

EXTRA ACTIVITY

What You Can and Can't Control

The Serenity Request

May I have the strength to change the things that I can change;

the courage to accept the things I cannot change;

and the wisdom to know the difference

One way to work out what you can and cannot change (or control) is to think about what you could do if you were offered a lot of money to do it. This activity asks you to list four things that you don't normally do but which you COULD do if you were paid enough and four things that you COULD NEVER do (even for a million pounds!)

Things I COULD do

If I had to/if it was worth it. Example: You could shout in the street

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

Things I COULDN'T do

However hard you tried. Example: You couldn't jump 7 feet in the air!

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Extra Costs of Unwanted Thoughts and Feelings

In one of the extra activities suggested in connection with ACT 1, you were asked to identify the thoughts and feelings that are bothering you and distressing you at the moment. These may be thoughts and feelings you are hoping that the ACTivate Your Life course will help you to deal with. We are now suggesting that you build on this previous activity by thinking about how the problems you identified are having an impact on your lifestyle. Are they holding you back from doing the things you need to do and want to do? Thus depression, anxiety, physical pain and other problems often incur serious “extra costs” by limiting your lifestyle and spoiling your enjoyment of life.

For example, anxiety may be reducing your confidence and holding you back from doing things you would enjoy, or depression may be draining you of energy and may have led to you losing interest in things. Extreme self-consciousness may be holding you back from joining in social events that would lift your spirits.

This activity will help you to appreciate how your negative thoughts and feelings are impacting on your lifestyle. As a ‘thought experiment’, imagine waking up tomorrow morning and finding that all your negative thoughts and feelings (those you listed in last week’s activity) have suddenly and ‘miraculously’ vanished. If this were to happen, how would it allow you to change your lifestyle? What extra things would you be able to do?

List some of the extra things you would be able to do if such a ‘miracle’ were to happen ...

1

2

3

4

So – you have now identified extra benefits that would be gained if your current problem thoughts and feelings suddenly disappeared. Look at this list again and now think whether you might be able to do some of these things even without the ‘miracle cure’! For example, if you listed something like “I’d start going to the gym again” or “I’d get back to playing my guitar”, think whether you could make a special effort to do some of these things even while you are still experiencing the problem thoughts and feelings. Even if you have little enthusiasm about getting back to these activities, they are likely to do you good and will certainly reduce the overall ‘costs’ of your problem thoughts and feelings.

EXTRA ACTIVITY

My Quick Fixes

Whenever we experience unpleasant feelings (feelings that we don't like or "can't stand"), our natural reaction is to get rid of them, and we often use "quick fix" strategies to avoid these feelings, to escape from them or to neutralise or cover them up. This activity asks you to identify the quick fixes that you use, or have used in the past, to try to get rid of distressing feelings.

The list below includes many quick fix strategies that people often use:

- Comfort eating (and bingeing)
- Alcohol
- Smoking
- Self-harm (cutting, etc.)
- Drugs
- Withdrawal (stay in bed, etc.)
- Excessive spending
- Gambling
- Reckless actions

Place a tick beside any of the listed strategies you have ever used as a way of avoiding or escaping from an unwanted feeling (for example, to "blot out" anxiety, stress or guilt).

Feeling	Quick Fix	Immediate effects	Longer-term effects
<i>e.g. Depressed</i>	<i>e.g. Go shopping</i>	<i>e.g. Buying things gives me a lift</i>	<i>e.g. Feel bad, worry about increased debt</i>

EXTRA ACTIVITY

How My Reactions Have Changed

This Extra Activity focuses on how your reactions to things have changed over the years. Have your tastes changed? Did you once have fears that have now disappeared?

PART 1 – Reactions that have changed over the years

Think of three things (music, foods, people, activities or situations) to which your attitude / reaction / taste has completely changed over the years

1**2****3****PART 2 – Reactions I would like to change**

Now think of three of your CURRENT attitudes / reactions / tastes to any objects, situations or people that you would like to completely change (and that it might be possible to change)

1**2****3**

Is there anything you could do NOW to bring about any of these desirable changes?

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Mindful Activities

1. Mindful Arm Stretch

This activity combines Mindfulness and Acceptance. It involves holding a body position that will be uncomfortable and may even be somewhat painful while focusing directly and Mindfully on all of the sensations that are generated. The task is simple. Just hold out one of your arms, at shoulder level, either directly in front of you or to the side and maintain it in that position for some time.

Continue holding your arm in this position even when it feels very heavy. Some of the sensations you feel at this time are likely to be unpleasant, but focus on these with curiosity and interest, rather than trying to distract yourself or struggling to 'bear it'. This means that you turn toward rather than away from the unpleasant sensations. This will help you to develop the skill of Acceptance.

This activity shows how we can engage with unpleasant sensations in a different way, not trying to eradicate them but 'being with them' and 'allowing them to be present'.

2. Mindful Candle Watching

Light a candle and simply spend some time watching the movement of the flame. As thoughts and feelings arise, as they naturally will, just let them come and go, and gently bring your attention back to the candle and the flame.

ACTivate Your Life – Notes

Use the space below to note any thoughts and feelings about your own issues and any relevant ideas and strategies that you have learned from the ACTivate Your Life course.

Because some of the notes you make on these sheets may be very sensitive, please make sure that you keep them in a safe and private place.