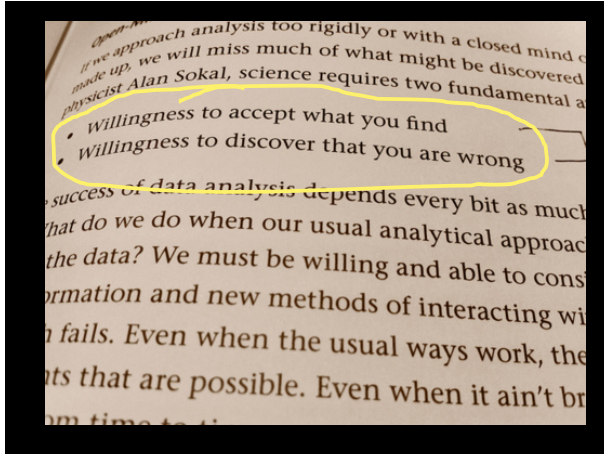
Suggestions for Tonglen

On the Spot too!

FEEL Exercises

- ✓ *Willingly Dizzy*
- ✓ *Willingly Out of Breath*
- ✓ *Being Willingly Aerobic*
- ✓ *Staring at Self in a Mirror*

- Identify a valued domain
- Practice FEEL exercise
- Apply mindful acceptance & kindness
- Chart progress
- Reflect on practice
- Repeat FEEL exercises
- Review ratings on worksheet





EXERCISE: Bubble Wand



Making Peace with a Difficult Past

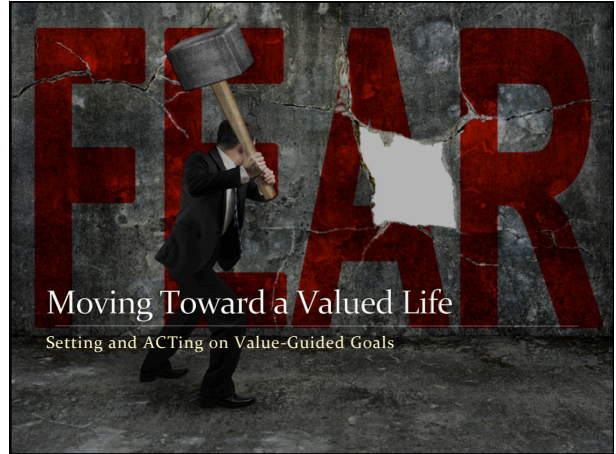
Changing Our Relationship With Our Trauma History



EXERCISE: Grounding in the NOW



Documentary
OF YOU
THE STORY OF
CONTENT



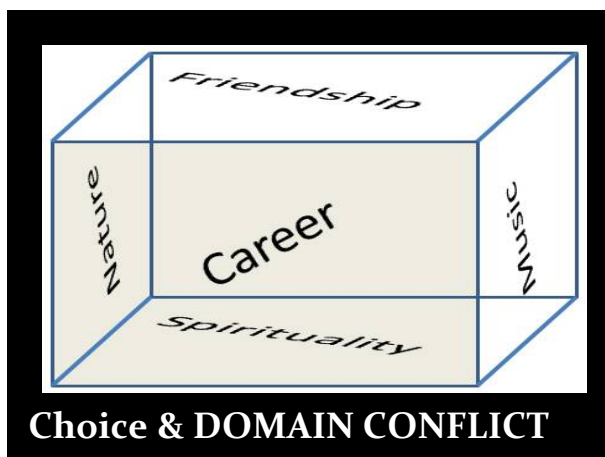
Value and Goals Worksheet			
My Valued intention is: <i>Being a good and supportive mom with my kids</i>			
The SMART goal I want to achieve is: <i>Attending my daughter Mary's school concerts</i>			
Steps toward achieving my SMART goal	Barriers	Strategies	Date(s) completed
1. Go to quiet place every other day and imagine myself being at next school concert.	Stress of knowing that eventually I'll have to attend the concert	Practice FEEL exercise & Observer Self skills. Make a list why attending concert is important for living out my values.	9/15 9/17 9/19
2. Attend an outdoor concert with family.	Fear of everyone around me knowing that I'm nervous and may have a panic attack at any moment	Practice watching my mind from an observer perspective. Practice WAF surfing if panic arises.	10/15
3. Sit twice in empty auditorium to become familiar with the surroundings two weeks before concert.	Fear (thought) that I'll feel so anxious that I won't be able to make it through the concert when people are around	Practice watching thoughts and feelings mindfully and with kindness. Keep eyes on value of being a good mom and supporting my kids.	11/1 11/14
4. Go to two rehearsals when few people are around.	Fear of not being able to escape without interrupting the rehearsal	Practice FEEL exercise & Observer Self skills. Watch thoughts, feelings, images and let them be—just WANR again	11/20 11/28
5. Attend daughter's school concert.	Fear (thought) of embarrassing Mary if I have a panic attack during the concert	Let thoughts be, and focus on Mary's performance and the value of being a supportive mom. Practice WAF surfing if I feel panic.	12/10

Navigating Value Conflicts



Possible Signs

- ✓ Procrastination
- ✓ Use of words like ... should, ought, have to, must
- ✓ Excuses (reason giving) that name values
- ✓ Strong emotional charge directed at self
- ✓ Sense of stuckness



Navigating Value Conflicts



Watch for

- ✓ Relative importance
- ✓ Win-win or win-lose
 - ✓ Balancing acts
- ✓ Short changing values

Support Flexibility & Acceptance
"Life as a dance"

