# Therapy Session: struggles with emotional dysregulation, avoidance, and internal conflict

T: Good morning, Sarah. How are you doing today?

C: I'm a bit anxious, I guess. I don't know, it's just hard to feel anything, you know?

T: That makes sense. It sounds like you're struggling with emotional dysregulation. Can you tell me more about what that feels like for you? [emotional dysregulation]

C: It's like I just numb out and feel nothing. Sometimes I get angry, but it feels so intense that I just shut down completely.

T: I see. It sounds like you're trying to avoid the pain that comes with feeling emotions deeply. Can you tell me more about what happens when you feel anxious or overwhelmed? [avoidance]

C: I just try to distract myself with work or TV or something. I don't know, it's just easier that way.

T: That makes sense. It sounds like you're trying to avoid feelings by distracting yourself. But what's the cost of that for you? [cost]

C: I don't know, I just feel empty, I guess. Like I'm not really living my life.

T: I can see how that would be frustrating for you. Have you ever noticed any thoughts that come up when you're feeling anxious or overwhelmed? [cognitive fusion]

C: Yeah, I get these thoughts like "I'm not good enough" or "I'm going to fail." They just come up and I feel like I'm stuck in this negative cycle.

T: It sounds like you're caught up in your thoughts and they're really affecting your mood. Let's try to practice some defusion techniques to help you see these thoughts as just thoughts, rather than reality. Can you try repeating after me: "This is just a thought"? [defusion]

C: Okay, "This is just a thought." But it feels so real, you know?

T: I understand that it's hard to believe at first, but try to see it as just a thought. Like a thought bubble in a cartoon, it's just floating there, not necessarily connected to reality. Can you imagine that?

C: I guess so.

T: Good. Now, let's talk about values. What's most important to you in life? What are your non-negotiables? [values]

C: I guess I value honesty and compassion. I want to be able to connect with people and understand them.

T: Those are beautiful values. Can you see how your current behavior might be at odds with those values? [values-based action]

C: Yeah, I guess so. If I'm always avoiding emotions and distracting myself, I'm not really being honest with myself or others.

T: Exactly. And what about compassion? How can you practice more compassion with yourself when you're feeling overwhelmed? [self-compassion]

C: I don't know, I just feel like I'm failing or something.

T: Sarah, you're not failing. You're just struggling, and that's okay. It takes a lot of courage to admit when we're struggling. Can you try to see yourself with more kindness and understanding, even when you're feeling overwhelmed? [self-as-context]

C: I guess so. But it feels so hard.

T: I know it's hard. But try to imagine that you're observing yourself from outside your body, like a chessboard. You're not the pieces on the board, you're the one moving the pieces around. You have the power to choose how you respond to your emotions, even when they're overwhelming. Can you try to see yourself in that way? [self-as-context]

C: Yeah, I can try.

T: Good. Now, let's talk about committed action. What's one small step you can take today to move towards your values, even if it feels scary or uncomfortable? [committed action]

C: I don't know... I guess I could try to sit with my anxiety for a few minutes without distracting myself.

T: That's a great start. Can you commit to doing that today, even if it feels hard? [committed action]

C: Yeah, I'll try.

T: I'm proud of you, Sarah. Remember, it's okay to struggle, and it's okay to ask for help. We're in this together.

C: Thanks, I feel a little better, I think.

T: That's great. Let's check in next week and see how you're doing.