

YOUR VALUES: *What really matters to you, deep in your heart? What do you want to do with your time on this planet? What sort of person do you want to be? What personal strengths or qualities do you want to develop?*

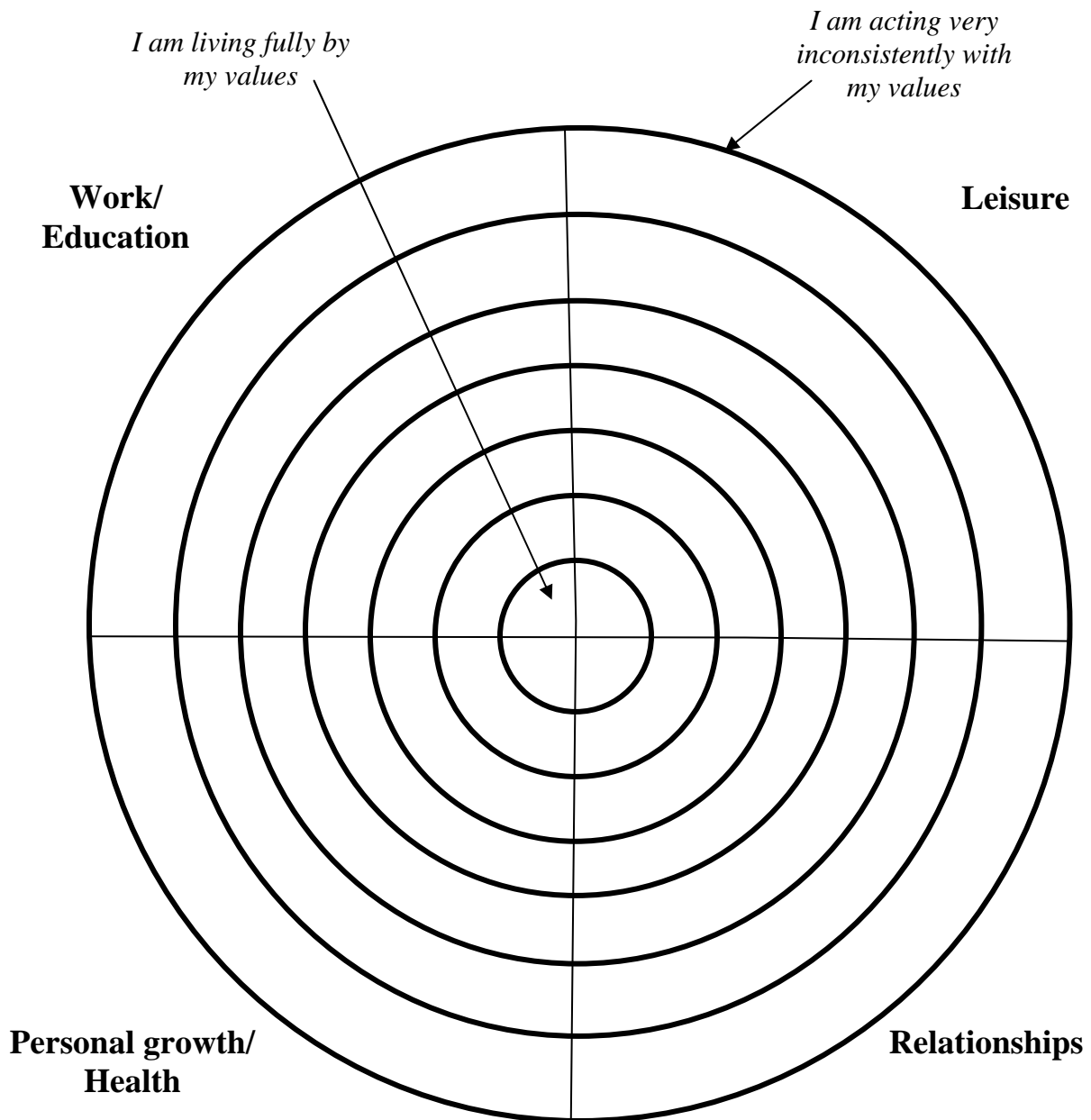
1. Work/Education: includes workplace, career, education, skills development, etc.

2. Relationships: includes your partner, children, parents, relatives, friends, co-workers, and other social contacts.

3. Personal Growth/Health: may include religion, spirituality, creativity, life skills, meditation, yoga, nature; exercise, nutrition, and/or addressing health risk factors like smoking, alcohol, drugs or overeating etc

4. Leisure: how you play, relax, stimulate, or enjoy yourself; activities for rest, recreation, fun and creativity.

THE BULL'S EYE: make an X in each area of the dart board, to represent where you stand today.



Dissecting The Problem

This form is to help gather information about the nature of the main challenge, issue, or problem facing you. First, please summarize, in 1 or 2 sentences, what the main issue or problem is:

Second, please describe, in 1 or 2 sentences, how it affects your life, and what it stops you from doing or being:

Regardless of what your problem is – whether it is a physical illness, a difficult relationship, a work situation, a financial crisis, a performance issue, the loss of a loved one, a severe injury, or a clinical disorder such as depression - when we dissect the problem, we usually find four major elements that contribute significantly to the issue. These are represented in the boxes below. Please write as much as you can in each box, about the thoughts, feelings and actions that contribute to or worsen the challenge, problem or issue facing you.

<p>Entanglement With Thoughts What memories, worries, fears, self-criticisms, or other unhelpful thoughts do you dwell on, or get “caught up” in, related to this issue? What thoughts do you allow to hold you back or push you around or bring you down?</p>	<p>Life-draining Actions: What are you currently doing that makes your life worse in the long term: keeps you stuck; wastes your time or money; drains your energy; restricts your life, impacts negatively on your health, work or relationships; maintains or worsens the problems you are dealing with?</p>
<p>Struggle With Feelings What emotions, feelings, urges, impulses, or sensations (associated with this issue) do you fight with, avoid, suppress, try to get rid of, or otherwise struggle with?</p>	<p>Avoiding Challenging Situations: What situations, activities, people or places are you avoiding or staying away from? What have you quit, withdrawn from, dropped out of? What do you keep “putting off” until later?</p>

The Life Compass

In the main part of each large box, write a few key words about what is important or meaningful to you in this domain of life: What sort of person do you want to be? What sort of personal strengths and qualities do you want to cultivate? What you want to stand for? What do you want to do? How do you ideally want to behave? (If a box seems irrelevant to you, that's okay: just leave it blank. If you get stuck on a box, then skip it, and come back to it later. And it's okay if the same words appear in several or all boxes: this helps you identify core values that cut through many domains of life.)

Once you've done that for all boxes, go through them and in the upper small square inside each box, mark on a scale of 0-10 how important these values are to you, at this point in your life: 0= no importance, 10= extremely important. (It's okay if several squares all have the same score.)

Finally, in the lower small square inside each box, mark on a scale of 0-10 how effectively you are living by these values right now. 0= not at all 10= living by them fully (Again, it's okay if several squares all have the same score.)

Finally have a good look at what you've written. What does this tell you about: a) What is important in your life? b) What you are currently neglecting?

Parenting	Personal Growth	Leisure	Spirituality
Health	Work	Community & Environment	
Family Relationships	Intimate Relationships	Social Relationships	

The Problems and Values Worksheet

Acceptance & Commitment Therapy aims to reduce suffering and enrich life, as shown in the diagram below. To help in this process, there are four lots of information that are particularly important. These are represented in the four columns below. Between now and the next session, see what you can write in or add to each column.

STRUGGLE & SUFFERING		RICH & MEANINGFUL LIFE	
<p>Problematic Thoughts And Feelings: What memories, worries, fears, self-criticisms, or other thoughts do you get “caught up” in? What emotions, feelings, urges, or sensations do you struggle with?</p>	<p>Problematic Actions: What are you doing that makes your life worse in the long run: that keeps you stuck; wastes your time or money; drains your energy; impacts negatively on your health or your relationships; or leads to you “missing out” on life?</p>	<p>Values: What matters to you in the “big picture”? What do you want to stand for? What personal qualities and strengths do you want to develop? How do you want to enrich or improve your relationships? How would you like to “grow” or develop, through addressing your issue(s) or problem(s)?</p>	<p>Goals & Actions: What are you currently doing that improves your life in the long run? What do you want to start or do more of? What life-enriching goals do you want to achieve? What life-enhancing actions do you want to take? What life-improving skills would you like to develop?</p>

VITALITY VS. SUFFERING DIARY

Between now and next session, keep a record of what you do when painful thoughts and feelings arise, and notice if these actions lead to increased vitality or increased suffering

Painful Thoughts/ Feelings/ Urges/ Sensations/ Memories that showed up today	Things I did - when those thoughts and feelings showed up - that lead to <u>VITALITY</u> (i.e. enriched my life, or improved my health, wellbeing, or relationships in the long term)	Things I did - when those thoughts and feelings showed up - that lead to <u>SUFFERING</u> (i.e. restricted or worsened my life, drained my health and wellbeing, or hurt my relationships in the long term)

JOIN THE DOTS

What are the main thoughts and feelings showing up in your life today, that are problematic for you? Write these down below under “Body” and “Mind”. Next write down everything you have ever tried to get rid of, avoid, suppress, escape or distract yourself from these thoughts or feelings. Finally consider the long term outcomes.

Body

Feelings, sensations, urges,
cravings, symptoms of physical illness

Mind

Thoughts, memories, beliefs,
worries, self-judgments

D - Distraction: how have you tried to distract yourself from these thoughts and feelings (eg TV, shopping, etc)?

O - Opting out: we often opt out (quit, avoid, or withdraw from) people, places, activities, and situations when we don't like the thoughts and feelings they bring up for us. What are some of the things you opt out of?

T -Thinking: how have you tried to think your way out of it? (e.g. blaming others, worrying, rehashing the past, fantasizing, positive thinking, problem-solving, planning, self-criticism, ‘What if?’, ‘If only ...’, ‘Why me?’, ‘Not fair!’, analyzing, trying to make sense of it, debating with yourself, denial, beating yourself up, etc.)

S – Substances, Self-harm, other Strategies: What substances have you tried putting into your body (including food and prescription medication)? Have you ever tried self-harming activities, such as suicide attempts or reckless risk-taking? Any other strategies you can think of, e.g. excessive sleeping?

Did these strategies get rid of your painful thoughts and feelings *in the long term* – so that they never came back?

When you have used these strategies excessively, rigidly, or inappropriately, what have they cost you in terms of health, vitality, energy, relationships, work, leisure, money, missed opportunities, wasted time?

Getting Hooked

In ACT, we talk colloquially of being “hooked by your mind” or “hooked by thoughts” – by which we mean you get all caught up in your thoughts and they exert a strong influence over your actions. In what situations does your mind manage to hook you? What sort of things does it say in order to hook you? How do you manage to unhook yourself?

Date/Time Triggering Events or Situation	What did your mind say or do to hook you?	How did your behavior change when you got hooked? What did those actions cost you?	Did you manage to unhook yourself? If so, how?

EXPANSION PRACTICE SHEET

Expansion means opening up and making room for difficult feelings, urges and sensations – thereby allowing them to ‘flow through’ you without a struggle. You don’t have to like or want these feelings – you just make room for them and allow them to be there even though they are unpleasant. Once this skill is learned, if these feelings should resurface, you can rapidly make room for them and let them ‘flow on by’ – so you can invest your time and energy in doing meaningful life-enhancing activities, instead of struggling. Aim to practice at least once a day breathing into and making room for difficult feelings and sensations

Expansion Practice Form			
Day/Date/Time Feelings/sensations	How long I practiced for (mins) Struggle switch rating, 0 -10 10 = switch on, 0 = switch off, 5 = halfway point (tolerance)	Used a CD or MP3 to assist? yes/ no	Benefits and/or difficulties

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Struggling vs. Opening Up

Fill in this worksheet once a day to help keep track of what happens when you struggle with your emotions and what happens when you open up and make room for them.

Struggling vs. Opening Up Worksheet			
Day/Date/Time Feelings/Sensations What events triggered this?	How much did you struggle with these feelings? 0 = no struggle, 10 = maximum struggle. What did you actually do during the struggle?	Did you open up and make room for these feelings, allowing them to be there even though they were unpleasant? If so, how did you do that?	What was the long-term effect of the way you responded to your feelings? Did it enhance life or worsen it?

Simple Ways to Get Present

Take Ten Breaths

This is a simple exercise to center yourself and connect with your environment. Practice it throughout the day, especially any time you find yourself getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.

1. Take ten slow, deep breaths. Focus on breathing out as slowly as possible until the lungs are completely empty—and then allow them to refill by themselves.
2. Notice the sensations of your lungs emptying. Notice them refilling. Notice your rib cage rising and falling. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your shoulders.
3. See if you can let your thoughts come and go as if they're just passing cars, driving past outside your house.
4. Expand your awareness: simultaneously notice your breathing and your body. Then look around the room and notice what you can see, hear, smell, touch, and feel.

Drop Anchor

This is another simple exercise to center yourself and connect with the world around you. Practice it throughout the day, especially any time you find yourself getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.

1. Plant your feet into the floor.
2. Push them down—notice the floor beneath you, supporting you.
3. Notice the muscle tension in your legs as you push your feet down.
4. Notice your entire body—and the feeling of gravity flowing down through your head, spine, and legs into your feet.
5. Now look around and notice what you can see and hear around you. Notice where you are and what you're doing.

Notice Five Things

This is yet another simple exercise to center yourself and engage with your environment. Practice it throughout the day, especially any time you find yourself getting caught up in your thoughts and feelings.

1. Pause for a moment
2. Look around and notice five things that you can see.
3. Listen carefully and notice five things that you can hear.
4. Notice five things that you can feel in contact with your body (for example, your watch against your wrist, your trousers against your legs, the air on your face, your feet upon the floor, your back against the chair).
5. Finally, do all of the above simultaneously

Informal Mindfulness Practice

1. Mindfulness in Your Morning Routine

Pick an activity that constitutes part of your daily morning routine, such as brushing your teeth, shaving, making the bed, or taking a shower. When you do it, totally focus attention on what you're doing: the body movements, the taste, the touch, the smell, the sight, the sound, and so on. Notice what's happening with an attitude of openness and curiosity.

For example, when you're in the shower, notice the sounds of the water as it sprays out of the nozzle, as it hits your body, and as it gurgles down the drain. Notice the temperature of the water, and the feel of it in your hair, and on your shoulders, and running down your legs. Notice the smell of the soap and shampoo, and the feel of them against your skin. Notice the sight of the water droplets on the walls or shower curtain, the water dripping down your body and the steam rising upward. Notice the movements of your arms as you wash or scrub or shampoo.

When thoughts arise, acknowledge them, and let them come and go like passing cars. Again and again, you'll get caught up in your thoughts. As soon as you realize this has happened, gently acknowledge it, note what the thought was that distracted you, and bring your attention back to the shower.

2. Mindfulness of Domestic Chores

Pick an activity such as ironing clothes, washing dishes, vacuuming floors—something mundane that you have to do to make your life work—and do it mindfully. For example, when ironing clothes, notice the color and shape of the clothing, and the pattern made by the creases, and the new pattern as the creases disappear. Notice the hiss of the steam, the creak of the ironing board, the faint sound of the iron moving over the material. Notice the grip of your hand on the iron, and the movement of your arm and your shoulder.

If boredom or frustration arises, simply acknowledge it, and bring your attention back to the task at hand. When thoughts arise, acknowledge them, let them be, and bring your attention back to what you're doing. Again and again, your attention will wander. As soon as you realize this has happened, gently acknowledge it, note what distracted you, and bring your attention back to your current activity.

3. Mindfulness of Pleasant Activities

Pick an activity you enjoy such as cuddling with a loved one, eating lunch, stroking the cat, playing with the dog, walking in the park, listening to music, having a soothing hot bath, and so on. Do this activity mindfully: engage in it fully, using all five of your senses, and savor every moment. If and when your attention wanders, as soon as you realize it, note what distracted you, and re-engage in whatever you're doing.

The Mindful Breathing Practice Sheet

Mindful breathing practice enables you to develop several skills: the ability to focus and engage in what you are doing; the ability to let thoughts come and go without getting caught up in them; the ability to refocus when you realize you're distracted; and the ability to let your feelings be as they are without trying to control them. Even five minutes of practice a day can make a difference over time. Ten minutes twice a day or twenty minutes once a day is even better.

Mindful Breathing Practice Sheet			
Day/Date/Time(s) & how long I practiced for	Difficult thoughts and feelings that showed up	Used CD yes/ no	Benefits and/or difficulties

Overcoming F.E.A.R. - 1

Let's assume you have clarified your values, and set yourself a goal – but you haven't followed through on it. What stopped you? The F.E.A.R. acronym covers most of the common barriers:

F = Fusion (stuff your mind tells you that gets in the way when you get caught up in it)

E = Excessive goals (your goal is too big, or you lack the skills, time, money, health, or other resources)

A = Avoidance of discomfort (unwillingness to make room for the discomfort this challenge brings)

R = Remoteness from values (losing touch with - or forgetting - what is important or meaningful about this)

So now, in as few words as possible, write down everything that has stopped you following through:

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

Now go back, and label each answer with one or two of the letters F, E, A, or R – whichever best describe this barrier. In other words, was it F = Fusion with a story (e.g. I'll fail; it's too hard; I'll do it later; I'm too weak; I can't do it); was it E = Excessive goal (you lacked the time, money, health, facilities, skills, or support necessary; or it was just too big and you got overwhelmed); was it A = Avoidance of discomfort (you were unwilling to make room for the anxiety, frustration, fear of failure, or other uncomfortable thoughts and feelings); or was it R = remoteness from your values (you forgot or lost touch with the values underlying this goal)?

The antidote to F.E.A.R. is D.A.R.E.

D = Defusion

A = Acceptance of discomfort

R = Realistic goals

E = Embracing values

Go through your barriers, one by one, and work out how you can deal with them, using D.A.R.E. Below, you'll find some suggestions to help you.

Overcoming F.E.A.R. – 2

Defusion strategies: name the story, thank your mind, acknowledge ‘Here’s reason-giving’ or ‘Here’s judging’, name the demon/monster/passenger, recognize this is Radio Doom & Gloom broadcasting, or simply let the thoughts come and go like passing cars.

Acceptance strategies: name the feeling, observe it like a curious scientist, rate it on a scale of 1 to 10, commit to allowing it, breathe into it, make room for it, give it a shape and color.

Realistic goal-setting: if you lack skills, set new goals around learning them; if your goal is too big, break it down into small chunks; if you lack resources, brainstorm how you can get them; if you lack time, what are you willing to give up in order to make time?; if the goal is truly impossible, e.g. due to health or financial issues, or external barriers over which you have no direct influence, then set a different one.

Embracing values: connect with what matters to you about this goal. Is it truly meaningful? Is it aligned with your values? Is it truly important? Is it moving your life forward in the direction you wish to go?

Using these ideas (and others of your own, or of your therapist/coach), write down how you can respond to the barriers you listed above.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

Finally, ask yourself this question: am I willing to make room for the difficult thoughts and feelings that show up, without getting caught up in them or struggling with them, and take effective action, in order to do what matters, deep in my heart?

If so: go ahead and give it a go.

If not, consider these three questions:

- a) Does this really and truly matter to you?
- b) If it does, then what is the cost to you of avoiding it or putting it off?
- c) Would you rather have the vitality-draining pain of staying stuck, or the life-enhancing pain of moving forward?

The Willingness and Action Plan

My goal is to (be specific):

The values underlying my goal are:

The actions I will take to achieve that goal are (be specific):

The thoughts/memories, feelings, sensations, urges I'm willing to make room for (in order to achieve this goal):-

- Thoughts/memories:

- Feelings:

- Sensations:

- Urges:

- It would be useful to remind myself that:

- If necessary, I can break this goal down into smaller steps, such as:

- The smallest, easiest step I can begin with is:

- The time, day and date that I will take that first step, is: