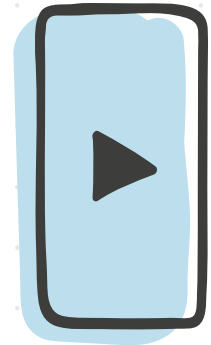


ACT 2

Facing Up To Life

Some things you can change and some you cannot.
 You cannot change how you are feeling by 'an act of will'.
 You cannot just...
cheer up calm down pull yourself together or get over it
 ...we cannot switch our feelings on and off.



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

Struggling just makes things worse!

If we struggled in a quicksand, we'd sink faster. And when we dig down to get out of a hole, the hole just gets deeper. Sometimes we need to be Mindful rather than just doing what comes naturally. There are dangers in relying too much on habit or 'intuition'.



Intrusive thoughts

Everyone has unwanted thoughts, and some people are very upset by the extreme thoughts that come to them. The best response is to accept that the thoughts are there and just let them come and go. If you try to avoid them or suppress them, they will get worse – stronger and more frequent. Just notice them; and let them naturally come and go.

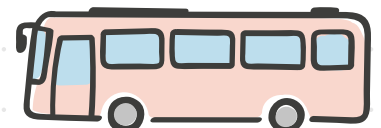
Pain and suffering are not the same

How much we suffer as a result of pain will depend a lot on how we respond to the pain. If the pain can't be controlled, then it is best to accept it and – as far as possible – to carry in as normal rather than focusing on the pain and trying to fight it (because pain fights back!).
 It is very unfortunate that our reactions to distress (including physical pain, depression, anxiety, fear, loss of confidence, etc.) often make things much worse for us – we can be our own worst enemy!

When you have an emotional problem – don't put life on hold 'until the problem is sorted'. Putting life on hold will often mean that the problem will continue for longer – while you're having a really bad time.

The passengers on the bus

As the driver of the bus, you will certainly have some undesirable passengers – life is like that. If you refused to let them on your bus, or tried to throw them off, there would be trouble. It's best just to carry on with the journey and hope that they won't be on board for too long. This is really about you and your journey through life – don't let your suffering stop you from living your life – and recognise that it's often better to accept things that cannot be changed – don't struggle!



Our natural reactions to pain and distress often add to our suffering. We often increase our distress when we try...

- 1 to fix what can't be fixed
- 2 to suppress unwanted thoughts and feelings
- 3 to put our life on hold until 'things get sorted'
- 4 to avoid situations that we fear

Often, our avoidance is unnecessary

There is no real danger, but avoiding the situation increases our belief that facing up to it would have terrible consequences – avoidance keeps this fiction going!

To overcome a needless fear...

EXPOSE yourself to the thing you fear

CONFRONT the feared object or situation

and **ACCEPT** that when you do this...

you **WILL** experience fear and anxiety

Acceptance of discomfort, sadness, anxiety and pain leads to less suffering

Being willing to accept discomfort and pain will mean that you don't struggle against the pain, etc. The natural effect of such 'exposure' is often to reduce the fear, etc. This is called The Acceptance Bonus.

Avoidance of negative emotions

We often use 'Quick Fixes' to try to avoid unwanted emotions such as fear, depression, worry, guilt, anger and embarrassment. These include:



REACTING

Reacting is automatic, reflexive, uncontrolled and driven by impulse and emotion.

RESPONDING

Responding is more conscious and deliberate; it involves thoughtful consideration.

Responding to physical pain

Struggling to overcome physical pain can increase suffering. When pain is chronic, and there is no effective means of relief, then it is best to use Acceptance – this can reduce the suffering.

Mindfulness is also useful, as is commitment to carrying on doing the things that matter.

What needs to change?

When we have a negative response to something, we often assume that for our response to change, the object of our fear, anger, etc. has to change. But this is not the case – our response can change even if the thing itself does not change.

You don't have to feel motivated to ACT motivated – and you don't have to be 'in the mood' to do what needs to be done.



Doing what needs to be done

Our actions are often (too often) dictated by our feelings. We do what we feel like doing at the moment even if we know that it is not the best thing to do. If we are more Mindful, then we do what we have decided is the best thing to do – whether or not it fits with our current mood. It's up to you to decide what YOU think is the best thing to do.

And then the wise course of action is to do 'the right thing' – whether or not you feel motivated.

**FEEL THE FEAR...
AND DO IT ANYWAY**