



Feeding the Hungry Tiger metaphor



(From: "Get out of your mind and into your life" Steven C. Hayes 2005)

Imagine you wake up one morning and just outside your front door you find an adorable tiger kitten meowing. Of course you bring the cuddly little thing inside to keep it as a pet. After playing with him for a while, you notice he is still meowing, nonstop, and you realise that he must be hungry.

You feed him a bit of bloody, red mince meat knowing that's what tigers like to eat. You do this every day, and every day your pet tiger grows a bit bigger. Over the course of two years, your tiger's daily meals change from hamburger scraps to prime ribs, to entire sides of beef. Soon your little pet no longer meows when hungry. Instead, he growls ferociously at you whenever he thinks it is meal time. Your cute little pet has turned into an uncontrollable, savage beast that will tear you apart if he doesn't get what he wants.

Your struggle with your painful thoughts & feelings can be compared to this imaginary pet tiger. Every time you empower your pain by feeding it red meat of experiential avoidance (i.e. anything you do that helps you avoid upsetting thoughts and feelings), you help your pain grow larger and a little bit stronger. Feeding it in this manner seems like the prudent thing to do. The pain-tiger growls ferociously telling you to feed it whatever it wants or it will eat you. Yet, every time you feed it, you help the pain to become stronger, more intimidating, and more controlling of your life.

So what now?



I am willing to accept that my current coping strategies are not working. But that's ok.



I am going to be kind to myself. Everyone struggles



I am....

(fill in your own kindness idea here)