

The Costs of Avoidance Worksheet

Complete the following sentences:

The thoughts I'd most like to get rid of are:

The feelings I'd most like to get rid of are:

The sensations I'd most like to get rid of are:

The memories I'd most like to get rid of are:

Next, take a few minutes to write a list of every single thing you've tried in order to avoid or get rid of these unpleasant thoughts or feelings. Try to remember every strategy you have ever used (whether deliberately or by default). Below is a guide to help you:

Distraction: list everything you have ever done to distract yourself from, or 'zone out', or take your mind off these painful thoughts, feelings, sensations or memories.

Opting out: list all the activities, interests, events, people, or places that you have avoided or withdrawn from, and all the opportunities you have missed out on, because you did not feel good or wanted to avoid feeling bad:

Thinking strategies: list all the different ways of thinking you have tried (deliberately or unintentionally) when painful thoughts and feelings started showing up. Tick any of the following that you have done, and write in any others:

- Worrying
- Dwelling on the past
- Fantasizing about the future
- Imagining escape scenarios (eg leaving your job or your partner)
- Imagining revenge scenarios
- Imagining suicide scenarios
- Thinking ‘It’s not fair ...’
- Thinking ‘If only’
- Thinking of killing yourself
- Blaming yourself
- Blaming others
- Blaming the world
- Talking logically to yourself
- Talking positively to yourself
- Talking negatively to yourself
- Analyzing yourself (trying to figure out why you are like this)
- Analyzing the situation (trying to figure out why this happened)
- Analyzing others (trying to figure out why they are like this)

Substances: list all the substances you have ever used to try and feel better, including foods, drinks, cigarettes, recreational drugs, and prescription drugs

Anything else: write down anything else you can think of you have ever tried to make yourself feel a bit better, or not so bad, when these painful thoughts and feelings showed up.

Once you’ve done that, go through your list and for each item, ask yourself:

1. Did this get rid of my painful thoughts and feelings *in the long term*?
2. Did it bring me closer to a rich, full, and meaningful life?
3. If the answer to question 2 is “no”, then what did this cost me in terms of time, energy, money, health, relationships, and vitality?