Identify current coping techniques

Metaphors are often used to convey information about ACT.

The Cold Shower metaphor

Imagine two scenarios: You are thinking of taking a shower but you discover there is no hot water:

1. If you had the choice to have a cold shower…or not to, you might choose not to because it's cold, uncomfortable! You could not shower, 'I will be cold afterwards', 'I'm not that smelly' or 'I'll wait until the morning' etc. You might not shower because there's no point in putting up with that much discomfort for no good reason.

2. But if a close relative or friend was getting married that day, you might want to be clean and fresh. If you stopped for a few minutes and you thought about the person getting married and how much you care about them, and the enjoyment you would get sharing their special day, would you put up with a few minutes of discomfort in the cold shower, because it was <u>important to you</u>? Might you be able to put aside your feelings of discomfort, because you wanted to be fresh and clean for the great day ahead?

In this instance, we can be prepared to make room for the un-comfortableness of the cold. We can choose discomfort in the service of nourishing relationships with people we care about.

In both scenarios, the water is the same unpleasant temperature.

Take a moment to consider, which of the 2 scenarios would bring greater fulfillment? And why?

When we increase our willingness to make room for un-comfortableness it can increase our ability to take on experiences we might previously have avoided. For example, in the second scenario, we made room for the un-comfortableness of the cold shower because it was important.. In the first scenario, we only focused on the uncomfortable feelings and preferred to avoid the shower altogether.

Finding out what's important to us in life can really help to provide us with direction when uncomfortable thoughts and feelings take us away from what is important

So if someone was socially anxious, yet they wanted to go to a gathering. They could choose to make room for some discomfort (uncertainty, awkwardness) because they value connecting with people. This is about being willing to experience discomfort.

Now take a few minutes to consider something thing you find uncomfortable?
What is it?

> *For example Vivienne* finds large team meetings difficult and uncomfortable, she experiences a physical reaction, her breathing shallows, her heart rate increases and she sweats (autonomic nervous system). She has thoughts that 'I am not going to be able to get my point across', 'I am not very good with lots of people' and in response she often avoids the meetings and often withdraws from team events. This is having a detrimental effect on her career.*

Now think about what you do to cope with it? Consider what do you do to make yourself feel better when you have an unwanted thought, image, or experience?

Are any of these familiar? Tick all that apply.

- drinking alcohol,
- comfort eating,
- being a 'good listener' (asking lots of questions, but sharing little of yourself),
- arriving late,
- leaving early,
- avoiding social events altogether,
- deep breathing,
- relaxation techniques,
- using positive affirmations,
- disputing negative thoughts,
- analysing childhood,
- blaming parents or others,
- telling yourself to 'get over it',
- self-hypnosis
- _____(others)

Now how helpful are these coping strategies in the *short term?*
_____

Did they help reduce your unwanted feeling?
_____

Or did they add to them?

_____

What about the *long-term?*
_____

What do they cost you in terms of energy/time?

_____