

DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 15



(Distress Tolerance Worksheets 8, 8a, 12)

Mindfulness of Current Thoughts

1. OBSERVE YOUR THOUGHTS.

- As waves, coming and going.
- Not suppressing thoughts.
- Not judging thoughts.
- Acknowledging their presence.
- Not keeping thoughts around.
- Not analyzing thoughts.
- Practicing willingness.
- Stepping back and observing thoughts as they run in and out of your mind.

2. ADOPT A CURIOUS MIND.

- Ask, “Where do my thoughts come from?” Watch and see.
- Notice that every thought that comes also goes out of your mind.
- Observe but do not evaluate your thoughts. Let go of judgments.

3. REMEMBER: YOU ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS.

- Do not necessarily act on thoughts.
- Remember times when you have had very different thoughts.
- Remind yourself that catastrophic thinking is “emotion mind.”
- Remember how you think when you are not feeling such intense suffering and pain.

4. DON'T BLOCK OR SUPPRESS THOUGHTS.

- Ask, “What sensations are these thoughts trying to avoid?” Turn your mind to the sensation. Then come back to the thought. Repeat several times.
- Step back; allow your thoughts to come and go as you observe your breath.
- Play with your thoughts: Repeat them out loud over and over as fast as you can. Sing them. Imagine the thoughts as the words of a clown, as recordings getting all tangled up; as cute animals you can cuddle up to; as bright colors running through your mind; as only sounds.
- Try loving your thoughts.

Practicing Mindfulness of Thoughts

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS OF THOUGHTS BY OBSERVING THEM

- ☐ 1. Notice thoughts as they come into your mind. As a thought comes into your mind, say “a thought has entered my mind.” Label the thought as a thought, saying, “The thought [describe thought] arose in my mind.” Use a gentle voice tone.
- ☐ 2. As you notice thoughts in your mind, ask, “Where did the thought come from?” Then watch your mind to see if you can see where it came from.
- ☐ 3. Step back from your mind, as if you are on top of a mountain and your mind is just a boulder down below. Gaze at your mind, watching what thoughts come up when you are watching it. Come back into your mind before you stop.
- ☐ 4. Close your eyes and scan your body for the first physical sensation that you notice. Then scan your mind for the first thought you notice. Shuttle back and forth between scanning for physical sensations and scanning for thoughts. Another time, replace scanning your body for physical sensations to scanning yourself for any emotional feelings. Then shuttle back and forth between an emotional feeling and a thought.

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS OF THOUGHTS BY USING WORDS AND VOICE TONE

- ☐ 5. Verbalize thoughts or beliefs out loud, using a nonjudgmental voice tone, over and over and over:
 - ☐ As fast as you can until the thoughts make no sense.
 - ☐ Very, very slowly (one syllable or word per breath).
 - ☐ In a different voice from yours (high- or low-pitched, like a cartoon character or celebrity).
 - ☐ As a dialogue on a TV comedy show (“You’ll never believe what thought went through my mind. I was thinking, ‘I’m a jerk.’ Can you believe that?”).
 - ☐ As songs, sung wholeheartedly and dramatically, in a tune that fits the thoughts.

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS OF THOUGHTS WITH OPPOSITE ACTION

- ☐ 6. Relax your face and body while imagining accepting your thoughts as only thoughts—sensations of the brain.
- ☐ 7. Imagine things you would do if you stopped believing everything you think.
- ☐ 8. Rehearse in your mind the things that you would do if you did not view your thoughts as facts.
- ☐ 9. Practice loving your thoughts as they go through your mind.

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PRACTICE MINDFULNESS OF THOUGHTS BY IMAGINING THAT YOUR MIND IS:

- ☐ 10. A conveyor belt, and that thoughts and feelings are coming down the belt. Put each thought or feeling in a box labeled with the type of thought that it is (e.g., worry thoughts, thoughts about my past, thoughts about my mother, planning what to do thoughts). Just keep observing and sorting thoughts into the labeled boxes.
- ☐ 11. A river, and that thoughts and feelings are boats going down the river. Imagine sitting on the grass, watching the boats go by. Try not to jump on the boat.
- ☐ 12. A railroad track, and that thoughts and feelings are train cars going by. Try not to jump on the train.
- ☐ 13. A leaf that has dropped off a tree into a beautiful creek flowing by you as you sit on the grass. Each time a thought or image comes into your mind, imagine that it is written or pictured on the leaf floating by. Let each leaf go by, watching as it goes out of sight.
- ☐ 14. The sky, and thoughts have wings and can fly through the sky. Watch as each flies out of sight.
- ☐ 15. The sky, and thoughts are clouds. Notice each thought-cloud as it drifts by, letting it drift out of your mind.
- ☐ 16. A white room with two doors. Through one door, thoughts come in; through the other, thoughts go out. Watch each thought with attention and curiosity until it leaves. Let go of judgments. Let go of analyzing thoughts and of figuring out if they fit the facts. As a thought comes into your mind, say, "A thought has entered my mind."

Other: _____

Other: _____

Other: _____

Other: _____

Other: _____