Tolerance for Uncertainty: A COVID-19 Workbook

A guide to accept your feelings, tolerate distress, and thrive

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Like many of you, I am experiencing anxiety related to all the unknowns associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. We like stability, routine, and a sense of control over our environments and experience tremendous stress when there are disruptions in our normal lives. This workbook is one attempt for me to gain back some control by giving back to the courageous people I work with and to the larger community. It is also is an invitation to learn skills that assist with alleviating and better managing stress and anxiety.

Much of my work with clients is shifting ineffective coping to more adaptive healthier strategies. While we have little control over the current pandemic, it is helpful to focus on what control we have such as following the recommendations by health officials which includes: washing our hands frequently, practicing physical distancing, and avoid touching our eyes, nose, and mouths (please refer to The World Health Organization, Health Canada, and the Ontario Ministry of Health for reliable and accurate information on COVID-19). While we will all experience significant changes, we also can practice resilience and virtue through effective coping.

I created this workbook to assist you with managing the strong emotions that will arise during this difficult time through a form of psychological treatment called Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT). DBT is an evidence based intervention that helps individuals identify their feelings and learn skills to better manage their emotions. The content for this workbook has been pulled from various resources such as “DBT Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets” by Dr. Marsha Linehan, worksheets through the Centre for Clinical Interventions, CAMH’s COVID-19 website, Dr. Kristin Neff's work on self-compassion, and my own clinical background in dialectical and emotion-focused therapies.

The current pandemic is an opportunity to learn new skills to accept your feelings, tolerate distress, and move forward with grace despite not knowing what lies ahead. We are all in this together, and I am hopeful that we can come together as a community to offer support, compassion, and kindness through these exceptional times.

Sachi

Sachiko Nagasawa, H.B.Sc., M.A., Ph.D., C. Psych.

Disclaimer: The information provided in this document is for information purposes only. This information in this workbook is NOT a substitute for proper diagnosis, treatment, or the provision of advice by a regulated mental health professional.

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INSTRUCTIONS: I created this workbook to contain information with practical skills to help you to thrive through uncertainty. It can be completed individually but preferably in collaboration with your psychologist or another registered mental health professional.

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

Stress is caused by being here and wanting to be there ~Eckhart Tole~

Chapter One

We all experience emotions. Emotions are naturally-occurring internal responses that motivate and inform our behaviour. If we do not listen to our emotions then we risk reacting blindly without full awareness to what we need or want. As humans, we are designed to feel a whole range of emotions, some of which may be comfortable to us and others of which may be uncomfortable. Most people I know dislike emotional discomfort. We may not like it, but experiencing uncomfortable emotions is a natural part of life-now more than ever! This chapter will provide you with some tools to manage uncomfortable emotions including:

- **Healthy coping ideas**
- **Daily planner**
- **Gratitude journaling**
- **Sleep hygiene tips**
- **Common coping pitfalls**

Healthy Coping Ideas

CHECK THE BOXES OF THE ACTIVITIES YOU DO TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF:

- [ ] EAT WELL-BALANCED MEALS
- [ ] CONTACT FAMILY OR FRIENDS VIRTUALLY/PHONE/SNAIL MAIL
- [ ] MEDITATE (EVEN IF IT IS 2 MINUTES)
- [ ] LIGHT AN AROMATIC CANDLE
- [ ] GRATITUDE JOURNAL
- [ ] PRACTICE DEEP BREATHING
- [ ] LISTEN TO GOOD MUSIC
- [ ] INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
- [ ] LIMIT UPSETTING MEDIA COVERAGE
- [ ] DO SOMETHING KIND
- [ ] SPEND TIME IN NATURE
- [ ] TAKE A CANDLE-LIT BATH
- [ ] DANCE, DANCE, DANCE!
- [ ] MAKE A NEW RECIPE
- [ ] READ A BOOK

Date:

My Daily Planner

THINGS TO DO

- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____
- [ ] _____

GOALS FOR TODAY

WAYS I AM GOING TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF

FIVE THINGS

I'm Thankful For

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

In a world full of chaos, ground yourself with the beautiful things going on in your life.

SLEEP HYGIENE

BEDTIME & WAKE TIME

ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO TRAIN YOUR BODY TO SLEEP IS TO GO TO BED AND GET UP AT MORE OR LESS THE SAME TIME

GET UP & TRY AGAIN

IF YOU HAVE NOT FALLEN ASLEEP AFTER 20 MINUTES, GET UP AND DO SOMETHING CALMING OR BORING UNTIL YOU FEEL SLEEPY, THEN TRY AGAIN

AVOID CAFFEINE, ALCOHOL & NICOTINE

AVOID CAFFEINE, ALCOHOL OR NICOTINE AT LEAST 4-6 HOURS BEFORE GOING TO BED

BED IS FOR SLEEPING

TRY NOT TO USE YOUR BED FOR ANYTHING OTHER THAN SLEEPING AND SEX SO THAT YOUR BODY ASSOCIATES BED WITH SLEEP OR SEX

NO NAPS

IT IS BEST TO AVOID NAPS DURING THE DAY TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE TIRED AT BEDTIME

CREATE A SLEEP RITUAL

DEVELOP A ROUTINE TO REMIND YOUR BODY THAT IT IS TIME TO SLEEP. SOME EXAMPLES INCLUDE STRETCHES, MEDITATION OR READING

REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

DAILY EXERCISE ASSISTS WITH SLEEP BUT NOTHING TOO STRENUOUS 4 HOURS BEFORE BEDTIME

REDUCE SCREEN TIME

USING TVS, TABLETS, SMARTPHONES, LAPTOPS, OR OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES BEFORE BED DELAYS YOUR BODY'S INTERNAL CLOCK, SUPPRESSES MELATONIN AND MAKES IT MORE DIFFICULT TO FALL ASLEEP. CREATE A DIGITAL CURFEW AND SET THIS CURFEW AT LEAST 2 HOURS BEFORE BEDTIME. ABSOLUTELY NO SCREENS IN THE BEDROOM

NO CLOCK WATCHING

MANY PEOPLE WHO STRUGGLE WITH SLEEP TEND TO WATCH THE CLOCK TOO MUCH. FREQUENTLY CHECKING THE CLOCK DURING THE NIGHT CAN INCREASE ANXIETY

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COMMON COPING PITFALLS

We get into trouble when we act impulsively to escape our uncomfortable emotions. The problem with strategies that involve escaping emotional discomfort is that they only work in the short-term and can lead to problems in a person's life in the long-term.

Some common strategies for emotional escape include:

- Avoidance
- Numbing & withdrawing
- Anger

Avoidance: Fear alerts us to what may threaten our survival. If we try to avoid the problem when we feel fear, we may get into trouble. Imagine if our ancestors had avoided their fear of a sabre-tooth tiger! Unlike distraction (setting our worries and thoughts aside until we have time to deal with them productively), avoidance is an escape method that can take many forms such as avoiding situations, or repeatedly seeking reassurance rather than focusing on solving a problem. Other people avoid distressing thoughts and feelings through repetitive behaviours like checking for cleanliness, or engaging in actions over and over again in an attempt to stop distressing thoughts. Examples of avoidance during a pandemic include:

- Not following recommendations of health professionals to engage in physical distancing or hand-washing because doing so would acknowledge the gravity of the situation.
- Pushing away distress through continuous or repetitive distraction activities like immersion in social media, online gambling, gaming, or shopping. This is especially problematic if such activities prevent you from having time to effectively plan for managing changes that are needed at this time, or if they are harmful to your bank account or your relationships with loved ones.

Numbing & Withdrawing: Both numbing and withdrawing represent things you do to tune out uncomfortable emotions. The most common ways of doing this would be by using alcohol or drugs to escape. Binge eating and excessive sleep are also common forms of escape.

Anger: Anger is interesting because I often find in my practice that it is a secondary emotion, meaning that a person initially feels a more vulnerable emotion such as rejection, anxiety or sadness but then feels and expresses anger instead. Examples of secondary anger include blaming certain groups for the current pandemic, angry outbursts with your family/roomates due to the disruption in your routine, and righteous anger towards marginalized groups that are not complying to the social distancing recommendations but have little choice due to systemic forms of oppression such as poverty.

COMMON COPING PITFALLS

Take some time to ask yourself, what you do to get rid of unpleasent emotions and what emotional escape methods you use:

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

FEELINGS ARE JUST LIKE VISITORS, LET THEM COME AND GO~MOOJI~

CHAPTER TWO

Emotion regulation is the ability to control or influence how you experience and express your feelings. In order to regulate your emotions, you need to understand them. You can do this by learning to do two things:

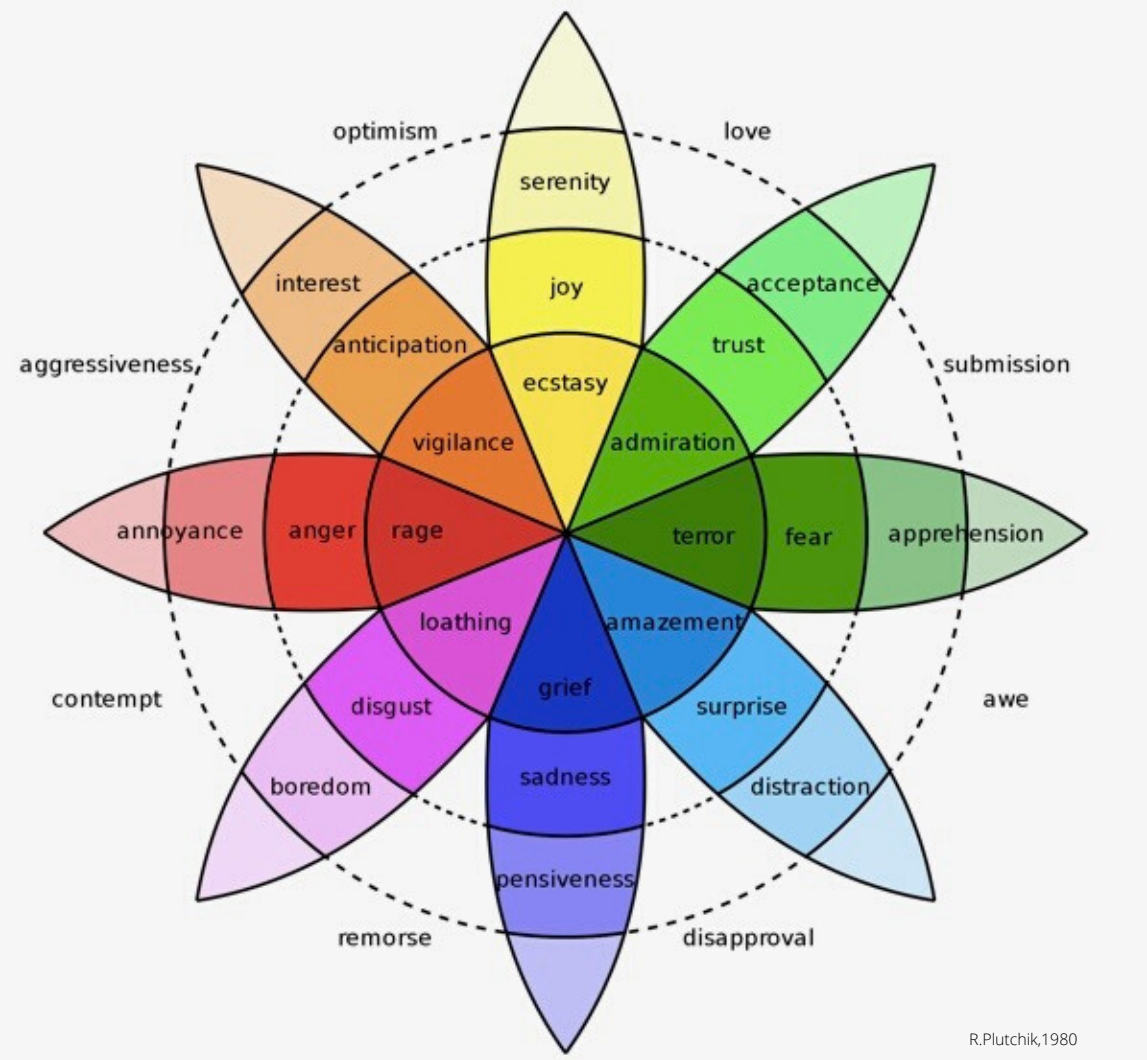
1-Identify your own emotions: the simple act of naming your emotions can help you regulate them. Neurocognitive research has found that identifying emotions (affect labeling) may diminish emotional reactivity. The majority of people I work with find it difficult to identify or describe their feelings.

2-Understand what emotions do for you: It can be hard to change emotions when you do not understand where they come from or why they exist. Briefly, emotions motivate our behaviour, emotions communicate to others, emotions are a signal guiding our attention to what is important in our environments, and emotional reactions can provide us important information about a situation.

The next three sections will help you to foster emotional literacy, identify your emotions, and better understand how to manage strong emotions.

FEELING WHEEL

PLEASE REVIEW THE FEELING WHEEL BELOW TO FOSTER EMOTIONAL AWARENESS



USE THE FEELING WHEEL FOR THE EXERCISE ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

- **Step 1: Notice/Observe**
  Please recall a time when you were last experiencing a strong uncomfortable emotion. What physical sensation did you experience? (i.e butterflies, heaviness, heat, etc)

- **Step 2: Label the Emotion**
  What feeling (on the wheel) does this sensation fit with? (sensation such as butterflies could represent anxiety, heaviness can represent sadness, and heat may represent anger)

- **Step 3: Adopt/Allow**
  Can you accept this emotion?

- **Step 4: Need**
  What need is the emotion alerting you to? Anxiety =reassurance or safety, Sadness= solace/comfort; and Anger=boundary needed/violation.

- **Step 5: Action**
  What do you need to do to fulfill this need? Anxiety= I need reassurance/safety; Sadness=I need solace/comfort; and Anger=I need to assert myself and set a boundary.

Adapted from Emotion Theory (Elliott ane colleagues, 2002)

LET'S PRACTICE!

USE THESE EXERCISES TO HELP YOU TO IDENTIFY YOUR EMOTIONS

EXERCISE #1: MORNING CHECK IN

WHAT AM I FEELING?...

WHAT DO I NEED?...

THOUGHTS & REFLECTIONS

EXERCISE #2: DAYTIME CHECK IN

WHAT AM I FEELING?.

WHAT DO I NEED?...

THOUGHTS & REFLECTIONS.

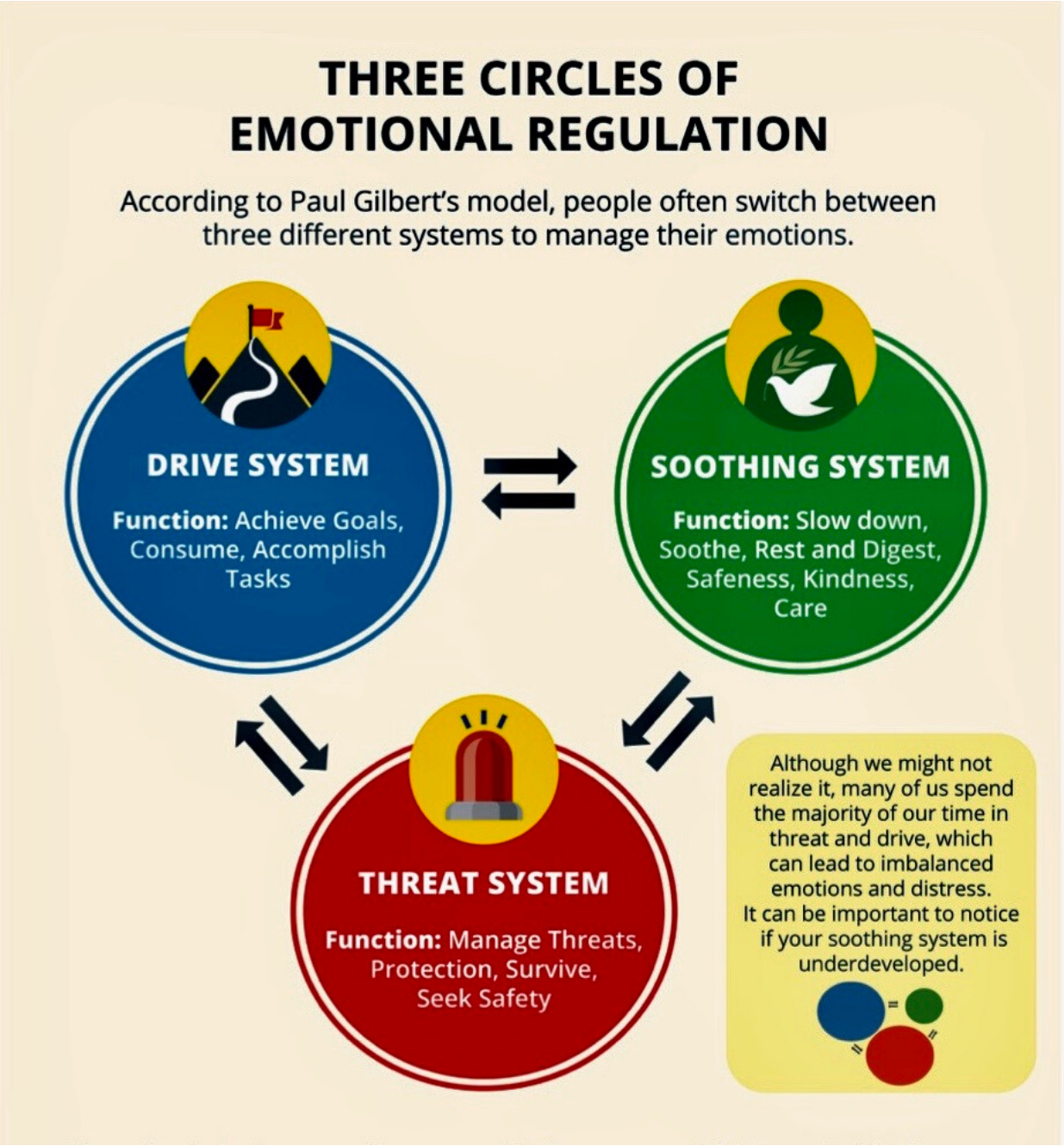
EXERCISE #3: EVENING CHECK IN

WHAT AM I FEELING? ...

WHAT DO I NEED?...

THOUGHTS & RELFECTIONS..

SYSTEMS OF EMOTIONAL REGULATION



Adapted from Gilbert (2009). The Compassionate Mind. London:Constable and Robertson. Made by NICABM

SYSTEMS OF EMOTIONAL REGULATION

1. I imagine that many of us have been spending a large bulk of our time in the threat system. In the space below draw the system with sizes that reflect your current coping

2. Draw the systems how you want them to be

3. What are the three things you can do to shift your coping?

- ✓
- ✓
- ✓

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE

SERENITY COMES WHEN YOU TRADE EXPECTATIONS FOR ACCEPTANCE ~BUDDHA~

CHAPTER THREE

COVID-19 is a new virus and there is a never-ending stream of updates. The uncertainty about the virus and the changes that are rapidly unfolding no doubt make most of us feel on edge. This is normal, and it can motivate us to take to take action to protect ourselves and others, and to learn more about the pandemic.

Radical acceptance involves accepting the present without an intense desire to change it. It's when you stop fighting reality, stop resenting that reality is not the way you want it, and start letting go of bitterness. In essence, the idea is that life can be worth living even with painful events in it.

Taking the approach of radical acceptance can be important when dealing with an overwhelming situation such as the current one. It is about recognizing and accepting the truth of the situation, even if it is difficult. It is also not burying our heads in the sand. For example, it is not continuing with our daily routine like nothing has changed. Many of our typical routines have changed substantially. It is recognizing what is and where we can act and respond accordingly. It is realizing what is out of our control, but also what is within our control. Radical acceptance is hard, but the two sections that follow will help you to develop your own radical acceptance plan.

- **Accept Distress**
- **5 Stages of Acceptance**

ACCEPT DISTRESS

- **Step 1: Watch or Observe**
  Pay attention like a third person to whatever you are feeling in the present moment. If needed, pay close attention to the sensations in your body, or the actions your body is taking to give you clues about what you are feeling. Regardless of what the emotion is doing, you are not your emotions, you are the watcher of your emotions. (Tolle, 2010)

- **Step 2: Label the Emotion**
  Your self-talk may sound like "...there is fear, I can feel it in the fast beating of my heart", ...or "...there is anger, I can feel it in the tightness of my jaw." Given what you observed, name the emotion you are feeling.

- **Step 3: Curious & Non-Judgemental**
  Try not to judge the feeling as good or bad, right or wrong. It is what it is.

- **Step 4: Imagery**
  The use of imagery can often be helpful in allowing you to foster this detatched observer perspective. Some people like the image of an ocean wave, as emotions rise and fall.

5 STAGES OF ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance does not come in one easy step. Dr. Neff and other researchers have described five stages in coming to full acceptance. Write an example from your own experience for each step.

- **1: Resisting**
  Struggling against what comes-"Go away!"

- **2: Exploring**
  Turning toward discomfort with curiousity-"What am I feeling?"

- **3: Tolerating**
  Safely enduring, holding steady-" I don't like this, but I can stand it."

- **4: Allowing**
  Letting feelings come and go-"It's okay, I can make space for this."

- **5: Befriending**
  Seeing value in difficult emotional expereinces-"What can I learn from this?"

Neff, 2018

IMPROVING DISTRESS

STRESS IS CAUSED BY BEING "HERE" AND WANTING TO BE "THERE" ~ECKHART TOLLE~

CHAPTER FOUR

Accepting and improving distress are quite different approaches, and maintaining a balance between acceptance and improvement is the key to fostering distress tolerance. The main goal for this workbook is to allow you to learn to accept the strong emotions you are currently experiencing, and with that in mind, then work on improving your emotional experience. Basically, you need to feel the emotion first, accept it, ride through it, and then take action to improve it. If you are particularly stressed then give yourself permission to shelve the acceptance strategies in the previous chapter and focus on improving your distress.

- **Distress Improvement**
- **Distraction Activities**
- **STOP Skill**
- **TIPP Skill**

DISTRESS IMPROVEMENT

Finding small ways to be active or to self-soothe when you are feeling distressed is essential for improving your emotional experience. Many activities can help you to participate actively in the present moment in order to reduce stress, and self-soothing activities can bring a sense of calm and a feeling of being cared for. The activities listed below can help you to reduce the intensity of any distress you may be feeling, and can increase mindfulness and self-soothing. Circle the activities you plan to use and add more to the lists.

ACTIVATE ACTIVITIES

- Exercise
- Walk
- Jog
- Weights
- Cleaning
- Washing
- Dishes
- Vacuuming
- Gardening
- Cooking
- Call a friend
- Watch a favourite movie
- Read a book
- Complete a puzzle
- Do something thoughtful
- Make something for someone

SOOTHE ACTIVITIES

- Have a good meal
- Have a favourite drink (non-alcohol)
- Have an indoor picnic
- Light a candle
- Watch the stars
- Listen to soothing music
- Enjoy sounds of nature
- Sing
- Put on your favourite scent
- Have a long shower
- Pet an animal
- Soak your feet
- Meditate
- Create meaning/purpose from distress
- Focus on any positive aspects in your life
- Listen to a relaxation
- Slow breathing

DISTRACTION ACTIVITIES

Distracting methods work by reducing contact with emotional stimuli and working to reduce the emotional intensity. The word ACCEPTS is a mnemonic for these strategies from Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT)

A

ACTIVITIES: FOCUS ON A TASK YOU NEED TO GET DONE, WATCH A MOVIE, CLEAN A ROOM, GO FOR A WALK, WRITE AN EMAIL, CALL A FRIEND, LISTEN TO MUSIC, BUILD SOMETHING, SPEND TIME WITH YOUR CHILDREN, DO PUZZLES, READ, PLAY CARDS

C

CONTRIBUTING: VOLUNTEER, HELP A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER, SEND ENCOURAGING MESSAGES, MAKE SOMETHING NICE FOR SOMEONE, DO SOMETHING THOUGHTFUL

C

COMPARISONS: COMPARE HOW YOU ARE FEELING NOW TO A TIME WHEN YOU FELT DIFFERENT, THINK ABOUT PEOPLE COPING LESS WELL THAN YOU, COMPARE YOURSELF TO THOSE LESS FORTUNATE, READ ABOUT OTHERS' SUFFERING

E

DIFFERENT **EMOTIONS:** READ UPLIFTING OR FUNNY BOOKS, LISTEN TO HAPPY MUSIC, WATCH HAPPY OR FUNNY TV SHOWS,

P

PUSHING AWAY: LEAVE THE SITUATION MENTALLY, BUILD AN IMAGINARY WALL BETWEEN YOURSELF AND THE SITUATION, NOTICE RUMINATING AND SAY "NO!", PUT THE PAIN ON A SHELF, DENY THE PROBLEM FOR THE MOMENT

T

OTHER **THOUGHTS:** COUNT TO 10, COUNT COLOURS IN A PAINTING, REPEAT WORDS TO A SONG IN YOUR MIND.

S

OTHER **SENSATIONS:** SQEEZE A RUBBER BALL VERY HARD, LISTEN TO VERY LOUD MUSIC, HOLD COLD ICE IN YOUR HAND OR MOUTH, GET OUT IN THE RAIN OR SNOW, TAKE A COLD SHOWER.

STOP SKILL

The STOP Skill is used when you are starting to act impulsively without thinking. It is to stop yourself from reacting. To help you stay in control, use the STOP skill which consists of: **S**top, **T**ake a step back, **O**bserve, and **P**roceed Mindfully. Practice this skill so that it becomes second nature. You want the STOP skill to be readily accessible when you are emotionally dysregulated.

S

Don't just react. STOP! Freeze! Do not move a muscle! Your emotions may try to make you act without thinking. Stay in control!

T

Take a step back from the situation. Take a break. Let go. Take a deep breath. Do no let your feelings make you act impulsively.

O

Observe. Notice your thoughts and feelings. Observe what other are saying or doing.

P

Proceed mindfully. Act with awareness. In deciding what to do, consider your thoughts and feelings, the situation, and other people's thoughts and feelings. Think about your goals. Ask yourself: which actions will make it worse or better?

STOP SKILL WORKSHEET

Distressing situation: What caused the distress? Who was involved? Where did it happen? When?

On a scale from 1-10 (with 10 being the most severe distress) What level of distress did this situation cause me?

DESCRIBE HOW YOU PRACTICED:

S _____

T _____

O _____

P _____

Describe the outcomes after using the STOP skill:

THE TIPP SKILL

The TIPP skill is to be used when you need to rapidly reduce emotional intensity. Similar to the STOP skill you should try to practise these skills so they become second nature.

T

DROP THE TEMPERATURE WITH COLD WATER (TO CALM DOWN FAST)*

- HOLDING YOUR BREATH, PUT YOUR FACE IN A BOWL OF COLD WATER
- OR HOLD A COLD PACK (ZIP-LOCK BAG OF WATER) ON YOUR EYES AND CHEEKS
- HOLD FOR 30 SECONDS

I

INTENSE EXERCISE (TO CALM DOWN YOUR BODY WHEN IT IS REVED UP BY EMOTION)

- ENGAGE IN INTENSE EXERCISE, IF ONLY FOR A SHORT WHILE
- EXPEND YOUR BODY'S STORED UP PHYSICAL ENERGY BY RUNNING, WALKING FAST, JUMPING, LIFTING WEIGHTS, ETC.

P

PACED BREATHING (PACE YOUR BREATHING BY SLOWING IT DOWN):

- BREATHE DEEPLY DOWN INTO YOUR BELLY
- SLOW YOUR PACE OF INHALING AND EXHALING WAY DOWN (ON AVERAGE, 4-5 BREATHS PER MIN
- BREATHE OUT MORE SLOWLY THAN YOU BREATHE IN (5 SEC IN AND 7 SEC OUT)

P

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION (TO CALM DOWN BY PMR WITH BREATHING OUT)

- WHILE BREATHING INTO YOUR BELLY DEEPLY TENSE YOUR BODY MUSCLES
- NOTICE THE TENSION IN YOUR BODY
- WHILE BREATHING OUT, SAY "RELAX" IN YOUR MIND
- LET GO OF THE TENSION
- NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE IN YOUR BODY

Go to www.anxietycanada.com for further details on PMR

***Caution:** Very cold water decreases your heart rate rapidly. Intense exercise will increase heart rate. Consult your health care provider before using these skills if you have a heart or medical condition, a lowered base heart rate due to medications, take a beta-blocker, are allergic to cold, or have an eating disorder.

SELF-COMPASSION

WHEN WE STRUGGLE, WE GIVE OURSELVES COMPASSION NOT TO FEEL BETTER BUT BECAUSE WE FEEL BAD ~KRISTIN NEFF~

CHAPTER FIVE

Taking care of yourself is essential in this moment of great global instability. Research has shown that self-compassion is associated with mental health and well-being. Dr. Paul Gilbert, the clinical psychologist associated with the three emotion regulation systems known as the threat, drive, and soothe systems (recall from chapter two) describes that the soothe system has a calming influence on both the threat and drive systems. This is important as without our soothe system, our threat and drive systems become overactive and can lead to uncomfortable emotions such as anxiety, anger, and sadness. While others' kindness can stimulate the soothe system, self-compassion can as well (useful during times of social distancing).

Dr. Kristin Neff is the psychologist that has been credited with empircally validating self-compassion. She describes self-compassion as "a practice in which we learn to be a good friend to ourselves when we need it most-to become an inner ally rather than an inner enemy (Neff, 2018)." The following worksheets will assist you to foster self-compassion.

- **Self-Compassion Elements**
- **Self-Compassion Quiz**
- **Mindfulness**

THREE ELEMENTS OF SELF-COMPASSION

- Mindfulness: being in the present moment
- Self Kindness: rather than being harsh we act supportive and encouraging to ourselves
- Common Humanity: a recognition that we are all flawed and works in progress.

The Three Elements of Self-Compassion

Neff, 2018

SELF-COMPASSION QUIZ

THE FOLLOWING QUIZ WILL GIVE YOU A SENSE OF HOW SELF-COMPASSIONATE YOU ARE. THE MORE ITEMS YOU TICK, THE MORE SELF-CRITICAL YOU ARE LIKLEY TO BE, INDICATING THAT YOU COULD BENEFIT FROM SELF-COMPASSION PRACTICES

	Tick (if this applies)
I find it hard to be kind to myself	
If something goes wrong I automatically blame myself	
I don't deserve to do nice things for myself	
I am very critical of myself when things aren't going well	
When I am having a hard time, I wouldn't even think to look after myself like I would a friend	
I focus a lot on my faults and flaws and can't let them go	
If I make a mistake I give myself a really hard time	
When I am struggling, I don't treat myself with much care	
I can't accept mistakes I've made or things I haven't done well	
I think over and over about things I don't like about myself	
I am not very gentle with myself when I am suffering emotionally	
If I make a mistake I feel like I should be punished	
I feel like I'm the only one who struggles or fails at things	

Dr. Neff created the Self-Compassion Scale for researchers:
https://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ShortSCS.pdf

MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

Mindfulness is a key component of self-compassion because we need to be with our pain in order to respond with kindness. Mindfulness allows us to face the truth of our experience by being present with our thoughts and feelings. A common mindfulness practice is to become aware of your breathing, noticing any time your mind wanders away from the breath, catching its wandering, and redirecting it back to the breath as your anchor to the present moment.

1) To begin the practice, sit down in a chair and adopt a comfortable posture, then ask yourself:

- What am I experiencing right now?
- What thoughts and feelings are around?
- What body sensations are present?

Allow yourself to just acknowledge, observe and describe these experiences to yourself, without judgment and without trying to change them or make them go away. Spend 30 seconds to 1 minute just doing this.

2) Bring your awareness to your breath, focusing on the sensations of your breath as you inhale and exhale. Bring your awareness to the back and forth movements of the sensations in your abdomen from moment to moment, letting thoughts go with each out breath. Saying to yourself, “calm”, “relax” or “let go” in each outward breath. If your mind wanders away to other thoughts, feelings and sensations – do not try to change them or make them go away. Simply acknowledge their presence, allowing them to be there, then letting go with your attention and focusing back on your breath. Spend about 1 or 2 minutes doing this.

3) Now expand your awareness to sensing your whole body breathing, being aware of sensations throughout your body. If there are any strong feelings around, maybe say to yourself “whatever it is, it is okay, just let me feel it.” Allowing yourself to breathe with these feelings, and if your mind wanders to bothersome thoughts or sensations, just acknowledge and let go of these - focusing back on sensing your whole body breathing. Continue doing this for about another 1 or 2 minutes.

DAILY MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

Follow the mindfulness script provided on the previous page or use your own favourite scripts. Record after each practice whether you felt better, or worse, and how long you practiced .

EXERCISE #1: MORNING MINDFULNESS

BEFORE I FELT...

AFTER I FELT...

EXERCISE #2: AFTERNOON MINDFULNESS

BEFORE I FELT...

AFTER I FELT...

EXERCISE #3: EVENING MINDFULNESS

BEFORE I FELT...

AFTER I FELT...

WELLNESS ACTION PLAN

The wellness action plan is putting together everything you learned over the past five chapters.

Healthy coping strategies I use to maintain wellness:

New healthy coping skills I plan to try (review "Healthy Coping Ideas" page for ideas:

The coping pitfalls I use when I am not taking care of myself (i.e. avoidance, numbing & withdrawing, and anger)

My early warning signs I am not coping well. Some examples may include: sleep changes, appetite changes, irritability, sadness, reduced activity, substance use, and avoiding friends and family.

Distraction activities I will use when I am experiencing uncomfortable emotions (review the "Distraction Activities")

When I am experiencing strong distressing emotions and I need to reduce the intensity immediately I plan to try (review the STOP or TIPP skills):

Daily routines I plan to try in order to thrive (review ideas such as creating a daily planner, gratitude journaling, sleep hygiene, identifying emotions, acceptance, and mindfulness).

Workbook Checklist

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU MADE IT TO THE END OF THIS WORKBOOK. LOOK AT ALL OF THE SKILLS YOU HAVE LEARNED!

- [ ] UNDERSTAND YOUR EMOTIONS
- [ ] LEARNED NEW HEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES
- [ ] CREATED A DAILY PLANNER
- [ ] STARTED GRATITUDE JOURNALING
- [ ] LEARNED WAYS TO SLEEP BETTER
- [ ] IDENTIFIED EMOTIONAL ESCAPES
- [ ] CREATED A WELLNESS PLAN
- [ ] WORKED ON IDENTIFIYING EMOTIONS
- [ ] IDENTIFIED THE EMOTION SYSTEMS
- [ ] LEARNED TO IMPROVE DISTRESS
- [ ] TRIED THE STOP OR TIPP SKILLS
- [ ] IDENTIFIED HOW SELF COMPASSION YOU ARE
- [ ] PRACTICED MINDFULNESS

FINAL THOUGHTS

Thank you for joining me on the courageous path of self-reflection and growth during these uncertain times. The practices of emotional awareness, tolerating uncomfortable feelings, acceptance, and self-compassion are lifelong skills that are to be practiced over and over again. We never arrive at a point where we no longer need to practice them, just as we need to sleep, drink water, and eat on a daily basis.

This book is dedicated to all of you who are struggling and are still trying your very best. This workbook is free to download from my website. My request is that anyone who uses it engages in one random act of kindness.

I want to send out appreciation to my partner and best friends for encouraging this side project and to Dr. Iryna Ivanova and Dr. Sarah Thompson for reviewing the chapters and providing insightful feedback. Take care of yourselves and each other!

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MAY WE BE HAPPY
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MAY WE RIDE THE
WAVES OF OUR
LIVES
MAY WE LIVE IN
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WHAT WE ARE GIVEN

~METTA PRAYER~

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