



LIVE WITH

Faith

NOT FEAR

A GUIDE FOR LDS TEENS

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# Why This Guide?

## Note to Parents

I've met many young people since I started my career in 2000. Many of them have been future or returned missionaries who struggled with severe anxiety.

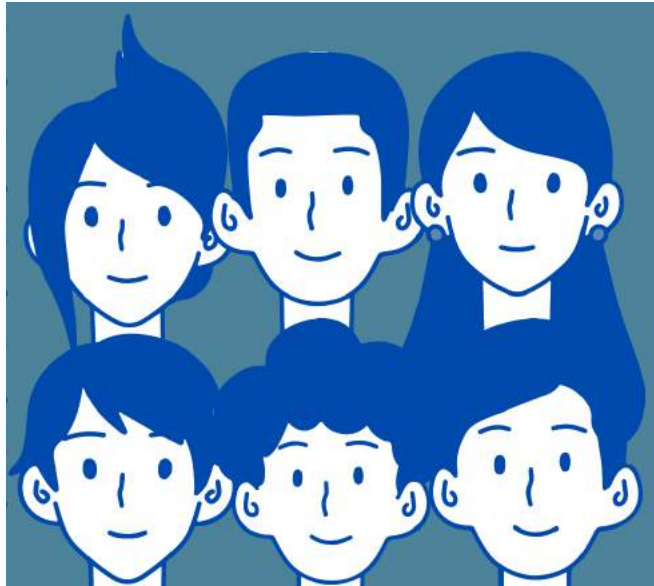
Many of them believed they should've been stronger and were also experiencing guilt and shame besides anxiety.

I also have met many college students who have struggled with severe anxiety related to their faith and morals (scrupulosity OCD) and other types of OCD. All of them have inspired me to write "Imperfectly Good: Navigating Religious and Moral Anxiety to Release Fear and Find Peace." However, I continue to meet youth who suffer silently and often they and their parents are not aware they actually can find joy and meaning despite their anxiety.

Thus, I decided to create this brief guide with evidence-based treatment tools. Though, it's not meant to be a substitute for treatment.

Please make sure your youth receives the appropriate assessment and treatment they deserve.

# You Can Live With Faith!



New experiences await you. You might be feeling excited about all the things you want to do after high school. You might also be feeling overwhelmed by the decisions you've made or have to make.

You are not alone. Every human being experiences emotions such as fear, anxiety, doubt and feelings of inadequacy at different times of their lives. Life is mostly difficult when they are about to start something that is very important to them or are still undecided on what to do next.

This guide will help you understand how to respond to what happens inside and outside of you so you can live with faith and not fear.

Are you ready to get some awesome tools that will help you now and the rest of your life?

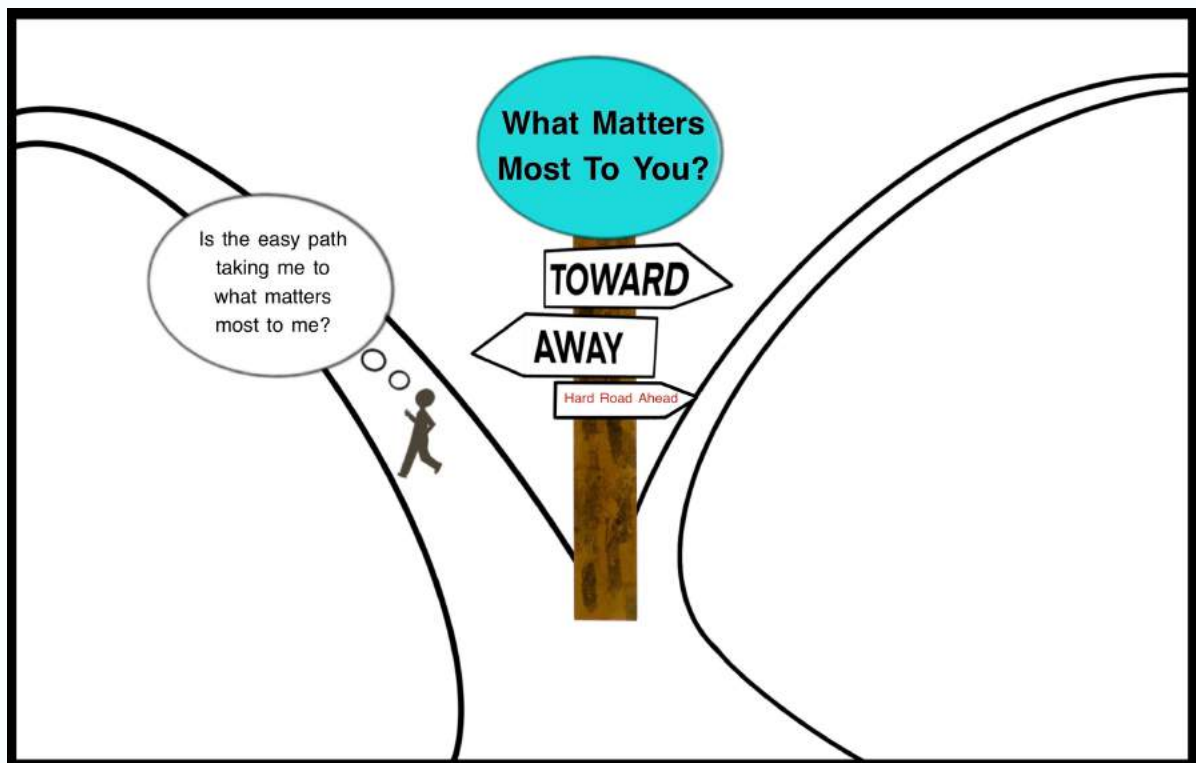
Let's go!

# Doing What Matters Most to You!

## The Road Not Taken

The famous poem by Robert Frost comes to mind as we start this guide:

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— I took  
the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*



When you are overwhelmed by fear and feel stuck with your thoughts and feelings, is it easier to take the most traveled road (graphic above)? Of course it is! But is it the the most helpful choice? We'll be talking about this soon.

Let's first talk about discovering what matters most to you.

## What Do You Want Your Life to Be About?

A caterpillar named Yellow was wondering what to do with her life when she noticed a gray-haired caterpillar hanging upside down on a nearby branch. He seemed to be caught in some kind of hairy stuff. She asked him if she could help as he seemed to be in trouble.



He answered, “No, my dear, I have to do this to become a butterfly.” When Yellow heard the word *butterfly*, **her whole insides leapt**. She wanted to know more about what the word *butterfly* meant.



The gray-haired caterpillar said, “It’s what you are meant to become. It flies with beautiful wings and joins the earth to heaven.”

Yellow was skeptical. “It can’t be true. How can I believe there’s a butterfly inside you or me when all I see is a fuzzy worm? How does one become a butterfly?” she asked pensively.

**“You must want to fly so much you are willing to give up being a caterpillar,”** he answered. Yellow decided to risk becoming a butterfly. For courage, she hung right beside the other cocoon and began to spin her own.”

It takes courage to do new things. In order to be transformed we all have to do hard things to reach our potential, don't we?

## Recognizing What Matters Most To You

One of the best ways to recognize what type of person you want to be every day is to think of someone you know and admire because of the way they behave with everyone they meet.



Even when they are distressed and experience hardships, how do they show up for life?

You may want to be the type of person who is kind, brave, calm, caring, attentive, loving, wise, committed, creative, adventurous, caring, friendly, reliable, responsible, fun, optimistic, etc. You get the idea.

Here are some additional questions that might help you decide what matters most to you (what you value most):

- If all of a sudden you found yourself in a distant galaxy, how would you live your life?
- Would you do what matters most to you to keep living meaningfully?
- Would your passions and the quality of actions you took every day bring you joy despite being far away from home?





- What motivates me?
- What am I passionate about?
- What sort of person do I want to be every day?
- What causes my whole insides to leap?"

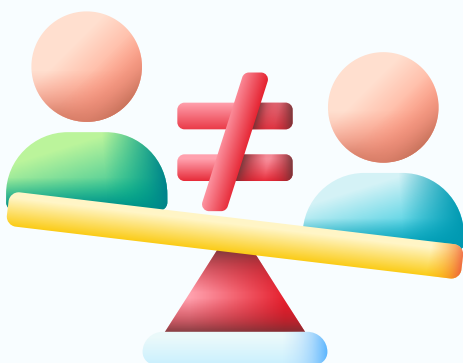
As you go through life, ponder these questions. They will help you discover what truly matters most to you!

## Focus on the Process

"Do I just want to climb Mount Everest or enjoy climbing?" My friend who said this realized he didn't need to rush the process.

It is not about goals or milestones.

It's about making small changes, improving, and most importantly, enjoying the journey as you keep doing what matters most to you.



## Watch out for Comparisons

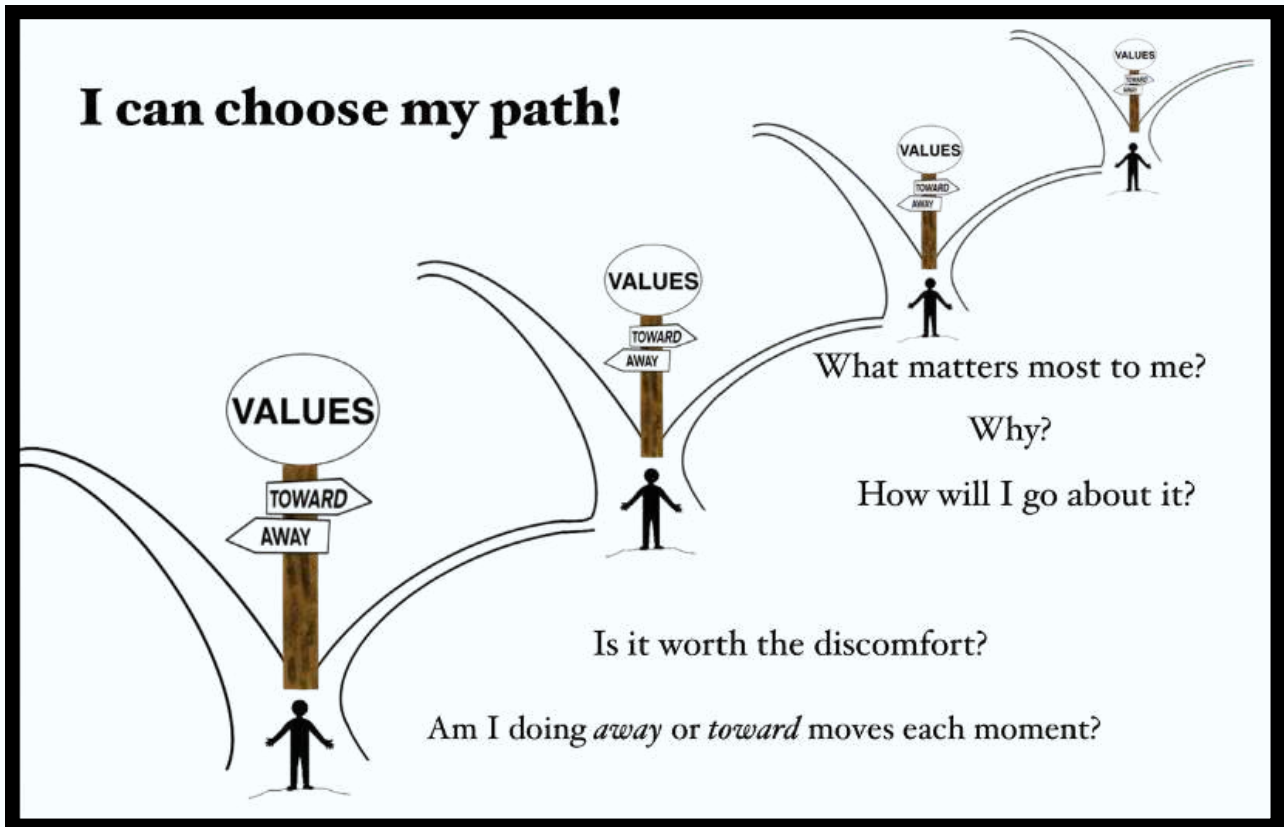
Have you noticed what happens when you compare yourself to others?

Does it make you feel worse?  
Notice that next time you do that.



## Living Your Values Is an Ongoing Choice

As you go about life doing what matters most, notice your answers to the questions in the graphic below.



What we care about most counts only when we act on it!



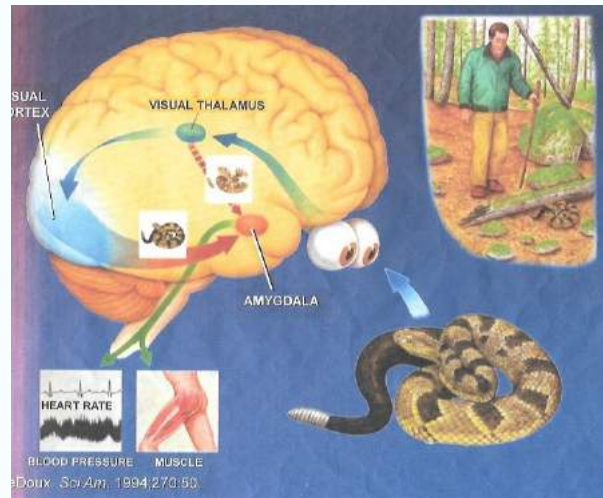
Come back to this section as often as you need to.

# UNDERSTANDING THE MIND

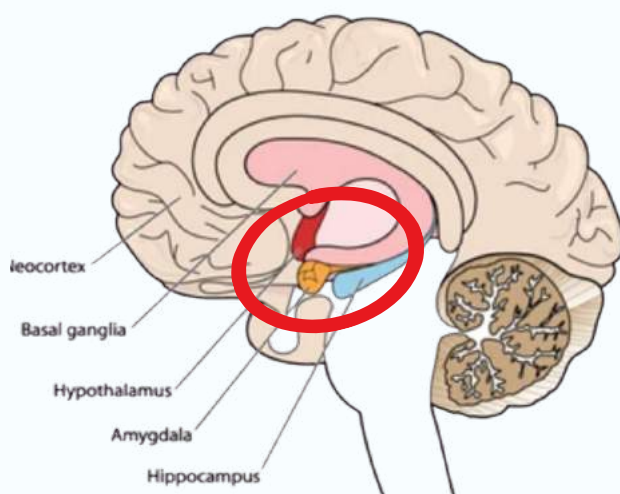
## Your Mind and Fear

### The Amygdala

When your brain detects danger, the amygdala receives the message and it immediately sends that message to other amazing structures in your brain so that your body can prepare to fight or flee danger.



The freeze response is basically fleeing internally. Just like when opossums play dead when they detect danger.



### The Hippocampus

The hippocampus is another amazing structure that plays an important role in regulating our learning and our memory.

I like to say that the amygdala is the "alarm system" for our body and the hippocampus is the "memory filing system."

The "alarm system" along with the "memory filing system" work together to keep us safe.



For example, have you ever gotten food poisoning? Maybe it was a burger you ate. But once you feel better you move on, right? Until your friends want to get together at the same place where you ate that burger that made you sick. The hippocampus and the amygdala might immediately alert you that something is not quite right.

Just hearing the word *burger* or driving by any burger place might feel horrible. It's as if your mind (the amygdala, the hippocampus and other amazing structures in your brain) are saying, "Remember you got sick after eating that burger? Don't eat; run away!" What would you do?



So FEAR is basically your mind saying, "You are in danger!" And in fact, if a tiger, a lion, fire or other physical danger is present, you would immediately try to escape, fight or stay in place until you feel safe.

We do have an amazing mind, and its main function is to protect us!

Sometimes our worry thoughts are the ones that alert the mind (the safety alarm, memory filing system, and other structures like the pre-frontal cortex--the thinking part of our brain) to keep us safe.



What sensations do you experience in your body when fear or anxiety show up? Remember, in that very moment, your mind is perceiving that you are in danger and wants to protect you, but there is no tiger or fire.



The question is, what can you do about it?

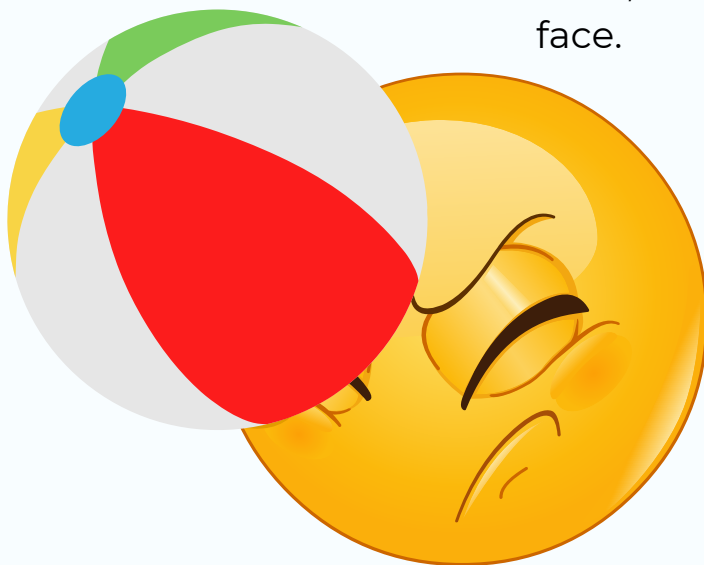
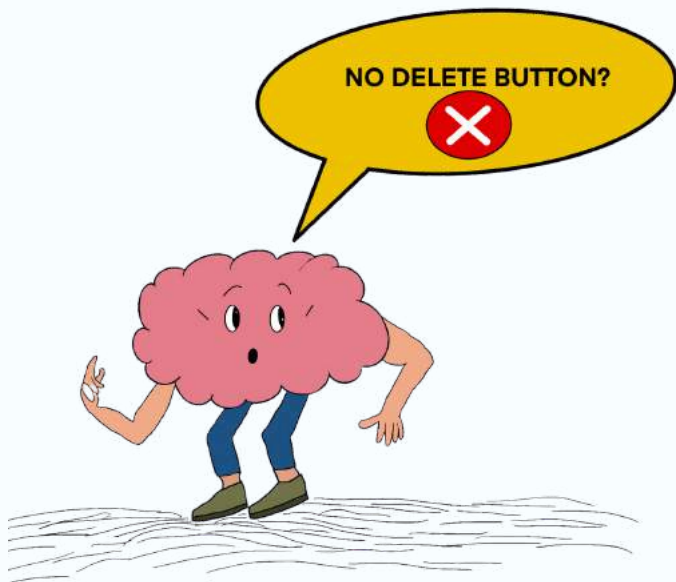
It makes sense to want to get rid of our thoughts and feelings, when they are unpleasant, right?

When events outside ourselves evoke unpleasant thoughts and feelings, the mind will quickly provide all kinds of solutions so we can feel safe.



Have you noticed what happens when you try to get rid of your thoughts and feelings, as if they were an old pair of shoes?

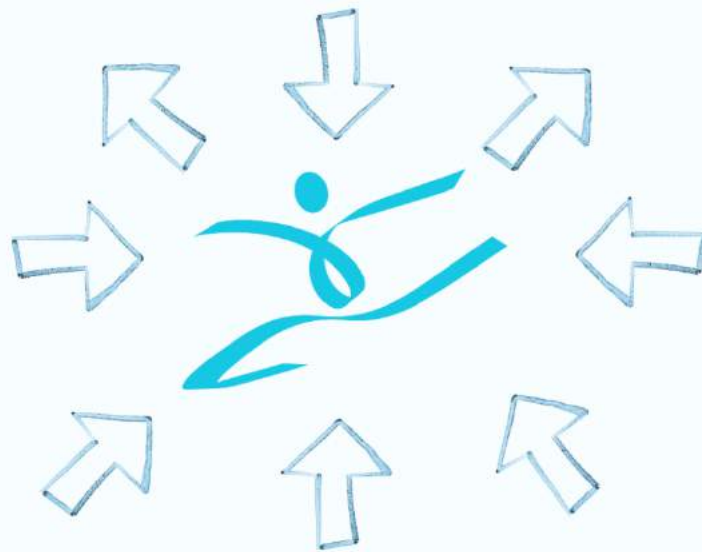
As much as we might try to get rid of or delete the unpleasant thoughts and feelings, they just keep coming back, don't they? The more we try to push them away, the more they seem to be present. Kind of like when we submerge a beach ball in the water. It just keeps coming back, and it might hit us in the face.





We simply cannot get rid of our thoughts, feelings, or other internal experiences from our minds like we do external things. There is no delete button in our nervous system.

And the human mind (the safety alarm, memory filing system, and our thinking part of us) are continually relating and linking anything to everything. Thus, the memory filing system just keeps working to keep it all recorded, in case we need that information. So, yeah, our brain has no delete button. 😞



## What Are Thoughts?

Thoughts are words, opinions, evaluations or assumptions related to how we may feel in that moment.

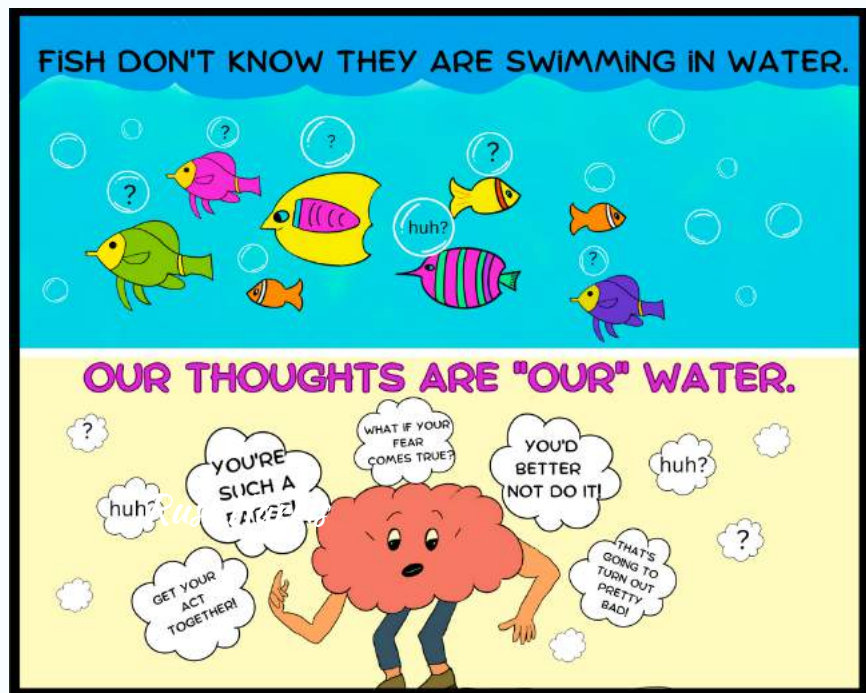
Some thoughts are about facts and others are not, but thoughts are not facts.

And some thoughts are helpful and others not so much.

Images and memories are also products of our minds. They are part of our inside world and are natural, internal, private events. They aren't facts either.



Quite often,  
we are not  
even aware of  
our thoughts  
until we feel  
overwhelmed  
by our  
feelings.



## What Are Feelings?

External and internal events can evoke feelings. And they have a function. For example, when you hear someone shouting "Fire!" your mind will

bring up fear in the form of fast heart palpitations and tension in your body (sensations) so you can fight or escape the fire. In this case, we can say feeling fearful is helpful.

## Shouldn't we be able to control our feelings so we can avoid the "bad" ones?

Feelings in and of themselves are neither good nor bad. It is what we do with them that gives feelings a negative reputation.

For example, when someone wrongs us, we may feel angry. Is this wrong? No! But if we get stuck with our emotions and react inappropriately, this can be a problem.

When we try to suppress and numb a feeling, we end up suppressing all of them and depression can ensue. The good news is that you don't have to be bound by the rules your mind is trying to impose upon you.

## The Mind's Unhelpful Roles

Sometimes the human mind can be a little overprotective. Remember, it will jump to save us even when there is no physical danger around us. The worry thoughts are often what activates all the yucky feelings and sensations we feel in our bodies.

Let's take a look at how your mind might wrongly invite you to perform behaviors that may temporarily provide comfort but also reinforce your fears.

### The Over Worry Grandma



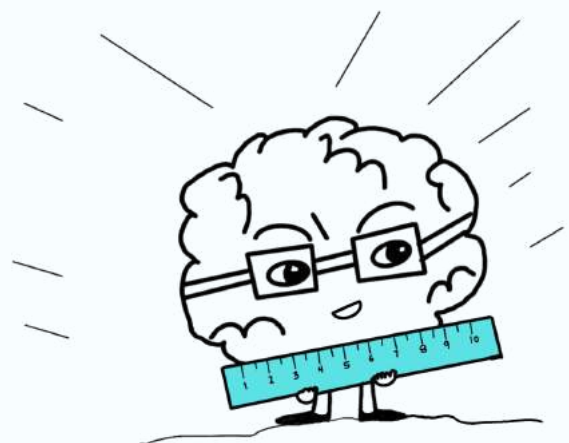
The human mind reminds me of my dear grandma. She was a worrier. I loved her, but her constant reminders to ensure everyone was safe were tiring. "Take your sweater or you'll catch a cold." "Get home before dark. Nothing good happens after dark!" She just worried too much.

Does your mind act and react like a over-worried grandma? Or maybe it plays other roles that get you stuck in your imagination?

### The Rule-Making Mind

Have you noticed if your mind is like a dictator watching your every move?

What happens when you don't obey it?





When the dictator makes you believe that you have to live your faith, and obey every rule perfectly, how do you feel?



### The Problem-Solving Machine

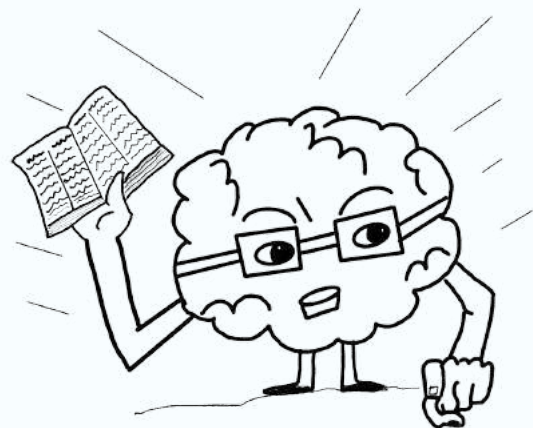
The mind is amazingly helpful when it comes to finding solutions to our problems. But sometimes its advice can actually make things more difficult for us. It can also give us an option overload.

And, we end up choosing the option that "makes sense" but actually might be unhelpful. Have you noticed that?

### The Preachy Mind

Is the preachy mind leading you to believe you are not good enough and that God doesn't love you?

Do you feel like you have to behave perfectly or you'll be in trouble somehow?



When your preachy mind insists that you need to constantly pray or repent, to feel accepted by God and others, does it help you feel better? Do you constantly feel anxious, guilty and/or ashamed?

Please consult with your therapist about treatment for scrupulosity

OCD. The skills taught here can be helpful, but you need specific treatment for this condition.





## The Judgmental Mind

"I'm bad; I'm not trying hard enough!" These types of thoughts are experienced by everyone at times. The problem is when we start believing them.

Notice how often your judgmental mind provides

these types of thoughts and how often do you believe them? Do they tend to stick around too?

## The Fortune-Telling Machine

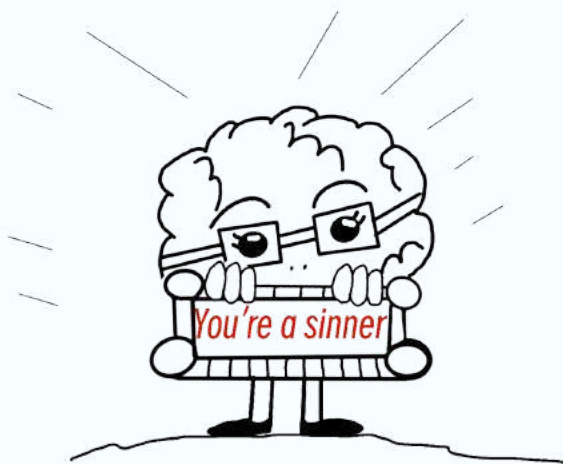
Your mind seems to believe it knows everything about your future. The "what if" worry thoughts can surely get the safety alarm and memory filing system going quickly. Notice how helpful those thoughts are when you fall for the unhelpful advice from the fortune-telling machine.



## The Label-Making Mind

Have you noticed how many labels your mind has created for you?

Before long, those labels might start popping up all the time, and you might likely start believing them. How do you feel when you believe those labels?



Remember, the mind plays all these roles to protect us, and sometimes it goes overboard. It is up to us to take it's well-meaning advice lightly.

Let's take a look at some of the behaviors we all might engage in, when we fall for our mind's unhelpful advice.

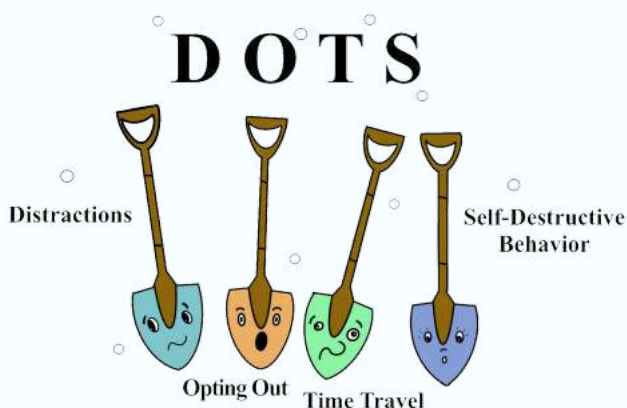
## The Man in a Hole

Sometimes we humans act like a man who was blindfolded and fell into a hole. Luckily he had a shovel and because he couldn't take the blindfold off, he was really mad. He was so frustrated that he thought he would dig himself out of the hole.

You can imagine what happened. The more he tried to get out, the deeper he got in the hole. Sometimes we act like this man by doing behaviors we think are helpful, but they actually get us deeper into a hole of anxiety, depression and frustration. Let's see what you can learn in this section about unhelpful shovels (behaviors).



## Recognizing Unhelpful Behaviors



### Distractions

Distractions can help us forget about our worries but only temporarily. Remember, there is no delete button in nervous system.

What distractions do you default to in order to resist or push away your thoughts and feelings?

## Opting Out

How often do you avoid or opt out of situations because they cause anxiety, doubt, or other unpleasant emotions?

Staying away from situations to avoid experiencing unwanted thoughts and feelings appears to make sense, doesn't it? Your anxious mind might propose avoidance is helpful.

## Time Travel

Your mind is your very own time machine; in less than a microsecond, it can take you to the past or future. And the mind often takes us to the past or future in an attempt to “make things better.”



- Where does your “time machine” like to take you?
- How often do you anticipate with anxiety a future event to the point you feel ill?
- When has time-traveling been effective for you?

## Self-Destructive Behavior

Sometimes your anxious mind will tell you that certain activities are helpful. But anything you do that is not helping you live purposefully and joyfully can become harmful.

Are you overusing TV and social media? You might be using these activities to distract yourself or to opt out, which affects your life.



Are those behaviors hurting your studies, work, service, and relationships, and therefore your emotional and mental well-being?



- Distractions:
- Opting out:
- Time travel:
- Self-destructive behavior:
- Other behaviors:

See if you can keep a tally on your smartphone or a piece of paper throughout the day to see if you are using your mind's favorite tools to help you cope temporarily.

Those behaviors may provide short-term relief, but are they allowing you to go (move) toward what matters most in your life?

Start noticing if your mind is consuming you with unhelpful thoughts and how you are responding. Are you doing DOTS and getting stuck there with your mind?

— “ —

What consumes  
your mind  
controls  
your life.

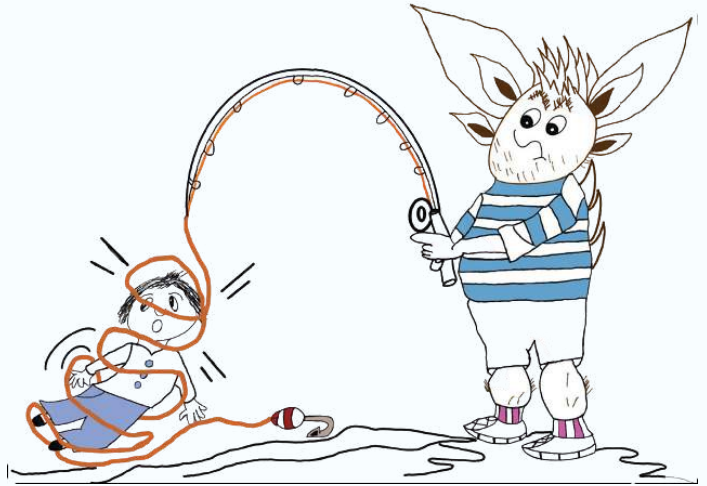
— ” —

And now, are you ready to learn how to respond to your mind so you can focus on what matters most to you every day?



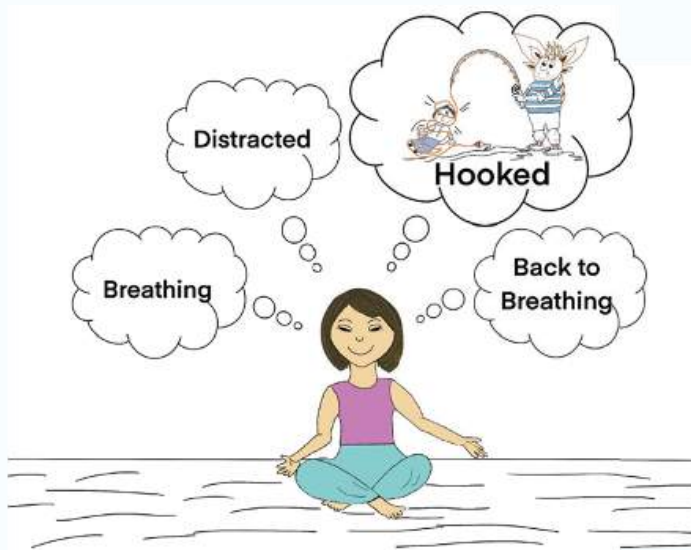
# Getting Unhooked

When you feel overwhelmed by anxiety and other emotions, it might feel like there is a monster who “hooks” you as if you were a helpless fish trying to swim away only to get more entangled.



When you get hooked, you may thrash around only to get caught in its trap. Hours may pass before you realize you’ve been hooked. Here is a practice that can help you respond differently.

## 1. Acknowledge Getting Hooked



After reading the instructions, set a timer for five minutes, then sit in a comfortable, quiet place, and close your eyes.

The purpose of this exercise is to help you notice when you get hooked (with thoughts, and feelings) and then become unhooked (unstuck) as follows.

- Notice how the air enters your nostrils and expands your lungs as you breathe. Is the air warm? Then notice the air as it slowly exits your nostrils or your mouth. If you want, you can say the word "breathing."
- When you get distracted by anything else but your breathing, just, acknowledge it by saying, “Distracted,” then gently refocus on your breathing.

- When you get distracted with a thought, memory, or feeling that "hooks" (feeling overwhelmed with emotions and you wish to push them away) you, acknowledge that's happened and say, "hooked," then gently refocus on your breathing.

Keep noticing until the timer goes off. You don't need to force yourself to think or feel. You just need to notice when you become distracted or hooked (by any thought, memory or feeling).

Every time you practice this exercise, write down what you've learned about you and your mind.

## 2. Responding to the Overprotective Mind



Remember my grandma and her overprotective attitude? When she would give me and my siblings her well-meaning advice, instead of arguing with her, we'd play along. "Thanks, Grandma. I'm listening."

My dear grandma had a one-track mind. She only wanted to protect us from future pain—just like the mind does!

Instead of arguing with your mind when you recognize its advice is not helpful in your life, just **thank it**. After all, it means well but you get to choose whether you'll listen to its advice.

Let's take a look at some examples of how you can do that.



*"You're a hypocrite!"*

*I hear you,  
Mind.  
Thanks!*



*"You're so imperfect!"*

*You have a  
point, Mind.  
Thanks!*



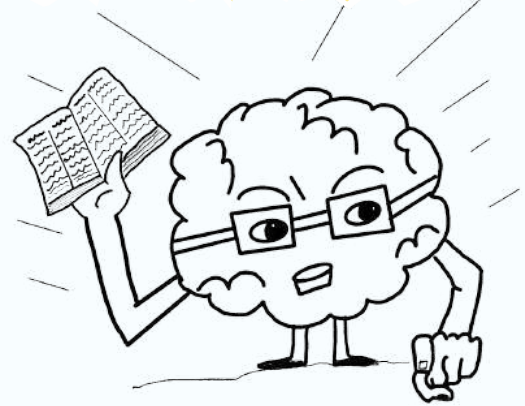
**Play along  
with your  
mind!**

When your mind brings doubts, which all minds do, reply with a doubt too! For example, "Maybe you're right!" "We'll have to see!" "I don't know." "That's possible." Try it and see what you can learn.



Do your best to not argue with your mind. We just want to acknowledge with a phrase of uncertainty and then gently refocus on what you were doing before the thought showed up.

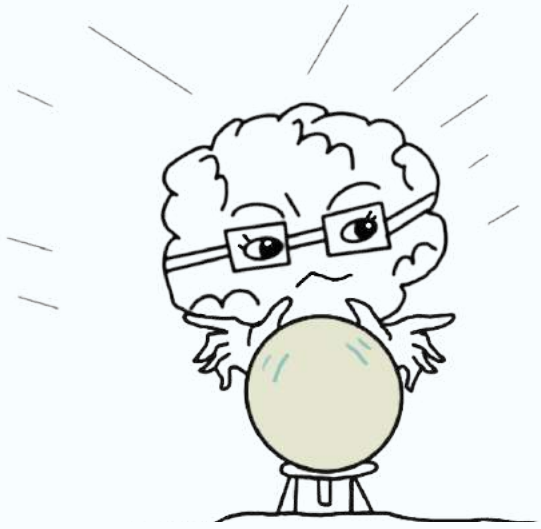
**You're not worthy of God's love!**



*You could be right.  
We'll see!*



**What if you do something wrong and get punished?**



*It's possible.  
I don't know.*





Better figure out what you did wrong last week!



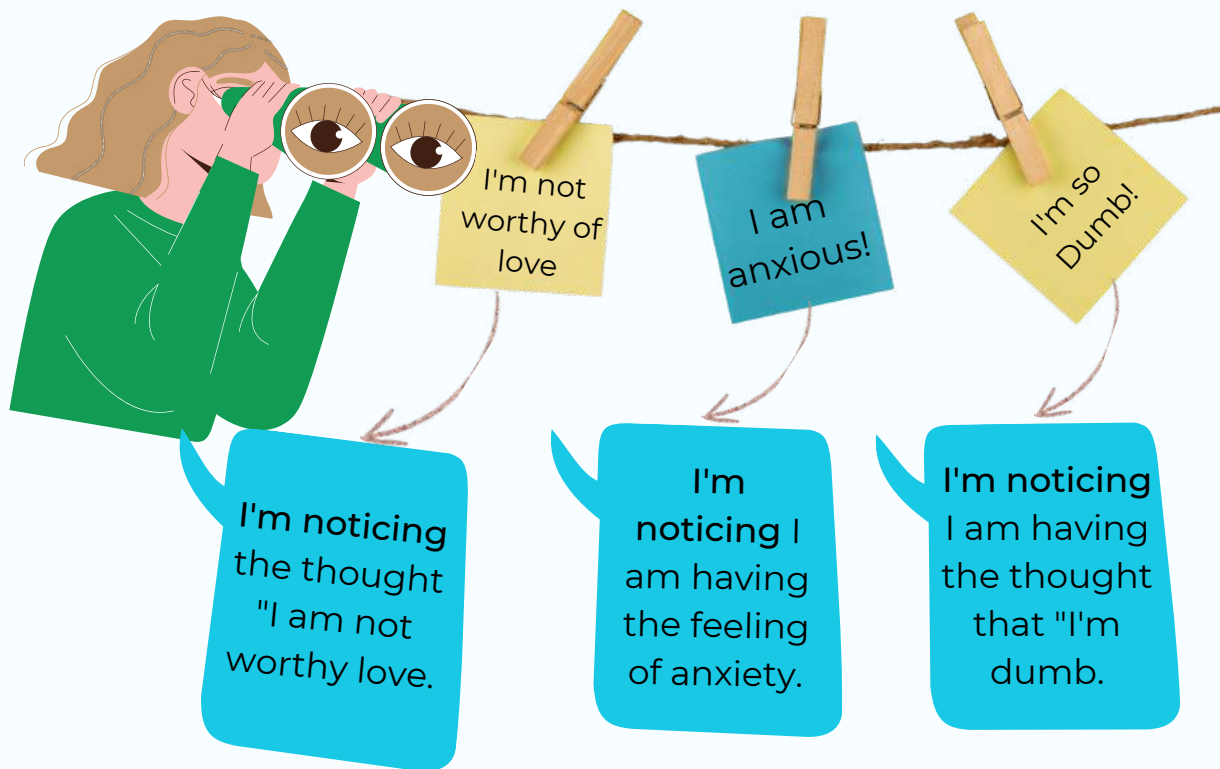
Be confident. You don't need to be afraid of the Mind. It's just being over-protective. Be creative with your responses as you practice. Remember to just acknowledge it, and then gently return your attention back to what you were doing without reasoning and arguing with your mind.

### 3. Noticing Your Thoughts and Feelings

Whenever fear and doubt strike, your “helpful” mind will offer solutions to the problem, but these solutions are not effective in the long run. The doubt (e.g., whether you are good enough, whether you are perfectly honest) that seem to control you, can lead you to feel anxious and fearful.



No worries. You can learn to get unhooked from your thoughts or feelings by noticing what your mind is saying. Notice these examples:



Every time you hear an unhelpful advice from your mind, just acknowledge what it says by saying, "I am noticing....".

#### 4. Sing Your Thoughts

My comments were so out of place. I'm such an idiot!



I can sing that thought to the Happy Birthday song!



A thought that keeps repeating itself can be scary or annoying. Either way, **don't** try to get rid of it with temporary coping skills (DOTS). Find out what happens when you sing it to a melody of a song you are familiar with. Sing it quietly or out loud. Try it now. See what happens.

## GETTING UNHOOKED - RECAP

### Start a New Habit!

When you notice you mind spitting out unhelpful thoughts and feelings,

ACKNOWLEDGE IT by saying: "I hear you, mind. We'll have to see. Thanks!" and then go on with what you were doing.



### Remember:

- Thoughts are words coming out of your mind.
- Thoughts and feelings are internal experiences. They are not facts.
- Responding to internal experiences the way we respond to external events only works temporarily.
- Feelings have a function. They result from signals we get internally and/or externally.
- We get to choose how to respond to them.
- Facts happen outside of ourselves.
- What we do with our hands, feet, lips and eyes is what we can control. We cannot control our thoughts and feelings.
- This guide and your therapist can help you change the way you respond to your thoughts and feelings.

# Letting Them Be



How do you respond to external and internal experiences?

Your body is constantly receiving signals (sounds and words that remind you of past experiences or trouble you about the future) from the environment, even if you don't want it to.

Sometimes those signals can evoke strong unpleasant thoughts and feelings.

What happens when you try to get rid of them? Have you been successful at it? Let's see what a natural event like rain can teach you about responding to your thoughts and feelings.

## Rain, Rain, Go Away!

Suppose you've planned a picnic and the day of the picnic looks clear, but three hours before the picnic, rain clouds start to form.

You could sing "Rain, rain, go away; come again another day," but you know you cannot fight the rain.

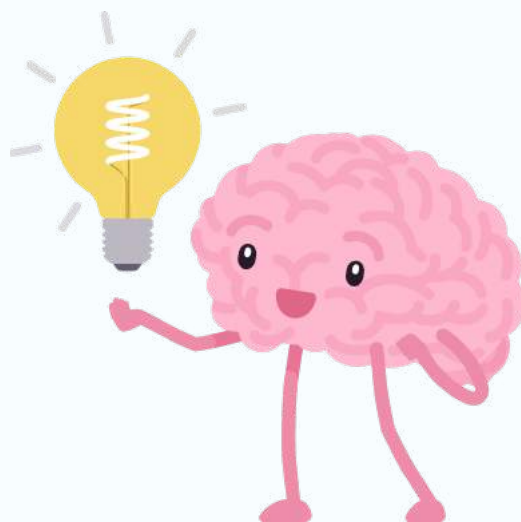


You can choose how to adjust to something you cannot control, right?

You would not try to fight a natural event like rain. Likewise, it is important to recognize that our thoughts and feelings are like rain—they're natural events. They are part of everyday life.

Even though your mind tells you that you can fight and control them, you cannot.

There is a way to respond to your internal events, and it's not the way your mind *thinks* you should. You can let them be!



“  
If you aren't willing  
to have it, you will.  
Steven C. Hayes  
”



What Is your default reaction when you feel overwhelmed by your thoughts and feelings?



Avoiding

Are you doing behaviors like DOTS?  
Will distracting yourself free you  
from the emotional pain?

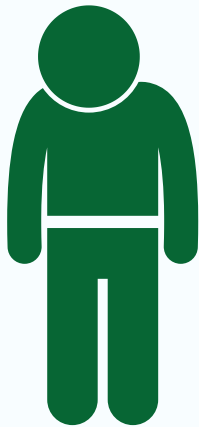
What do you notice about your body  
and yourself when you are trying to  
escape from the discomfort?



## Rigidly Enduring

Sometimes you may decide you're going to face your fears once and for all.

Trying to endure is a good start. Though you are trying, you may still be missing out on living with joy and purpose because white-knuckling internal events can leave you feeling exhausted.



## Surrendering

When you end up submitting to your mind, the painful feelings may subside temporarily. It is the easiest path.

When you experience this attitude, notice what happens in your body and yourself.

## Fighting

When you resist a thought or feeling by arguing or fighting with your mind, have you noticed what happens?

Does it really help you focus on what matters and do you enjoy your day?

What is it like when you spend your day avoiding, fighting, white-knuckling or surrendering to your thoughts and feelings?

No worries! There is a better way to respond to your feelings and thoughts. **You can let them be!**



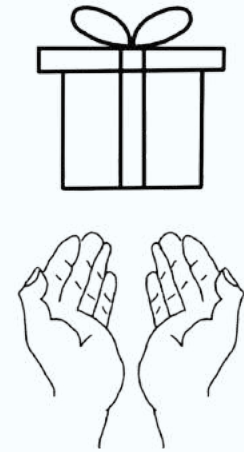
## 1. Taking What's Being Offered Now

When a friend offers you a gift, would you reject it? Even if you didn't like it you would receive it, right? You would say thank you, let the gift be, and you would get back to hanging out and doing what mattered in that moment.

Sometimes we are given "gifts" by life (unpleasant feelings and thoughts) and we just want them gone, don't we?

The problem is that we cannot control our thoughts and our feelings. Just like we cannot control the weather and other people's actions.

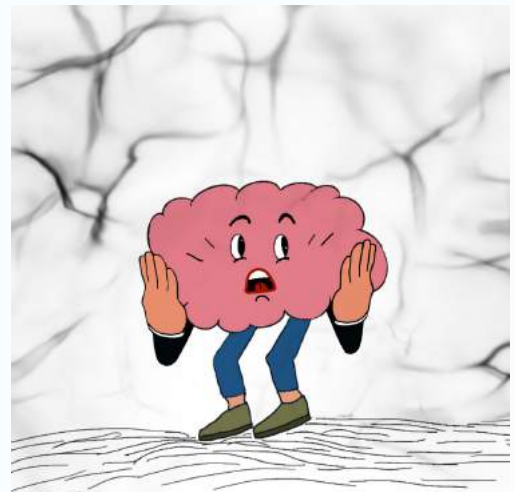
What we can control is what we do when they are present.



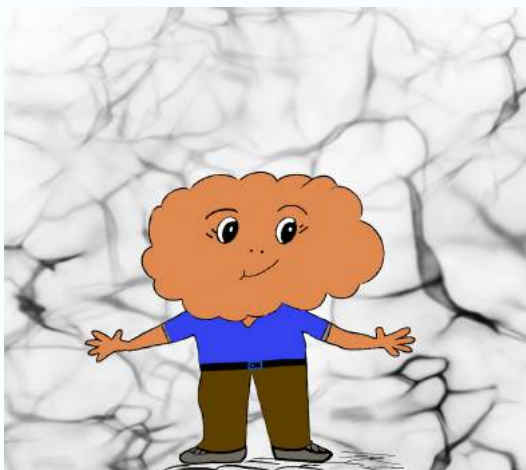
### Being on the Defensive

When you feel overwhelmed by your thoughts and feelings, do you react as if a monster were coming at you? Your mind reacts as if this were the case!

You can train your mind to respond differently. You don't need to hide from fear. You can learn to let fear be.



### Being Bold Even When You Are Afraid



Think about what your posture would look like if you were to say, "Bring it on Fear/Monster"

Can you be willing to face the unpleasant thoughts and feelings for a few moments and find out what happens when you actually don't try to avoid, fight, suppress, or give in to them?



Next time you feel fear, say "yes" to the feeling for a few moments instead of pushing it away.

See what you can learn. Be patient.

## 2. Be Curious As You Let Them Be

When you feel strong feelings and sensations, imagine being a curious scientist looking at the feeling, sensation or thought as if it is an object.

What shape, texture, and color does it have?

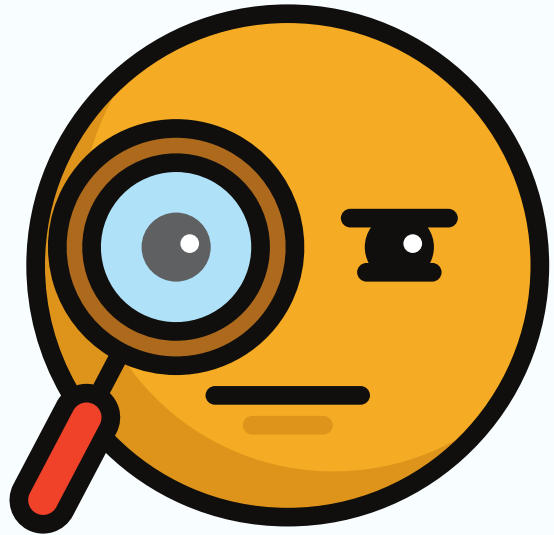
Notice where the emotion is in your body, where it begins, and where it ends. Does it have vibrations?

Though you don't like it, just take a few moments to imagine looking at it.

Drawing the feeling manifested in your body (sensation) on a piece of paper is helpful. Try it. It shows up regularly in your life, so find out what it's like to imagine looking at it as if it were an object.

Next, follow the ABCDE steps:

- **A**cknowledge your thoughts, feelings, and other internal events that you notice while this feeling or sensation is present ("I'm noticing fear.")
- **B**reathe in and out. As you exhale, imagine the air going around the area in your body where the uncomfortable emotion is located. Imagine what this emotion or sensation looks like.
- **C**reate space for it. Let it be there without fighting or ignoring it.



A B C D E

- **D**ecide to let the emotion or sensation be. Let it carry on with its function, even though it's unpleasant and scary.
- **E**ngage back to what you were doing that matters most.

As you continue to practice these steps, you will feel empowered and gain more confidence.

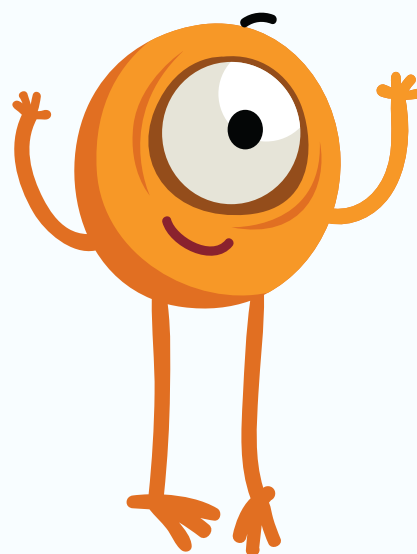
You can learn to let them be!

### 3. “Hello, Old Friend!”

Anxiety and other feelings such as shame, guilt, and doubt can be like an annoying old friend. It visits too frequently, and you don't like it. And while it's present, why not acknowledge it?

Whenever your old friend (the feeling) shows up, purposely take slow, deep breaths. As you take a deep breath, say, “Hello.” As you exhale say, “Old friend.” Continue to do so, and let the feeling be.

Can you make room for this old annoying friend? By breathing anxiety in (or another feeling) and letting it be, you're choosing a better option than trying to push it away and getting hooked by the anxiety monster.



**Breathe in—“Hello.”**  
**Breathe out—“Old friend.”**

### 4. Holding Your Emotion as You Would a Hurt Creature



Imagine holding the unpleasant feeling (e.g., guilt, doubt) as you would a puppy who is hurt (or any defenseless creature).

Imagine looking at this feeling with kindness and patience.

Embrace it gently. If you'd like, place your hands on the area of your body where you feel it.

Imagine gently holding the feeling for just a few more moments. Acknowledge the thoughts and notice what you learn when you do this practice.

## LETTING THEM BE - RECAP

The practices shared in this section will allow you to get really good at letting your thoughts, and feelings BE instead of fighting or submitting to them.

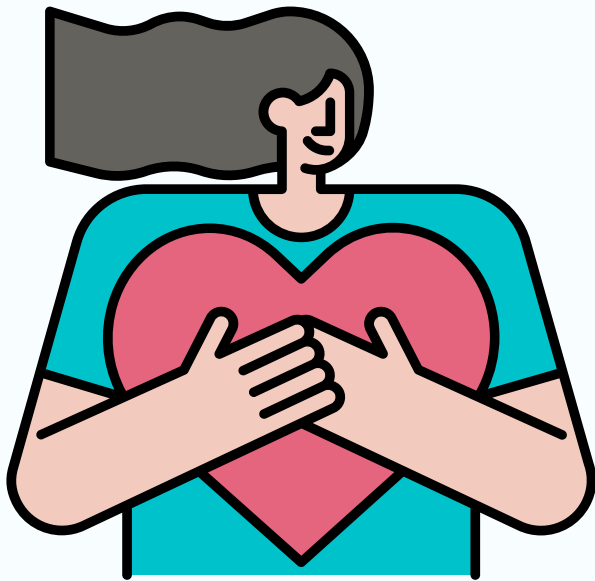
You don't need to beat yourself up when you forget to practice your skills or when you get hooked and try to control your internal experiences. Remember, learning is a process so be patient with yourself and the process.



Keep a curious attitude. See what you can learn when you are willing to take what is given to you each day. You **do have a choice** in how you'll respond!

What happens when you do it grudgingly?

Will you take what is given to you by life grudgingly or willingly?



Be bold and let the thoughts and feelings be while you focus on what matters most.

Notice how things go when you are flexible with all the gifts (Internal or external experiences) life offers you.

Be curious and let them be.

Remember that God loves you and trusts you. Trust and believe in yourself.

You may wish to practice one exercise per day. As you do, you'll discover that you can find more joy, stamina and vigor in your life even when unpleasant thoughts and feelings show up.

# Being Here, Not There



Have you ever felt overwhelmed by an external event (someone saying something that you didn't agree with) and then you blurting out a response you later regret?

It's not fun at all. You might have gotten stuck reviewing what others and you said. You probably wished you had behaved differently. Darn!

If we could just have a time machine to have do overs. It would be great, wouldn't it? Wait! We do have a time machine (our mind) that loves to take us back to the past or the future.

But when we travel with our mind and try to change something that cannot be changed, we end up more miserable. Have you noticed that?



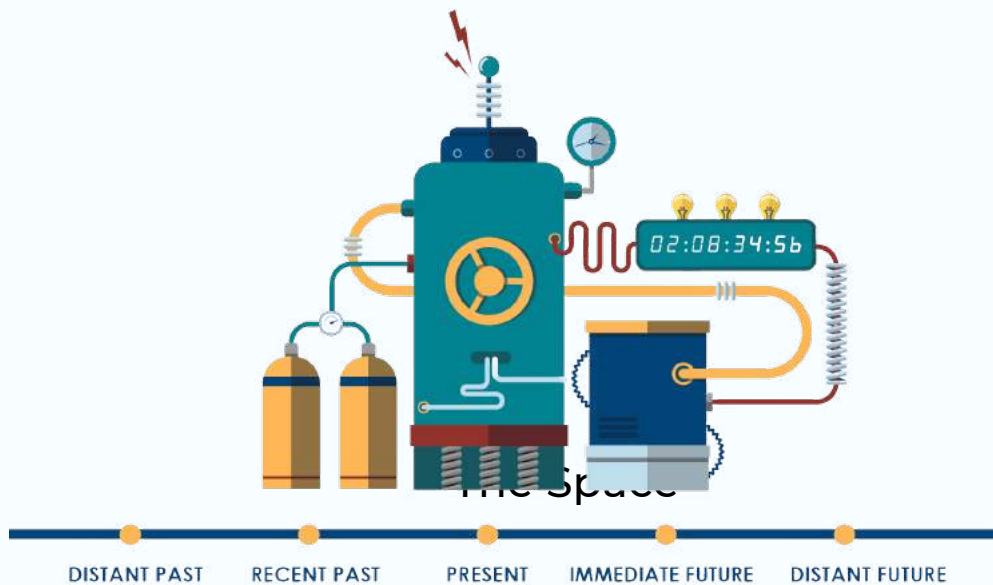
The following exercises will help you stay **here** (in the now) instead of *there* (in the past or the future).

## 1. Note Your Time Travel

Take a look at the "time machine graphic" next page. Read the instructions and then let your mind take you wherever it wants to take you. Don't force it. Notice what happens and acknowledge

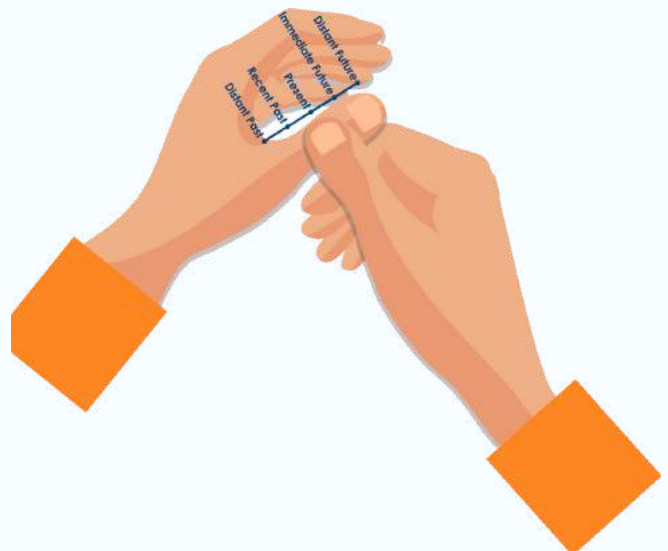
where it took you: distant past, immediate future, etc., by placing your finger on the corresponding mark. Gently move your finger back to the present. Wait and see where your mind will take you next.

Just notice where your mind takes you and move your finger according to where your thoughts and feelings belong on the timeline.



### Thumbs Thought Timeline

Move your top thumb to the left or right as if it were the timeline shown in the first practice. Acknowledge where it takes you by silently saying where you are. For example, say, “Distant past” when your mind takes you to the distant past as you move your thumb according to the illustration.



When your time machine (mind) is extra active, and you don't have a piece of paper, you can discreetly take note of your time machine by using your thumbs.

There is a **space** between your **internal experiences** (thoughts, memories, judgments, images, feelings, sensations, and urges) and your **behavior**. This space is **AWARENESS**. You can develop awareness by connecting to the here and now. The exercises in this section will help you choose your behavior in response to your internal experiences.

Your Internal Experiences



The Space



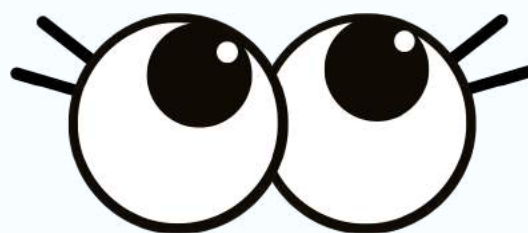
You Can Choose What To Do



T H O U G H T S	M E M O R I E S	J U D G E M E N T S	F E E L I N G S	S E N S A T I O N S	I M A G E S	U R G E S	A W A R E N E S S	B E H A V I O R
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## 2. Notice Your Mind Talking

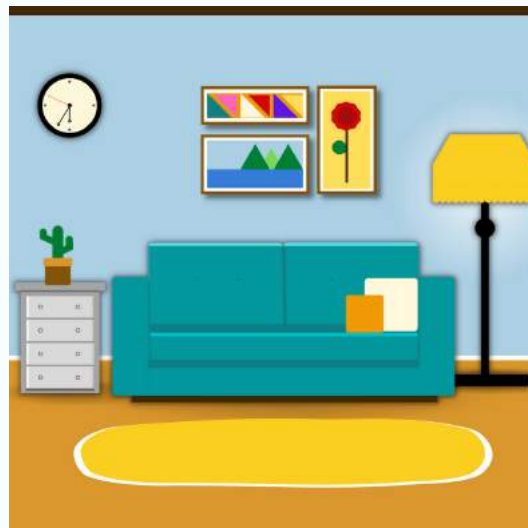
Take two or three minutes to look around the room where you are right now and let your eyes land on an object. Acknowledge what your mind says about it by asking yourself, "Who noticed that? Then respond, "I did."





Sometimes an object might bring up a memory, a thought, feeling, or any other internal experience that might get you hooked.

Acknowledge it by asking yourself, "who noticed that," and respond, "I did." Then continue looking around, landing on an object and acknowledging what your mind says until the alarm goes off.



Write down what you learn about you and your mind after doing this exercise.

## Anchoring in a Storm



Ships in a harbor need to be anchored when they are brought back in from a day at sea. If not secured, they will drift away, when a storm comes in during the night.

Like a ship in the harbor anchors to stay safe, you can anchor during emotional storms.

The more you practice these exercises, the more awareness you'll be able to develop.



### 3. Anchor with Your Feet

You can use your feet to anchor. Notice how your right foot feels against the ground.

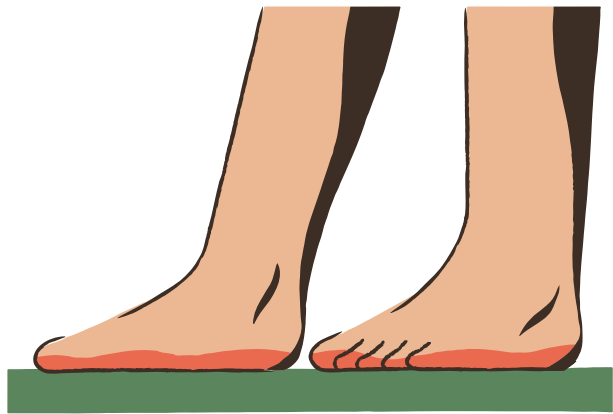
Acknowledge any sensations you feel right then: "I'm noticing my toe is itching."

Observe your right foot for a

few seconds, then notice how your left foot feels and acknowledge those sensations. Now notice both feet as if you were observing them from a distance for a few seconds. What is it like to notice both feet?

Notice your surroundings and acknowledge that you are here right now. Repeat as needed while the storm is present.

Then push both feet down against the ground for five seconds and notice how they feel. What did you learn by doing this exercise?



### 4. Notice What's behind Your Eyelids



If you're overwhelmed by thoughts and emotions, and your mind races from one situation to another, you may experience many sleepless nights.

Once you are in bed, close your eyes. Make a conscious effort to notice the lines, shapes, and shadows behind the lids of your eyes.

Have you ever consciously noticed what's behind your eyelids? Maybe it's pitch black.

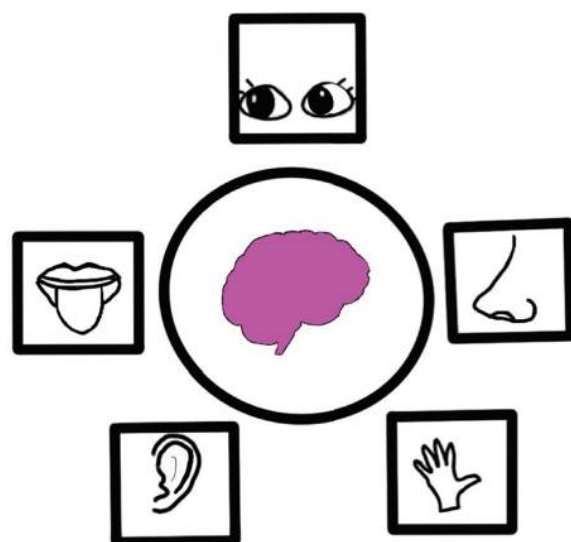
Observe all the details quietly and when your attention drifts, elsewhere, gently return to noticing what's behind your eyelids.

The goal of this exercise is not to help you fall asleep but to focus on what you see behind your eyelids. Continue noticing and gently refocusing as needed. You may even fall asleep because you are no longer carrying on a conversation with your mind. Try it and see what happens!

## 5. Daily Tasks and Your Five Senses

As you go about your daily tasks, you can use your senses to help you anchor in the present moment. For example:

**Brushing your teeth.** Use your five senses one at a time. Notice when your attention goes elsewhere, gently **acknowledge** it, and bring it back to the taste of your toothpaste or the sound you are making as you brush.



**Working or doing chores.** Become aware of your attention drifting and acknowledge it (“I’m noticing my worry thoughts about my comments yesterday. I hear you, Mind. Thanks!”), then go back to your task.

**Waiting at a store.** Can you notice the sounds around you and recognize that you are noticing?

**Stopping at a red light.** Breathe in deeply, exhale slowly, and scan your body from head to toe. Continue noticing your breathing and what your body is doing until the light turns green.

Notice being in the present moment by anchoring on any of your senses. When your mind distracts you, gently bring your attention back to the here and now.

## BEING HERE, NOT THERE - RECAP

“  
We should wisely live  
a day at a time  
because that is all  
we have.

—Marvin J. Ashton  
”

The natural mind is a wandering mind. You are learning how to respond to it.

Slow and steady wins the race!

Every day, notice if you are **here in the now** doing what matters most to you or **there with the mind**.

Notice when you get hooked with your thoughts and feelings. Let them be and gently bring your attention back to the **here**.



You can decide which exercise is your favorite after practicing each one of them. Notice which ones work best to help you increase your awareness.

You can choose how to respond to your thoughts and feelings, and gently connect back to the present moment.

Practice makes for progress and change!

# Kindness Begins With Me!



Some people worry that when they treat themselves kindly, they're being selfish. The reality is that the preachy mind might be leading you to become the extreme opposite.

As you get stuck with unhelpful thoughts and feelings, you begin to feel miserable and fail to give yourself even a crumb of love. Is that working out for you?

Would God want you to mistreat yourself? You can develop self-kindness even when you feel like you are not good enough and have made mistakes.

Let's talk about how you can begin implementing the following three principles to develop self-kindness:

1. Acknowledging the moment of pain
2. Remembering that you are not alone in your pain
3. Showing loving-kindness to yourself in difficult times

## 1. Acknowledging the moment of pain



When life is not going well, can you recognize the pain?

Why is it important to acknowledge your pain during difficult times?

It makes logical sense to want to fight, run away, or numb ourselves. But does it work for you?

When we focus on avoiding or preventing pain, are we not still thinking about the pain, and actually making it last longer? As we fight the pain, we may miss the opportunity of truly enjoying life despite our challenges.

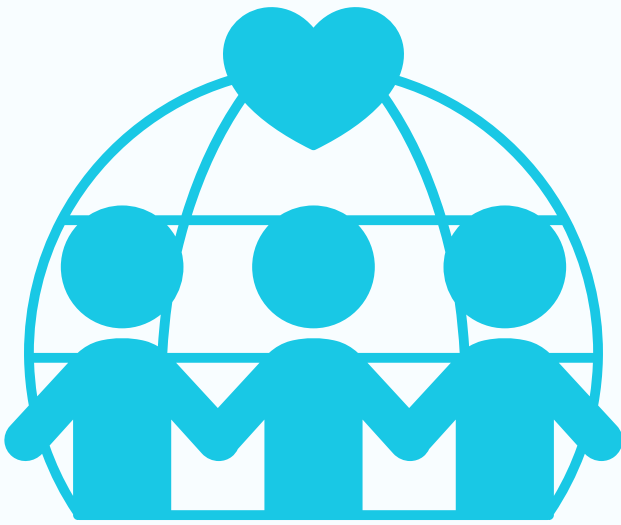


Next time you are struggling with something, think of a phrase that you would use to acknowledge a dear friend's hardship. What would you say to that friend? Can you use a similar phrase to acknowledge your pain? For example, you might say:

- The Lord knows your pain. You can trust Him.
- You might be feeling shame and numbness. That hurts.
- It makes sense to feel this way. Did you get stuck with your thoughts and feelings?
- Ouch! I bet this hurts a lot!

Will you be willing to use similar phrases ("The Lord knows my pain. I can trust Him.") when you are struggling? Try it and discover what happens!

## 2. Remember that you are not alone in your pain



There is no single human being who does not experience pain and suffering. We are all traveling on the same train!

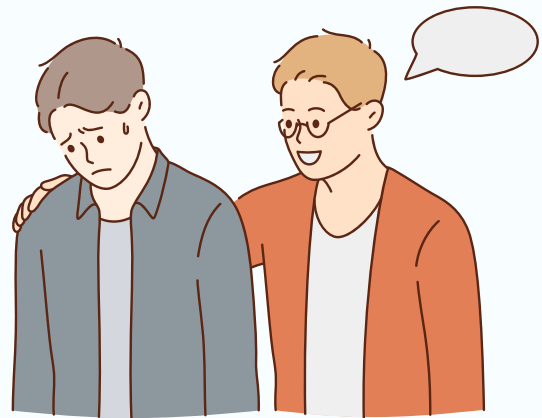
As you go about life, notice other people's suffering.

Also, think of the words you would say to a friend who is struggling?

What would you say to them? And when you are suffering, could you use similar words?

Here are some examples of phrases you can use.

- Other people feel anxiety and guilt too.
- Pain is part of life, and God is aware of everyone's challenges.
- I am not alone.

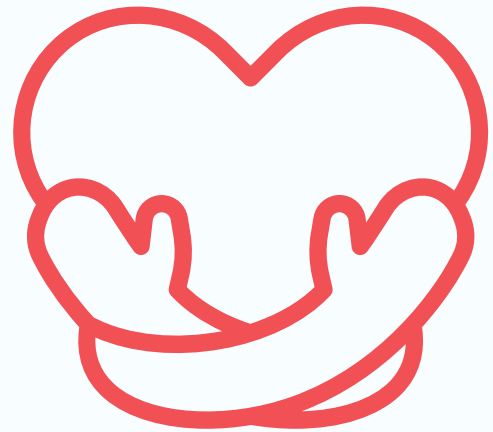


You can also write down the name of a person you know who is also struggling like you.



### 3. Show loving-kindness to yourself in difficult times

What would you say to comfort a friend who is in pain? Now, what words would you say to yourself when you are struggling?



Here are some examples for this third step:

- I can forgive myself and remember God's love.
- God is kind. I can also be kind with myself.
- I can keep hoping as I focus on being loving.



It's easy to be kind with our loved ones but harder to be kind with ourselves. When we develop self-kindness and self-compassion, we'll have enough love to share with others. Find out for yourself!

"If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete"  
—Jack Kornfield

# Trusting The Lord

God knows your thoughts and doings. He also knows that you struggle with general anxiety, religious, and/or moral anxiety (scrupulosity) and other challenges. Trust in Him and also seek professional help so you can find joy in your faith and religion.



Here are just a few questions to help you start changing some unhelpful behaviors that might be getting in the way of your faith.



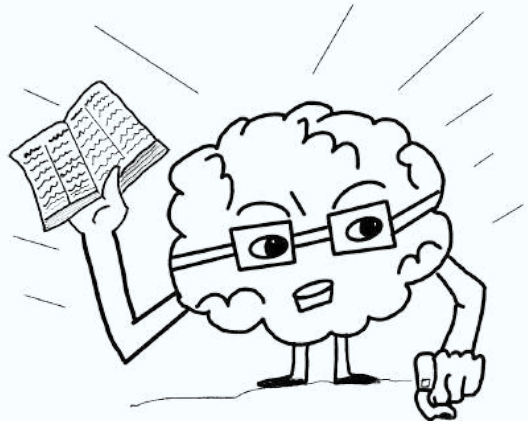
## Prayers

- When I pray, is my goal to connect with God or is it to find relief from my guilt and anxiety?
- Do I hope the Lord will see me differently? Why?
- Is it possible that my prayers are related to my being hooked with difficult thoughts and feelings? Am I praying to find relief?
- Are my religious habits strengthening my relationship with God?
- Is the "preachy" mind whispering unhelpful thoughts, and Am I believing every word it says?
- Is it possible that me listening to the preachy mind is what's causing me to engage in avoidant and unhelpful behaviors? Is this disrupting my ability to feel His Spirit?

## Respond Differently When the Preachy Mind Hooks You:

Your mind might say things like:

- "You've done something wrong and need to repent!"
- "You need to lengthen the study of your scriptures!"
- "You are not doing enough!"



Chances are you will feel overwhelmed by those demands and might experience feelings like anxiety, doubt, and guilt. Instead of letting the "preachy mind" get in the way of your faith and life, remember to,

- GET UNHOOKED, Acknowledge and notice what your mind is saying: "You have a point, Mind. We'll see." "I'm noticing anxiety in my body."
- LET THE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS BE. (Hold your emotion as if you were holding a wounded creature.)
- BE HERE NOW INSTEAD OF THERE WITH THE PREACHY MIND. (Anchor with your feet or with your senses.)

## Accepting Uncertainty with Faith



Some people say, "The Lord is all-knowing and will tell me what I need to do." Does that mean He has to make sure you get the outcome you'd like every time so you can be free of challenges?

It does not.

Please remember that life is about uncertainty. If God wanted us to have certainty all the time, He would take us by the hand to ensure we didn't make any mistakes. Do parents let their child who is learning how to walk fall down or do they pick them up when they fall every time? Would that child ever learn how to walk if the parent over protects them? The Lord allows us to fall so we can learn to pick ourselves up.



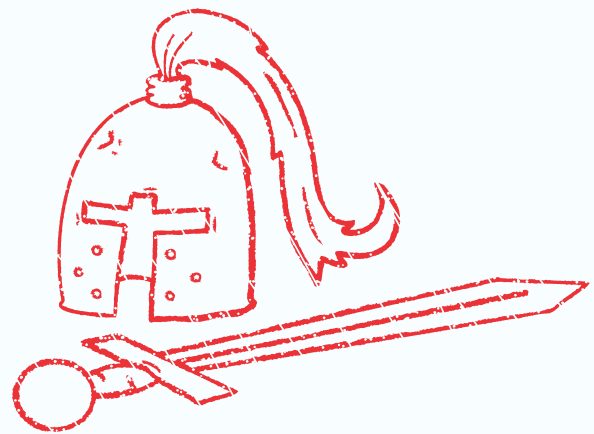
If our decisions always yielded the right outcome, what would we learn? As we continue to strengthen our faith, we can connect with God even when life gets really hard. He will be there for us to sustain us in our struggles. He cannot solve every problem for us though. We've got to learn to fall and get back up, don't we?

## Put Down Your Sword With Faith

In ancient times, warriors often used their swords for worldly prowess, but there were those who realized they didn't have to use weapons.

They found something of higher value than fighting physically for their land and property: their faith in God. Some even buried their weapons.

What about you? Every time your instinct to fight your internal experiences shows up, drop your sword and lift yourself up with courage and trust!



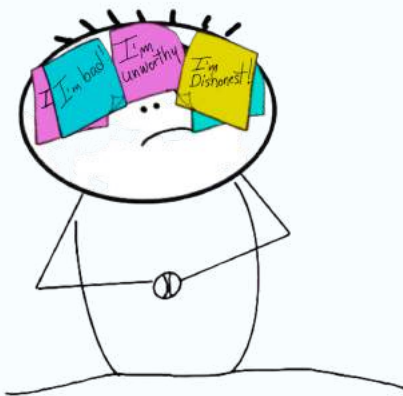
When questions such as “Am I worthy of God’s love?” show up, consider asking yourself,

“Am I willing to have God’s love?  
Am I willing to walk in faith?”

Confidently let your thoughts and feelings be. Even when the preachy mind may tries to dissuade you from taking risks and insists that you have to be perfectly good.

You can focus your time and energy on doing what matters most to you! You can be bold and let your unhelpful thoughts and feelings be!

## Does Everyone Have Unwanted Thoughts?



Every human being experiences unwanted and unpleasant thoughts. These thoughts may be random, weird, disturbing, immoral, unwanted, or distressing.

The difference is that when someone struggles with religious and moral anxiety (scrupulosity), those thoughts might become stickier when they try to get rid of them.

The more they try to get rid of them, the stickier they get.

No worries, use the tools you've acquired in your therapy and the ones here so you can become unstuck from any unpleasant thoughts and feelings.



## The Spirit or The Preachy Mind?

The Holy Ghost, reveals, testifies, comforts, guides, teaches, sanctifies, and much more!

*"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance."*

*-Galatians 5:22*



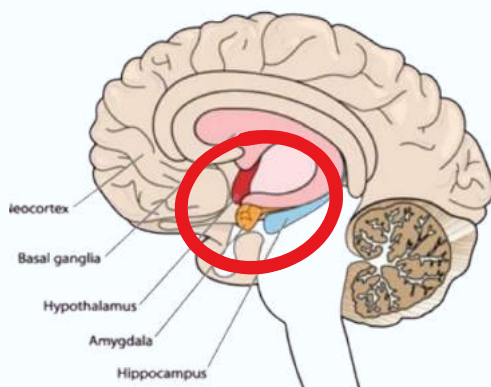
"Sometimes the spirit of revelation will operate immediately and intensely, other times subtly and gradually, and often so delicately you may not even consciously recognize it. But regardless of the pattern whereby this blessing is received, the light it provides will illuminate and enlarge your soul, enlighten your understanding, and direct and protect you and your family.

*-David A. Bednar*

*("The Spirit of Revelation," Ensign, May 2011, 90)*

Those scriptures and Elder Bednar's quote say it well! On the other hand, the preachy mind can cause anxiety, doubt, guilt, and shame.

## Remember the Amygdala and the Hippocampus?



These and other structures work together to help you stay safe when there is danger.

The "preachy mind" might provide all kinds of rules to "make sure" you are being faithful as you wish to be, but it goes overboard.





So, when you experience some or all the unpleasant sensations (as shown above), most likely the safety alarm (amygdala) and the filing memory system (hippocampus) are involved. When an internal or external event evoke those sensations, your preachy mind is most likely at work.

Remember, the Lord does not want us to be robots doing things just out of duty or fear. He wants us to follow Him and do what he's taught us out of love and desire to strengthen our relationship with Him. He knows our weaknesses and we don't need to be ashamed of them. He loves us no matter what!



Be bold in living your faith and other values.  
Be bold in letting your thoughts and feelings BE.  
Remember, doing hard things is worth it!

# Keep Going!

"What's most important may not be what you do, but what you do after what you did!"  
—Garry Landreth



Your mind might continue to provide rules, solutions, pointless sermons, evaluations, predictions, and labels all day long. Now you know how to respond to it. When it's advice is not helpful, you can choose how to respond.

Let's review this important part of your progress so you can continue to do what matters most and living the life you want to have!

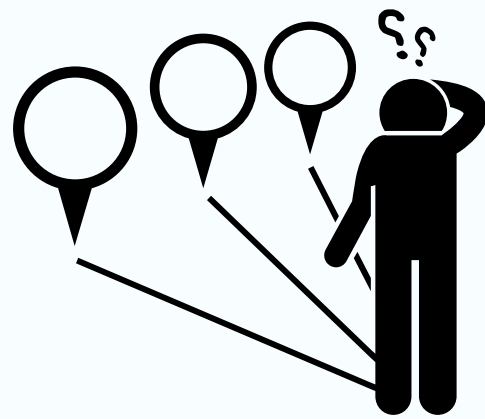
Whenever your mind provides advice, ask yourself this question:



If I act on this advice, will it truly get me closer to who I want to be and what matters most to me?"

1. When you cannot do anything about your mind's advice and it's causing you distress,

- Get unhooked and acknowledge your thoughts and feelings as you've practiced in this guide. ("I hear you. You may be right. Thanks, Mind. I'm noticing that thought. Thanks, Mind.")



- Let the feelings and thoughts be! ("Hello, old friend.")
- Then gently refocus on the here and now .

2. Whenever your mind provides advice, you act on your thought or feeling), and discover that your actions are taking you away from what matters most in that moment (because you got hooked),



- Get unhooked and recognize the thought or feeling. ("I just got hooked.")
- Let the feeling be. ("I can breathe and out to create space for anxiety.")
- Then gently come back to the here-and-now and keep moving toward what matters most to you!

3. When you cannot act on the advice in the moment, and if you did, it would take you closer to your values,

- Make a note to act on it later.
- Then come back to the present moment—the moment that matters most.

4. Whenever your mind provides advice, you act on the advice, and your actions take you closer to who you want to be and what matters most, carry on!



## Last Reminders

### Watch Out for Comparisons

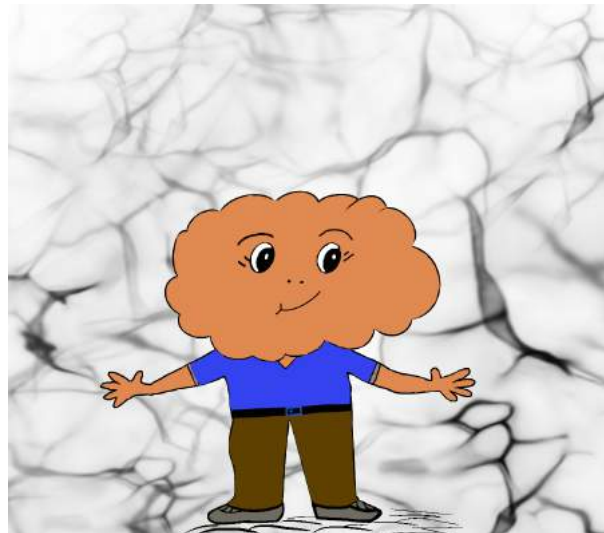
Comparisons can strip away your joy. Your thoughts and feelings are not other people's thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Don't let unhelpful thoughts consume you. What you see may not be reality, especially when you've become hooked by your mind.

### Have Brave Moments

You can have brave moments even when you are afraid. When you notice you've gotten hooked by your mind, acknowledge it and let the thoughts and feelings be. Practice the skills you've learned in this guide.

You'll feel empowered as you do the skills you've learned.

You know what to do. Go live life and have brave moments!



### Have Kind Moments

Be kinder to and more forgiving of yourself every day. You'll need those skills when you get hooked by your mind and your mind blames it on you.

There is no question your desire to serve God will be rewarding and difficult. Life is hard and you can choose how you'll respond to life's gifts.

Let others show you kindness too! Rejoice in the company of friends and loved ones.



## Stay Steady During the Storms



Your faith and other values you hold dear (what matters most to you) are essential. They are your guide each day. Beware of your overprotective mind twisting things around.

There will be days when you just want to give up. Your mind might say, "Life is unfair." It might neglect to remind you that pain and suffering are universal.

Remember that you are not alone. Your loved ones and God are cheering for you. Go live with faith not fear!



# Resources

## Books for Teens

- Get Out Of Your Mind & Into Your Life For Teens by Joseph V. Ciarrochi, Louise Hayes, and Ann Bailey.
- The ACT Workbook for Teens with OCD by Patricia Zurita Ona.
- Stop Avoiding Stuff: 25 Microskills to Face Your Fears and Do It Anyway Paperback – November 1, 2020 by Matthew S. Boone, Jennifer Gregg, and g, Lisa W. Coyne
- Stuff That's Loud: A Teen's Guide to Unspiraling When Ocd Gets Noisy by Lisa Coyne & Ben Sedley
- Stuff That Sucks: A Teen's Guide to Accepting What You Can't Change and Committing to What You Can by Ben Sedley
- Your Life, Your Way: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Skills to Help Teens Manage Emotions and Build Resilience by Joseph V. Ciarrochi & Louise Hayes.

## Books for Parents and Young Adults

- Imperfectly Good: Navigating Religious and Moral Anxiety to Release Fear and Find Peace - by Annabella Hagen.
- Let Go of Anxiety: Climb Life's Mountains with Peace, Purpose, and Resilience by Annabella Hagen.
- The Happiness Trap: How to Stop Struggling and Start Living by Russ Harris.

## Websites

- International OCD Foundation - <https://iocdf.org/>
- Faith and OCD Resource Center - <https://iocdf.org/faith-ocd/>
- Association for Contextual Behavioral Science  
<https://contextualscience.org/>



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