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Information highways in mental health care!

MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES IN TIMES OF STRESS DOING WHAT MATTERS

ABSTRACT

Stress is overwhelming at times, it is very important to do right thing at right time, to cope up with stress. This handbook will help the readers to cope up with stress and to engage in their daily life meaningfully.



DISCLAIMER

The handbook is adapted from an illustration guide, “DOING WHAT MATTERS IN TIMES OF STRESS” by WHO (World Health Organization). This work is not available for commercial purpose. This book has been translated by **MARGIKA** to make it available for non-English speaking individuals for **non-commercial purpose only**.

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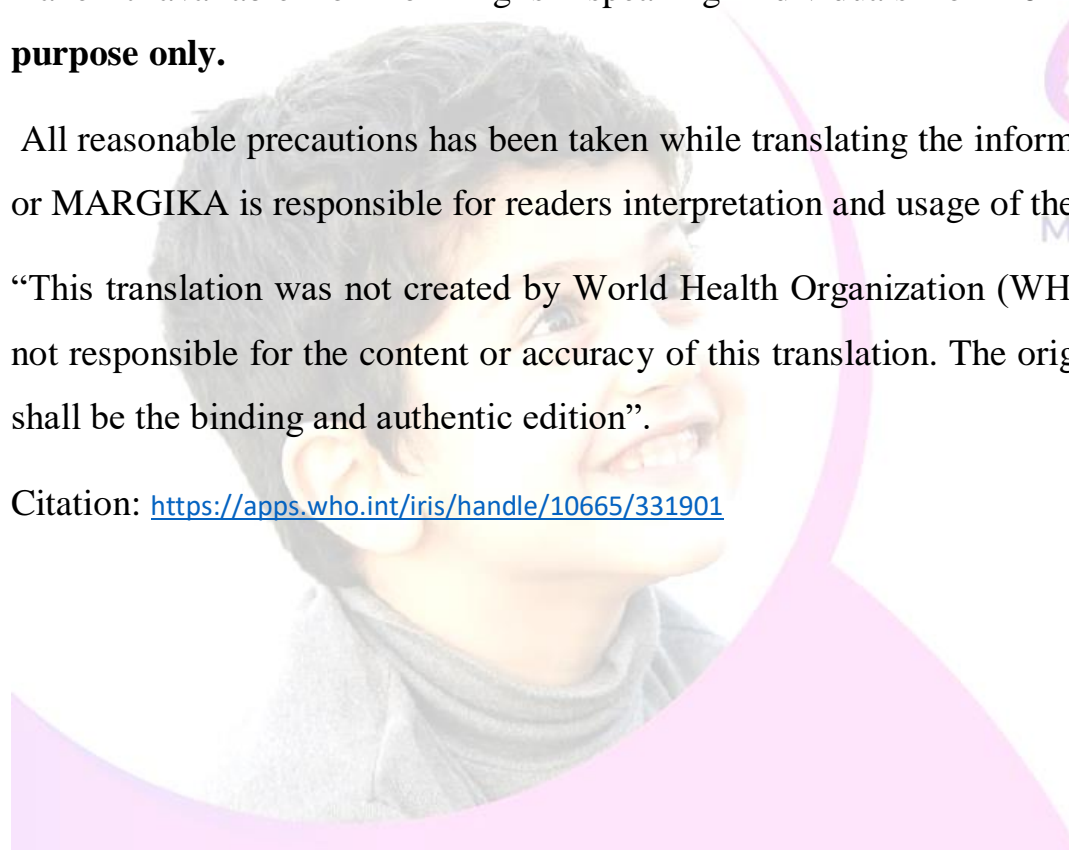
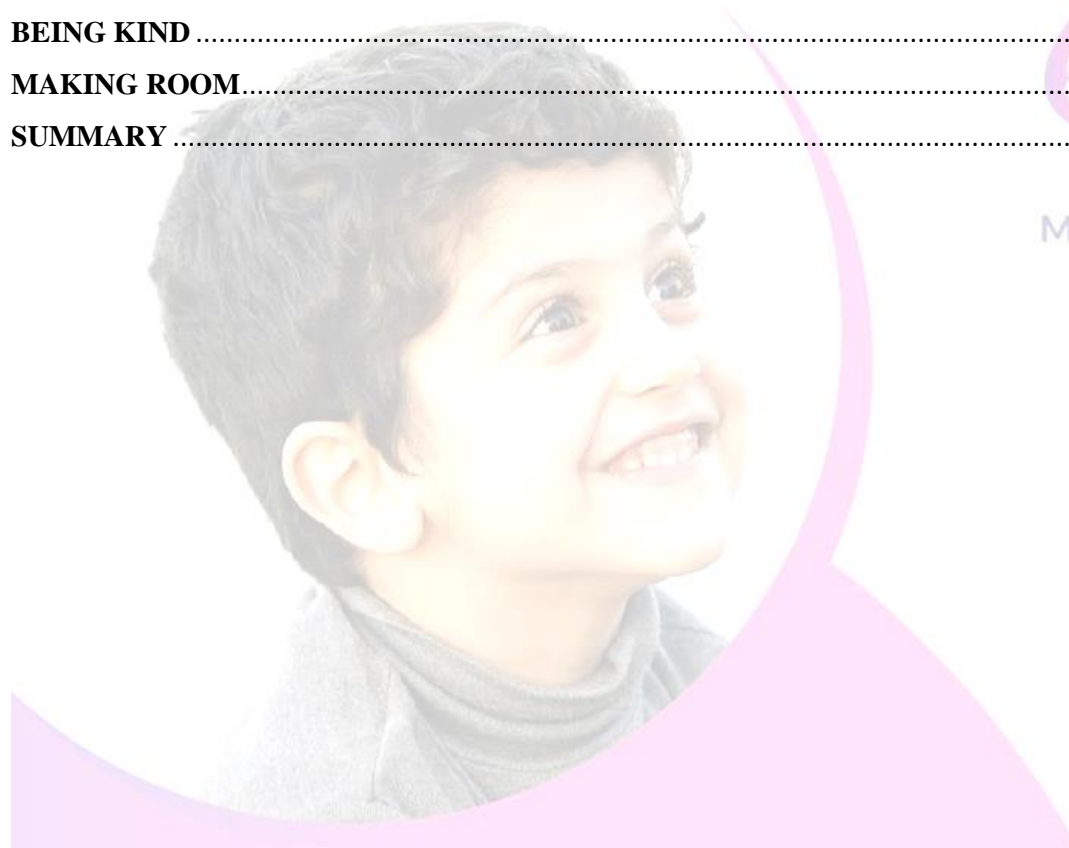




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PREFACE

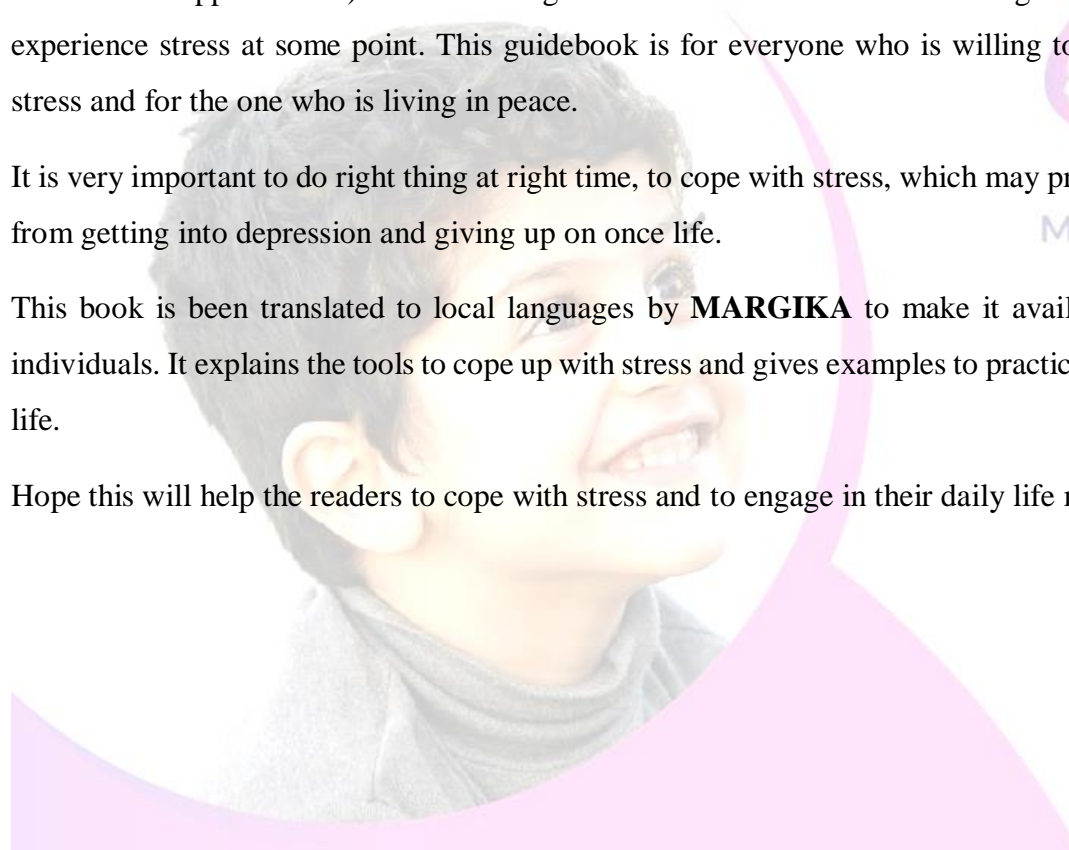
Mindfulness techniques handbook is stress management guidebook. This illustration adapted from World Health Organization (WHO) supports recommendations of WHO for stress management.

There are many reasons for stress, including major threats (Violence, disease outbreak, and lack of financial opportunities) and small arguments with loved ones or colleagues. Anyone can experience stress at some point. This guidebook is for everyone who is willing to cope up with stress and for the one who is living in peace.

It is very important to do right thing at right time, to cope with stress, which may prevent a person from getting into depression and giving up on once life.

This book is been translated to local languages by **MARGIKA** to make it available to all the individuals. It explains the tools to cope up with stress and gives examples to practice them in daily life.

Hope this will help the readers to cope with stress and to engage in their daily life meaningfully.



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STRESS, THOUGHTS & FEELINGS AND VALUES



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What is Stress?



"Stress" means feeling troubled or threatened by life.

Major reasons for stress

Stress can be caused due to major threats or changes in the surrounding or society, and disturbance in the livelihood.

Even small problems in the family or friends.

Everyone faces stress at times; a little bit of stress is not a problem

One man did something really bad to me



FAMILY VIOLENCE



ILLNESS



NO SCHOOL



PROBLEMS PROVIDING FOR YOUR FAMILY

DISPLACED FROM HOME



VIOLENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

ARGUMENTS WITH YOUR FAMILY



UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE

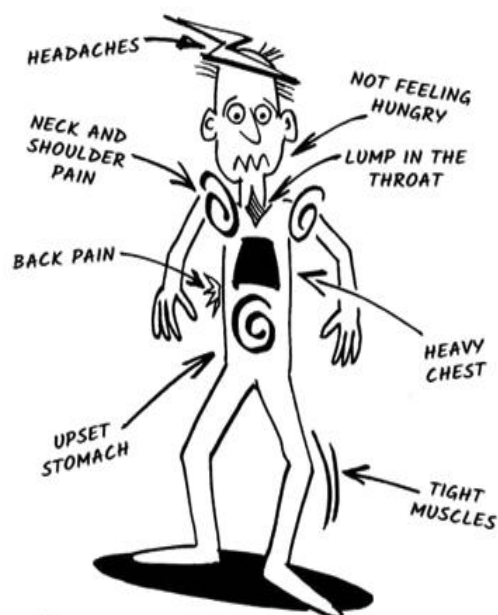




Heavy stress can effects the body

Stress can effect major parts of the body like brain, cardiovascular system, respiratory system, nervous system and digestive system. Some people have some unpleasant feelings.

Some people may have rashes, infections and illnesses.



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People exhibit certain emotions when they feel stress, including changes in appetite. Many of them think bad things happened in the past and fear bad things are going to happen in future.

...feel very tired



...have difficulty sleeping



...cannot focus



...get angry easily



...cannot sit still



...feel sad or guilty



...worry



...cry





THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

Powerful thoughts and feelings are part of stress, but hooking up with them can cause a problem



What does hooked mean?

When someone is on a hook, it cannot get away. The hook traps.

In the same way, you can be hooked up with your own thoughts and feelings.

One moment you will be playing with playing and the other moment you may feel as if you are with your own thoughts, feelings and anger, even if you are still there.





These difficult thoughts and feelings hook us and pull us away from our **VALUES**

What are values?

Values are the deepest desires, for the sort of person you want to become.

Values describes, how you want to treat yourself and others and the world around you.

If you are a parent, or you have responsibilities of caring for others your values would be caring, love, affection, responsibility, commitment, protective, attentive, wise, persistent, calm, courageous.

In stressful situations, values changes and leads us to act in uncharacteristic ways, like fighting with our family and staying away from them, or hurting others.





Many kinds of difficult thoughts and feelings can hook us.

- Thought of giving up



- Memories about difficult events



- Thoughts that blame others



- Thoughts about future

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- Harsh judgement of ourselves



- Thoughts where we worry about others





When we hooked up to these thoughts, our behaviors changes and we start doing things that often makes our lives worse.

- Getting into fights, arguments and disagreements.



- Withdrawing our self or staying away from loved ones.



- Or we might spend a lot of time in bed or feeling lonely



We call all these behaviors as MOVEAWAYS, because when we move away we are moving away from our values.

Therefore, first we have to focus, engage and pay attention better.



When we are stressed, we find it hard to engage in life.



To engage

To engage is to give full attention to the activity or to the person you are with.

But, when you are hooked up, with thoughts and feelings, you are disengaged, unfocused or distracted.

When unfocused, we do things poorly, or unable to enjoy the activity and feel dissatisfied.

Therefore, if you learn to be more engaged, and focus better, you will be able to handle stress better.

For example, you will find your relationship with others more satisfying or you can do important things in better way.

When you are hooked



When you are engaged and focused



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There are many ways to practise engaging in life or focusing on what you are doing





Practice engaging activity, while drinking coffee or tea.

- Focus with full attention notice the drink with curiosity, you notice the color
- You savor the smell of it.
- Sip it slowly
- Let it sit on your tongue, feel it on teeth and savor the taste
- Drink it slowly, savor the taste and notice the temperature.
- You notice the movement of the drink through your throat, as you swallow.
- Notice the taste fading from your tongue as you swallow
- And drink the each mouthful same way: slowly, noticing, savoring
- Whenever you are hooked by thoughts and feelings, you refocus on the drink.

Get some water, coffee or tea and practice the above activity by following the instructions, to practice engaging and practicing activities.



Other practice activities, to refocus and reengage

You can practice this while playing with children or teaching them to read, simply give full attention to the game and children.



While talking to family or friends, notice what they are saying, their tone, voice and facial expressions, give them your full attention.



You can practice while doing household chores like washing, cleaning. Simply refocus, when you are hooked.





Sometimes, these feelings are very painful, these feelings and thoughts overpower and they turn into **emotional storms**.

Emotional storm occurs when the emotions outmatch the ability to control or manage the emotions. Some difficult thoughts and feelings are so strong like a mighty storm and overpowers the individual.



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Imagine yourself on a tree when the storm starts.

Would you stay on the tree?

If you stay there, you are in high danger; you need to get down to ground as quickly as possible, to be safe.

In the same way, when you are emotionally overwhelmed, you should learn how to ground yourself.



So we need to "ground ourselves" when our emotional storms appear.



GROUNDING



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Grounding

How do we do that?

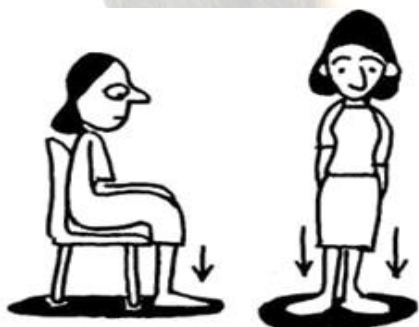
By engaging with the world around you, and refocusing on what you are doing.

Step 1: Notice your feelings

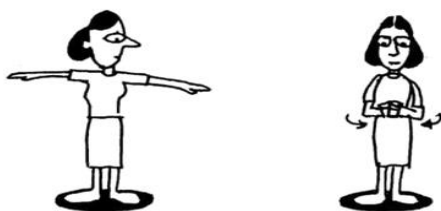
Step 2: Slow down and connect with your body. Slow your breathing and refill your lungs as slowly as possible.



Step 3: slowly press your feet onto floor



Step 4: Slowly, stretch your hands and press your hands together.



The next step in grounding is refocus.

Notice where you are, what are the five things you can see? What can you smell? What can you hear? Notice what you are doing.

Touch any object and notice how it feels under your fingers.

Notice there are difficult thoughts and feeling appearing and there is a world around you.



If you want to, you can also get in line with your values.





Grounding does not make the storm disappear; it just keeps you safe until the storm passes.



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The purpose of unhooking and grounding exercise is to help you engage and refocus with life like giving full attention to family and friends.

It also helps you move forward with your values, and to help you become the person you want to be

And to help you focus on what you are doing, to do it better and feel satisfied





UNHOOKING



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As we know, when we hooked with our thoughts and feelings we move away from values and make our lives worse by moving away and hurting our loved ones. We should learn how to unhook from these thoughts.

Unhooking is to withdraw ourselves from these difficult thoughts and feelings.



We cannot simply get rid of these thoughts and feelings.

It is not realistic to think that, we can leave them behind.

Can we burn them like rubbish?



Can we lock them up, hide them away?



Take a moment to think about all the ways you have tried to get rid of these thoughts and feelings.



Can we bury them in a hole?



Can we run off and leave them behind?

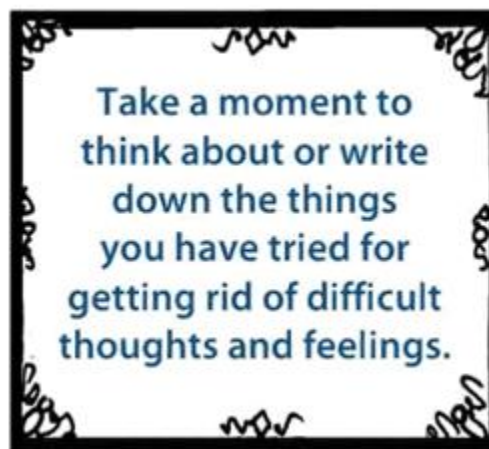


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Many people try many strategies, to get rid of these difficult thoughts and feelings.

Yelling, avoiding people and situations, trying not to think about, alcohol, drugs, isolating, giving up, lying in bed, blaming oneself.

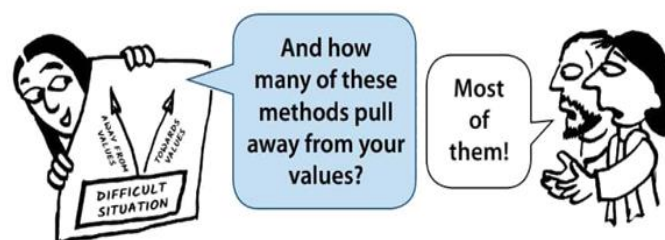
Of course, many of these make our thoughts and feelings go away. But, not for long, they do come back!





New Way of Unhooking

When we try to get rid of thoughts and feelings, it usually makes our lives worse.



Instead of trying to push them away...



And whenever you get hooked by them...



You stop struggling with them.



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How do we do that?

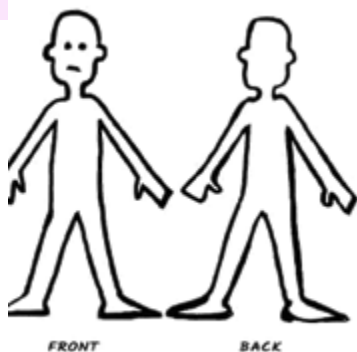
Step 1

First, let us NOTICE what thoughts and feelings are hooking you.



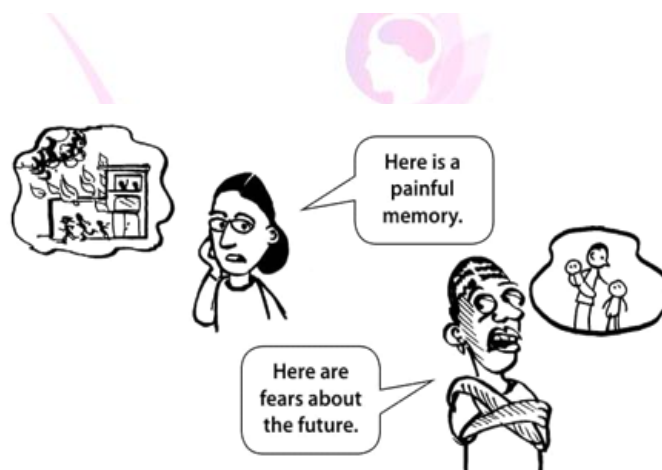
Write some of the thoughts and feelings that hook you.

Any feelings or marks in your body that hook you.



Step 2

Second, NAME the feeling. To name it silently say something like this





Thoughts and feelings hook us, when we are not aware of them.

Step 3

The next step is to **REFOCUS** on what you are doing.

Do the same thing, whenever you are hooked or stop engaging in life.

Pay full attention to whoever is with you or whatever you are doing



And even though I am having feelings of anger, I choose to act on my value of caring by refocusing and engaging with my family.



Whenever you feel hooked, practice these 3 steps to unhook.



So now you have your first two tools for your tool kit.

**TOOL 1
GROUND
YOURSELF**
DURING "EMOTIONAL STORMS", NOTICE HOW YOU ARE FEELING.
SLOW DOWN AND CONNECT WITH YOUR BODY. REFOCUS AND ENGAGE WITH THE WORLD AROUND YOU.



And whenever you are lying awake in bed at night, and cannot sleep, then practise slowing down and connecting with your body.



It probably will not make you sleep (although sometimes it does), but it will help you feel rested.

**TOOL 2
UNHOOK
YOURSELF**
FROM THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS BY NOTICING AND NAMING THEN REFOCUSING ON WHAT YOU ARE DOING.

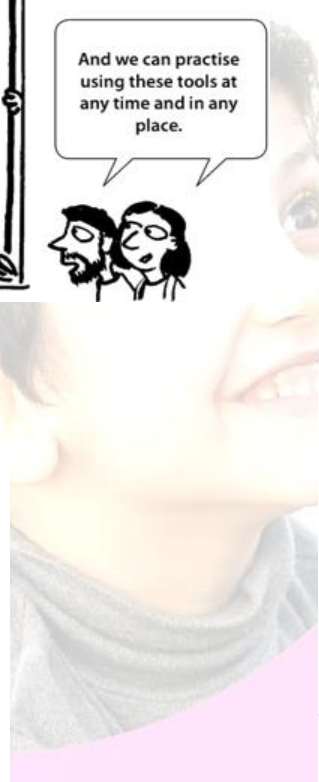
And we can practise using these tools at any time and in any place.



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Other things can also get in the way of practising with these tools.



Maybe you feel too tired...



Maybe you feel too sad or angry or scared...



Maybe you just can't be bothered...





You can also be hooked by unhelpful thoughts.



THIS IS ALL SO STUPID!
IT IS NOT IMPORTANT!
IT WILL NOT HELP!
I AM TOO BUSY!
THERE IS NO POINT!
IT IS A WASTE OF TIME!
I CANNOT DO IT!



So remind yourself over and over...

This is like learning a new language. It takes a lot of practice!



Every little bit of practice you do will make a difference.



And every time we practise, we are acting on our values of caring!





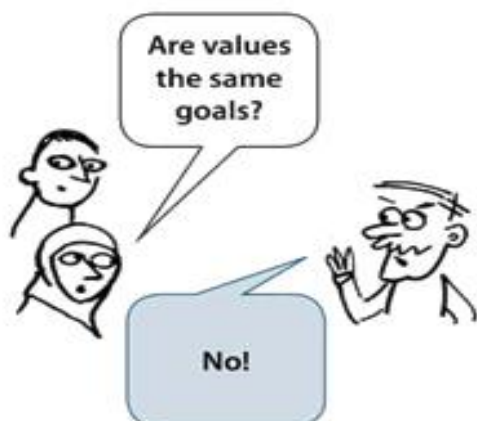
ACTING ON VALUES



Your values describe the kind of person you want to be; how you treat yourself and world around you.

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Suppose your goal is to get a job so that u can support the people you care about.

It might not be easy, to get a job, but you can still live your values of being kind, caring, loving and supportive to your family and friends or people around you.

Many of your goals might be impossible right now, but you can always find way to act on your values.

And suppose your values – the way you want to be with your family, friends or people around you – are to be kind, to be caring, to be loving and to be supportive.



And even if you are facing a very difficult situation and are separated from your family and friends, you can still live your values of being kind, caring, loving and supportive. You can find little ways to act on these values with the people around you.





What are actions?

"ACTIONS" are what you do with your arms and hands and legs and feet, and what you say with your mouth.



The more you focus on your actions, the more you influence the surroundings and people around you.

Example: if your country is at war, you cannot stop all the fighting, at least you can stop arguing with your community and act on your values.

You influence the people around you with your actions

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Fighting



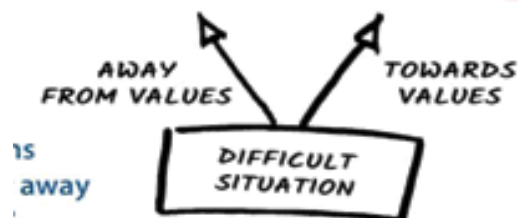
Collaboration





You should keep asking yourself about your values, does your actions support your values?

Are your actions moving you towards the values or away from your values?



To clarify your values, here is a list of values; these are not the right values or best values, these are just some common values.

- To be kind
- To be caring
- To be generous
- To be supportive
- To be helpful

- To be patient
- To be responsible
- To be protective
- To be disciplined
- To be hardworking
- To be committed

- To be brave
- To be persistent
- To be forgiving
- To be grateful

- To be loyal
- To be respectable/honourable
- To be respectful
- To be trustworthy
- To be fair/just
- To be...
- To be...

Select three or four values that seem most important to you, and write them down.

Think of a role model in your community, or someone you look up to.

What does this person say or do that you admire?



Does this person treat others in admirable ways?



What values does the person demonstrate through his or her actions?



Which of those values would you like to model for others around you?



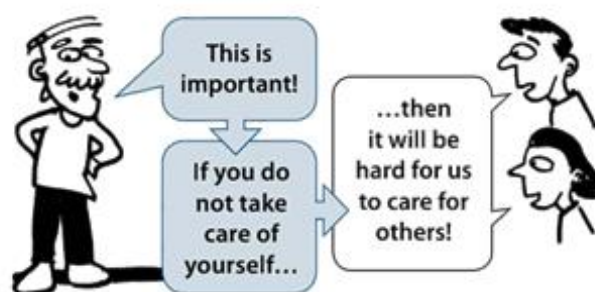


Values go both ways: towards yourself and towards others, so if your values are caring and kindness.



Then you aim to live up to these values, towards yourself and others.

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It is time to put your values into actions.





Pick the relationship that is very important and who you see on regular basis.



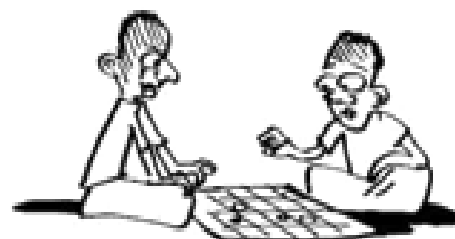
What values do you want to live by in this relationship?

If you choose your child, and your value is to be kind and caring.

Then a small step might be to play with or to read to your child for 10 minutes every day.

Or if you choose your relative and your value, is friendship and gratitude.

Then a small step might be to greet the person warmly and express your gratitude.





Remember, even the tiniest actions matter.

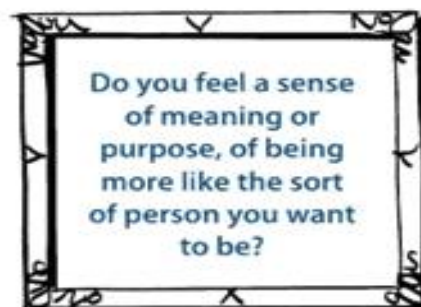
A giant tree grows from a tiny seed. And even in the hardest or most stressful of times, you can always take small actions to live by your values.

When you act on your values, you will begin to create more satisfying and fulfilling life.



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Will these actions take you towards or away from values?

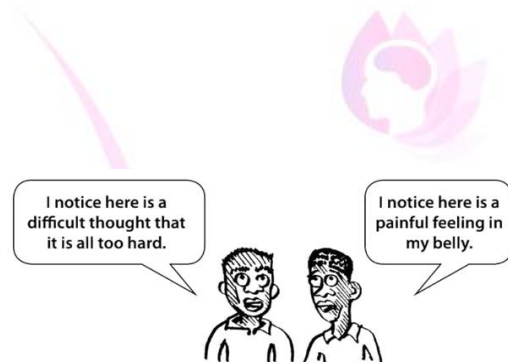




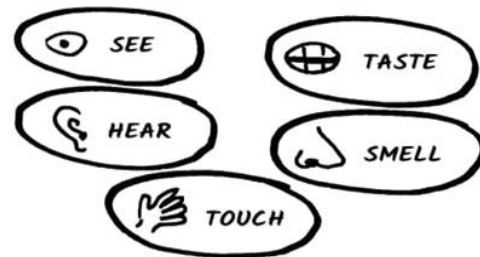
Notice, if there difficult thoughts and feelings, starting to hook up and stop you from following your action.



If so, you know what to do. Notice and name them



Engage with the world around you



Aim to start each day thinking of two or three values you want to live by. Look for the ways to act to those values, throughout the day.





Tool 3 – Act on your values

The next tool in the tool kit is act on your values.

A journey of 1000 miles starts with a single step.



Whenever you feel difficult with your thoughts and feeling, you have these three tools



At times, you cannot leave, so we have to choose between two of the three options

If you don't want to give up and move away from values or your values are more important, then you are left with option 2 .

Change what can be changed, accept the pain that cannot be changed, and live by your values.





Change what can be changed.

Take action, do whatever you can. No matter how small it might be to improve the situation.



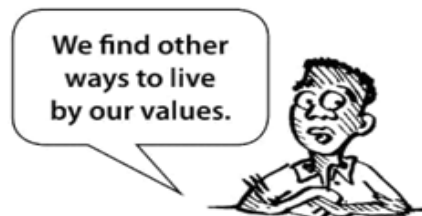
Accept the pain that cannot be changed

Many difficult thoughts and feelings appear when you face difficult situations- especially when you cannot change the situation.



And live by your values.

If there is nothing we can do to change the situation



Commit this to your memory and help it to help you deal with your problems.



BEING KIND



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No matter how hard the situation is, if you are in danger, in a family argument, or without income, you are always better off if you have a friend by your side or someone who is kind caring and helpful or someone who says kind things when you are in pain.

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Many of us are not kind to ourselves when we are in difficult situations. Often we are hooked up with unkind thoughts.



Unkind thoughts are natural, and may happen often; that is ok. But, it is not helpful if you hook up with these unkind thoughts.

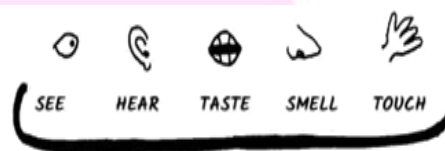


These unkind thoughts pulls us away from our values.

Choose an unkind thought about yourself, notice and name them, and unhook yourself.



Ground yourself and engage with the world around you.





Even in most difficult days, there are ways we can act on our values of being kind and caring.

How do you feel, when you are struggling, in pain and someone reaches out to you with kindness, caring and understanding you?

Even tiny little actions of kindness can make a difference. This includes kind words.



And, we should be kind to our self too, so unhook yourself from unkind thoughts.



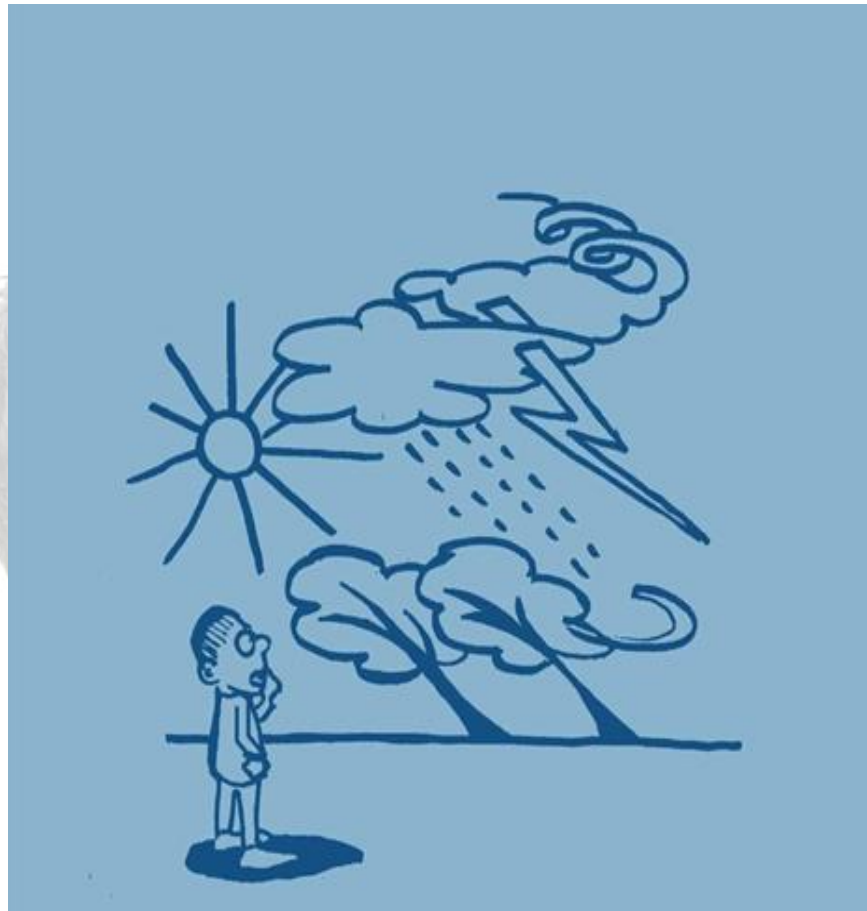
Everyone needs a friend and everyone needs kindness. If you are kind to yourself, you have more energy to help others and more motivation to be kind to others, so everyone benefits.

Remember as all values kindness goes both ways.





MAKING ROOM



**Unhooking is one way to stop struggling from difficult thoughts and feelings.
There is another way to do this, called making room**

.



Think about the sky, no matter how severe the weather is the sky has room for it.

The sky can never be hurt or harmed by the weather, whether it is intense heat, freezing cold eventually the weather always changes.

Our thoughts and feelings are like weather, we can make room for bad thoughts and feelings without being hurt by it.

First, silently notice the thoughts with curiosity and name these feelings. Imagine these feelings and thoughts are like the weather.

And, you are like the sky.

As you do this, breathe out slowly then your lungs are empty, pause for few seconds, breathe in slowly, and imagine your breathe flows into and around your pain.



...for the weather.





Imagine painful feelings as an object.
Imagine it has shape, size, color and temperature.



Imagine breathing into and around this object making room for it.



Imagine a difficult thought, as a word or pictures on the page of a book.
Notice your thoughts, and imagine it gently resting in your lap and engage with the world around you.



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You can also imagine tucking the book under your arm, and taking it with you.



So, the thought is still with you, but you can engage with the around you.





And after you **MAKE ROOM**,
you then **ENGAGE** with the world
around you.

y



NOTICE where you are,
who is with you, and give
your full attention to the activity
you are doing.



So now you have
another tool for
your toolkit.



Especially if you are in bed and can't sleep;
you can combine **MAKING ROOM** with your breathing exercises



Breathe in slowly into and around the difficult thoughts, and notice with curiosity the pain might grow bigger or smaller, the aim is to make room for the thoughts and stop fighting it. Whenever you are hooked and pulled away, notice, name and refocus on breathing and making room.

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An exercise in being kind to yourself and making room for your pain.



This is a good exercise to practise in bed or when you are alone.



1



3. Feel the warmth from the hand to your body, and see if you are kind enough to yourself

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Take one of your hands and imagine filling it with kindness...



2. Now place this hand somewhere on your body, anywhere it hurts

4. Use two hands if you prefer, hold yourself gentle.





If you are in bed and cannot sleep, it can be helpful to add it to your and making room exercises.



...it is an act of kindness to ourselves and to others!



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Place your hand over the painful feeling. See if you can be kind to yourself by imagining you are breathing through your hand to this painful feeling.



Every single step matters. A tiny seed grows into a mighty tree.

Remember, too:
it is like building muscles. The more you practise, the better.





SUMMARY

Tool 1: GROUNDING

GROUND YOURSELF during emotional storms by **NOTICING** your thoughts and feelings, **SLOWING DOWN** and **CONNECTING** with your body by slowly pushing your feet into the floor, stretching and breathing, and then **REFOCUSING** and **ENGAGING** with the world around you.

What can you see, hear, touch, taste and smell? Pay attention with curiosity to what is in front of you. Notice where you are, who is with you and what you are doing.

Practice tip:

Grounding is especially useful during stressful situations or emotional storms. You can also practise grounding when you simply have one or two minutes available, like when you're waiting for something, or before or after an activity you do every day, like washing, eating, cooking or sleeping. If you practise during these times, you may find that boring activities become more enjoyable, and it will be easier to use grounding later in more difficult situations.





Tool 2: UNHOOKING

UNHOOK YOURSELF with these three steps:

- 1) **NOTICE** that a difficult thought or feeling has hooked you. Realize that you are distracted by a difficult thought or feeling, and notice it with curiosity.
- 2) Then silently **NAME** the difficult thought or feeling; for example:
 - “Here is a difficult feeling”
 - “Here is tightness in my chest”
 - “Here is a feeling of anger”
 - “Here is a difficult thought about the past”
 - “I notice here is a difficult thought”
 - “I notice here are fears about the future”
- 3) Then, **REFOCUS** on what you are doing. Pay full attention to whoever is with you and whatever you are doing.





Tool 3: ACTING ON YOUR VALUES

Choose the values that are most important to you. For example:

- being kind and caring
- being helpful
- being brave
- being hardworking.

You get to decide which values are most important to you!

Then pick one small way that you can act according to these values in the next week. What will you do? What will you say? Even tiny actions matter!

Remember that there are three approaches to any difficult situation:

1. LEAVE
2. CHANGE WHAT CAN BE CHANGED, ACCEPT THE PAIN THAT CANNOT BE CHANGED, AND LIVE BY YOUR VALUES
3. GIVE UP AND MOVE AWAY FROM YOUR VALUES.



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Tool 4: BEING KIND

BE KIND. Notice pain in yourself and others and respond with kindness. Unhook from unkind thoughts by **NOTICING** and **NAMING** them. Then, try speaking to yourself kindly. If you are kind to yourself you will have more energy to help others and more motivation to be kind to others, so everyone benefits.

You can also take one of your hands and imagine filling it with kindness. Place this hand gently somewhere on your body where you feel pain. Feel the warmth flowing from your hand into your body. See if you can be kind to yourself through this hand.





Tool 5: MAKING ROOM

Trying to push away difficult thoughts and feelings often does not work very well. So instead, **MAKE ROOM** for them:

- 1) **NOTICE** the difficult thought or feeling with curiosity. Focus your attention on it. Imagine the painful feeling as an object, and notice its size, shape, colour and temperature.
- 2) **NAME** the difficult thought or feeling. For example:
"Here is a difficult feeling"
"Here is a difficult thought about the past"
"I notice here is sadness"
"I notice here is a thought that I am weak"
- 3) **Allow** the painful feeling or thought to come and go like the weather. As you breathe, imagine your breath flowing into and around your pain to make room for it. Instead of fighting with the thought or feeling, allow it to move through you, just like the weather moves through the sky. If you are not fighting with the weather, then you will have more time and energy to engage with the world around you and do things that are important to you.

