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CURRICULUM

Lesson Plans

MODULE 9 – Social decision making at work

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Lesson 1: Risk assessment of one's thoughts and actions

Lesson title	Risk assessment of one's thoughts and actions
Objectives	<p>The objectives of Lesson 1 are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observe and describe thoughts• Recognise thoughts as stories the mind is telling• Identify helpful and unhelpful thoughts• Identify the consequences of actions• Differentiate between the consequences of helpful and unhelpful thoughts• Identify unhelpful patterns of avoidance
Week	Week 2
Duration	1.5 hours
Key terms	<p>Decision</p> <p>Thought</p> <p>Action</p> <p>Emotion</p> <p>Consequences</p>
Learning outcomes	<p>With the completion of Lesson 1 participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Observe and describe their thoughts.✓ Recognize their thoughts as stories their mind is telling them.✓ Identify helpful and unhelpful thoughts.✓ Identify the consequences of their actions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Differentiate between the consequences of helpful and unhelpful thoughts. ✓ Identify unhelpful patterns of avoidance actions.
Learning methods	<p>Group work</p> <p>Use of metaphor</p> <p>Reflective exercise (individual work)</p>
Evaluation	Continuous performance evaluation
Reference	<p>Stoddard, J. A., Afari. N., Hayes, S. C. (2014) The Big Book of ACT Metaphors A Practitioner’s Guide to Experiential Exercises and Metaphors in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. New Harbinger Publications.</p> <p>Hayes, S. C., Smith, S. (2005). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. New Harbinger Publications</p> <p>Russ, H, (2019). ACT made simple An easy-to-read primer on acceptance and commitment therapy-New Harbinger Publications.</p>
Further Reading	<p>Wilson, K. G., DuFrene, T. (2012) The Wisdom to Know the Difference An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Workbook for Overcoming Substance Abuse. New Harbinger Publications.</p>

Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
Ice-breaking activity	5 min	Each group member shares the main emotion that they experience at that moment. The purpose of the activity is to connect to the present moment.	Group activity

MODULE 9. Lesson 1: Activity 1

Floating Leaves on a Moving Stream	15 min	<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To observe the content of their thoughts and consider thoughts as stories the mind is telling.</p> <p>Procedure:</p> <p>The facilitator will give the following instructions:</p> <p>Close your eyes [or if you prefer, you can keep them open and fix your gaze at a fixed point, for instance, on the floor] and imagine a beautiful, slow-moving stream. The water flows over rocks and around trees, descends downhill, and travels through a valley. Once in a while, a big leaf drops into the water and floats downstream. Imagine you're sitting beside that stream on a warm, sunny day, watching the leaves float by.</p> <p>(Pause briefly)</p> <p>Now pay attention to your thoughts. Each time a thought pops into your head, imagine that it's written on one of those leaves. If you think in words, put them on the leaf as words. If you think in images, put them on the leaf as images. The goal is to stay beside the stream and allow the leaves to keep floating by. Don't try to make the stream go faster or slower. Don't try to change what shows up on the leaves in any way.</p>	Group activity and discussion
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Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
		<p>If the leaves disappear, if you mentally go somewhere else, or if you find that you're in the stream or on a leaf, just stop and notice that this has happened. File that knowledge away, and then once again return to the stream. Watch a thought come into your mind, place it on a leaf, and let the leaf float downstream. Continue for the next few moments, just watching your thoughts float by.</p> <p>This exercise is followed by a group discussion.</p> <p>Discussion point:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Were you able to focus your attention on the words or images that you saw on the leaves? What got in the way? 2. Describe your experience of letting the leaves go on the stream. Did you have any difficulty doing so? Describe the difficulty. <p>Summary:</p> <p>This is a review mindfulness exercise from a previous session. The purpose here is to step back from thoughts and become aware of the experience of the moment. Participants may realise that we do not need to always follow the instructions of our thoughts.</p>	
<p>MODULE 9. Lesson 1: Activity 2</p>			
<p>The Master Storyteller</p>	<p>15 min</p>	<p>Purpose: To consider the mind as a producer of thoughts but acknowledge that these thoughts are not always wise or useful.</p> <p>Procedure:</p>	<p>Group activity and discussion</p>

Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
		<p>The Master Storyteller is a metaphor for the mind's ceaseless narrative, including its evaluations, rules, predictions, and so on.</p> <p>Background information for the trainer:</p> <p>Human language exerts an enormous degree of control over our behaviour, and as we mature, we increasingly engage with our environment, not directly as it is, but through the filter of what our language tells us it is.</p> <p>Our mind tells us "stories" about the world outside of us. The thoughts that we have are stories that the mind tells to make sense of our world. It is extremely difficult to escape from this process, and one of the consequences is that we constantly get stuck in our thoughts.</p> <p>The facilitator will start by saying:</p> <p>The human mind is like the world's greatest storyteller. It never shuts up. It always got a story to tell, and more than anything else, it just wants us to listen. It wants our full attention, and it will say anything to get our attention, even if it's painful, nasty or scary.</p> <p>And some of the stories it tells are true. We call these facts. But most of the stories it tells can't really be called facts. They're more like opinions, beliefs, ideas, attitudes, assumptions, judgments, predictions, and so forth.</p> <p>They're stories about how we see the world, what we want to do, what we think is right and wrong, or fair and unfair, and so on. One of the things we want to do here is learn to recognise when a story is helpful and when it isn't.</p>	

Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
		<p>So, I'd like you to close your eyes (or keep them open and fix your gaze at a neutral point) and not say anything for about thirty seconds—just listen to what your mind is telling you right now.</p> <p>The facilitator will spend some time processing this with participants—not debating whether their mind's story (their thoughts) is true or untrue but noticing some examples of thoughts. Thoughts can be funny, useful or even unhelpful tending to pull them away from doing things that are important to them.</p> <p>Examples of unhelpful thoughts:</p> <p>"I will not be able to make it".</p> <p>"They are trying to take advantage of me".</p> <p>"I cannot learn this".</p> <p>Once this metaphor has been used in the group, the facilitator can return to it later by saying things like "It sounds like the master storyteller has a captive audience today!" or "My, my, the word machine is really churning them out today!"</p> <p>Note to the facilitator. Whenever a "disturbing" story or unhelpful thought shows up, the facilitator can remind the participant that it is just the "Master storyteller" at work, doing a natural thing and that this story does not have to control the actions of the participant.</p> <p>Summary:</p>	

Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
		By using the ‘master storyteller’ metaphor, the participants start to recognise that their thoughts or the stories that they have in their minds are not always useful or true.	

MODULE 9. Lesson 1: Activity 3

<p>✦ The Challenge Formula</p>	<p>15 min</p>	<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To make decisions by showing that in any situation there are three possibilities of action.</p> <p>Procedure:</p> <p>The facilitator says:</p> <p>No matter how difficult our situation is, we still have choices. For any challenging situation we face, we have three options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leave. 2. Stay and live by our values: change whatever we can to improve the situation and make room for the emotional distress that goes with it. 3. Stay and stop acting in a way committed to our values: do things that make no difference or make it worse. <p>“Of course, option 1—leave—isn’t always available. But if leaving the situation is an option, you could consider it especially if you’re in a high-conflict situation, a dangerous or risky situation. Here you need to consider whether your life is likely to be fuller, more meaningful, if you leave the situation rather than stay”.</p>	<p>Group activity and discussion</p>
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Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
		<p>If you can't leave, or won't leave, or don't see it as the best option available, then you are down to options 2 and 3.</p> <p>Unfortunately, option 3 (stay and stop acting based on values) comes naturally to all of us; in challenging situations, we easily get hooked by difficult thoughts and feelings and pulled into self-defeating patterns of behaviour which either keep us stuck or make things worse.</p> <p>So, the path to a better life lies in option 2.</p> <p>2. "Change what you can according to your values to improve the situation. Also, I have to point out that taking into account the consequences of your actions is important when you act. These consequences may be on a personal, interpersonal, and social level. And of course, you can't expect to feel happy when you're in a difficult situation; you will have plenty of painful thoughts and feelings. So, the second half of option 2—make room for the inevitable difficult emotions—is very relevant! Making room for painful thoughts and feelings requires learning new skills to reduce their impact and take the power out of them, so they no longer hold you back.</p> <p>Exercise:</p> <p>In small groups participants take turns in presenting an important work-related situation of the past, in which they either chose option 1, 2, or 3.</p> <p>The facilitator says:</p> <p>"In small groups identify one work related situation (or task related situation) in which you chose option 1 (leave), option</p>	

Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
		<p>2 (stay and do what is important based on my values) or option 3 (stay and act in a way that is contrary to my values).”</p> <p>The facilitator can give an appropriate example:</p> <p>“For example, If I am annoyed with my colleague and they are trying to start an argument I can leave (option 1), I can tell them that I am interested in their friendship and would like to resolve the conflict (option 2 – having good relationships at work is a value of mine) or I could snap at them (option 3 – I do not want to argue at work but it felt easier in that moment).”</p> <p>Participants are then asked to present the consequences of their decision. Later they are asked to choose which option would have been more useful, more adaptive and more in line with their values.</p> <p>Facilitator says:</p> <p>“Now that you have thought about how you behaved in the past, think about which option you would prefer. What were the consequences of your choice? Was there a more useful choice? Was there a choice more suited to your values?”</p> <p>Summary:</p> <p>The facilitator emphasises that individuals always have choices: leave the situation, stay, and live by their values while making improvements, or stay but give up on acting in line with their values. The activity encourages participants to share past situations where they chose one of these options, outlining the consequences. The ultimate message is that the path to a better life lies in option 2—making positive</p>	

Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
		changes in line with personal values while acknowledging and managing the inevitable pain associated with difficult situations.	
MODULE 9. Lesson 1: Activity 4			
Join the D.O.T.S	15 min	<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To acknowledge that avoiding difficult thoughts, emotions and sensations is not efficient for a long-term period.</p> <p>Procedure:</p> <p>The facilitator says:</p> <p>We all try to get rid of difficult thoughts & feelings at work or in life in general. The aims of this exercise are:</p> <p>a) to find out what you do to avoid thoughts and feelings, and</p> <p>b) to consider how useful it is in the long term.</p> <p>Note to the facilitator: The idea is not to start judging these methods as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, ‘positive’ or ‘negative’. The aim is simply to find out if these methods are efficient in the long run – i.e. do they work in the long term to give you a meaningful life? (Obviously, if any of these methods improve one’s life in the long term, they could keep doing them!)</p> <p>Engage the participants in a brainstorming exercise and list on the flipchart the main thoughts, feelings, sensations, memories, emotions, urges that participants do not want.</p> <p>The facilitator says:</p>	Group activity and discussion

Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
		<p>“What are some thoughts, emotions or sensations that we do not like to have in the workplace?”</p> <p>JOIN THE D.O.T.S. HANDOUT 1 (Appendix 1) describes several strategies that people use. Some of them may be useful in the long-run and others not so much. The facilitator can comment on those that the participants may have not identify in the discussion.</p> <p>The facilitator says:</p> <p>“Now, let us consider the main strategies that we use in order to get rid of them.”</p> <p>Although the material is available on (join the D.O.T.S Handout 1), the facilitator will first put the participants in small groups and get them to identify behaviours that they use to avoid feelings, thoughts, and sensations in each D.O.T. S category.</p> <p>The facilitator says:</p> <p>“The first group will think about what you do to distract yourself. The second group will think about what kind of important events or activities or tasks you tend to opt out from (what do you avoid that is important?). The third group will identify how you try to think away a problem or a difficulty (e.g., worries, fantasies, blaming). The last group will identify whether people sometimes use substances to avoid feelings or thoughts. Once you identify each area, think about how long the strategy lasts for, and if it is useful in your life, and feed back to the group”.</p>	

Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
		<p>Participants are given Handout 1. The facilitator indicates the topic (distract, opt out, think, substances) that the group is working on so that they can use the handout for their group discussion.</p> <p>The participants then share the methods by which they tried to avoid difficult thoughts, emotions, and sensations. They consider in the group the consequences of these strategies.</p> <p>The facilitator emphasises:</p> <p>Most of these strategies give you short-term relief from painful thoughts and feelings. But they don't permanently get rid of these unwanted thoughts and feelings, so they come back. For this reason, when we make decisions on how to react at work or elsewhere, our motivation should go beyond the temporary relief from emotions. It should consider our values.</p> <p>Summary:</p> <p>Participants are encouraged to acknowledge that short-term decisions for getting rid of emotions are not always useful in the long run. The idea is not that all the techniques (above) are problematic but that when we make decisions on how to act, it is best to think of our long-term goals and values as well as the short-term returns.</p> <p>The exercise is summarised in handout 1 (Appendix 1).</p>	
<p>MODULE 9. Lesson 1: Activity 5</p>			
<p>Conclusion / questions</p>		<p>Purpose: To reinforce key points covered in the lesson, including mindfulness, thought observation, recognising</p>	

Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
	5 min	<p>unhelpful thoughts, decision-making and values, long-term perspective on coping strategies, authenticity in the workplace, and decision-making for personal and professional growth. Additionally, the facilitator aims to create an open dialogue by encouraging participants to ask questions. Finally, the facilitator introduces the topic of the next module in a general manner.</p> <p>Procedure:</p> <p>The facilitator emphasises the key points of the lesson, covering topics such as mindfulness, thought observation, recognising unhelpful thoughts, decision-making and values, long-term perspective on coping strategies, authenticity in the workplace, and decision-making for personal and professional growth.</p> <p>Participants are encouraged to engage in discussion and ask questions, fostering an interactive learning environment and addressing any uncertainties.</p> <p>Finally, the facilitator introduces the topic of the next module, providing a brief overview of what will be covered to set the stage for future sessions.</p> <p>Summary:</p> <p>This session effectively reinforces participants' understanding of key lesson points and encourages active participation through questions.</p>	Key points

Lesson 2: Making value-based decisions

Lesson title	Making value-based decisions
Objectives	<p>The objectives of Lesson 2 are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link values to goals. • Identify goal-oriented actions. • Identify goal obstacles. • Identify actions to overcome obstacles.
Week	Week 2
Duration	1.5 hours
Key terms	<p>Decision</p> <p>Thought</p> <p>Action</p> <p>Emotion</p> <p>Consequence</p>
Learning outcomes	<p>With the completion of Lesson 2 participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Link goals to values. ✓ Make a list of goals toward their values. ✓ Create a list of actions towards their goals. ✓ Identify obstacles of their goals. ✓ Create a list of actions to overcome obstacles. ✓ Identify workable and unworkable actions.
Learning methods	<p>Group work</p> <p>Use of metaphor</p> <p>Reflective exercise (individual work)</p>

Evaluation	Continuous performance evaluation
References	<p>Stoddard, J. A., Afari. N., Hayes, S. C. (2014) The Big Book of ACT Metaphors A Practitioner’s Guide to Experiential Exercises and Metaphors in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. New Harbinger Publications.</p> <p>Hayes, S. C., Smith, S. (2005). Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. New Harbinger Publications.</p> <p>Russ, H, (2019). ACT made simple. An easy-to-read primer on acceptance and commitment therapy-New Harbinger Publications.</p>
Further Reading	<p>Wilson, K. G., DuFrene, T. (2012) The Wisdom to Know the Difference An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Workbook for Overcoming Substance Abuse. New Harbinger Publications.</p>

Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
Ice-breaking activity	5 min	Each group member presents the dominant emotion that is present at the start of the workshop. The purpose of the activity is to connect to the present moment.	Group discussion
MODULE 9. Lesson 2: Activity 1			
✦ Walking the Path	15 min	<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To develop new behaviours and avoid self-destructive/deficient ways of acting.</p> <p>Procedure:</p> <p>Facilitator: “The work that we’re doing here is like walking across a wild hillside as we’ve seen in a previous lesson. This work is brand new, so there’s no clear path to walk on especially in the working space. Every step may be effortful, and deliberate effort is needed to keep taking steps. Then you look over to your right and see a well-worn path. It looks like it would be so much easier to walk on that path than to keep persisting on this unmarked route across the tall, overgrown grass. This old path is the way that you approached situations in the workplace in the past.</p> <p>The thing is, you know exactly where that well-worn path goes because you’ve walked it so many times before.</p> <p>Where does that old and worn path lead in your life?</p> <p>The participants are guided by the facilitator to share a major event in their working life pointing out some unhelpful decisions that they took.</p>	Group activity and discussion


Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
		<p>This discussion is facilitated by THE EFFECTS OF MY DECISIONS AT WORK HANDOUT 3 (Appendix 3). The participants will fill in the ‘old path’ section on the handout.</p> <p>This helps the participants get into direct contact with the consequences of their past decisions at work that were possibly fuelled by avoidance or led by unhelpful thoughts.</p> <p>The facilitator continues:</p> <p><i>So, here we are now, encountering a new territory. You see that old, familiar path... and you’re being pulled onto that old familiar path. Now remind yourself of where that path led you. Are you willing to take a chance on a new path?</i></p> <p>The whole group now completes the ‘new path’ section on THE EFFECTS OF MY DECISIONS AT WORK HANDOUT 3 (Appendix 3).</p> <p>The facilitator discusses with the participants the risks and benefits associated with taking this new path, of non-avoidance, of acting in accordance with one’s values. The challenges of taking such a path are discussed, such as making room for uncomfortable feelings and thoughts, persisting in action even if the rewards are delayed, noticing thoughts as stories that the mind is telling and not actual facts. The benefits are also noted such as deeper and healthier connection with others, and truer rewards in relationships over time.</p> <p>Summary:</p> <p>In this exercise participants see the contrast between old decisions in the workplace born out of avoidance and</p>	

Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
		mechanical listening to their minds. They see the possibility of a new path and a new behaviour with a different set of benefits in the workplace.	

MODULE 9. Lesson 2: Activity 2

<p>✦ Don't Do What You Say</p>	<p>15 min</p>	<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To behave independently from their thoughts. This will show them that they can behave differently from the story that their mind is telling them in a work environment.</p> <p>Procedure:</p> <p>The group will get in pairs. Participants will engage in a series of actions like clapping their hands, then sitting on a chair, then jumping, and so on.</p> <p>The first participant of each pair is instructed to choose to do any reasonable movement (e.g. raise hands, pretend they can fly, stomp their feet etc.) Their partner should then describe this action out loud, starting the sentence with “<i>I must...</i>” and completing it with the action they have just performed.</p> <p>For example, if the first participant of the pair raises their hands, their partner says, “<i>I must raise my hands.</i>” While doing so, the participant’s task is to simultaneously perform a different movement—anything but the action the partner just performed. For example, if the partner sits on a chair, the participant will say, “<i>I must sit on a chair,</i>” while simultaneously doing something different, like hunkering down, crossing his arms, or standing on one foot.</p>	<p>Pairs activity and discussion</p>
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Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
		<p>About ten different actions will be done before debriefing this exercise. Thus, the participant has time to experience how it feels to do something different than what is being said.</p> <p>This exercise helps participants perceive that it's possible to disobey language, and that there's no obligation to obey our thoughts.</p> <p>The facilitator invites each participant to describe the challenges they faced during this exercise. The facilitator points out that even though it is difficult, it is possible to do something different from the story that your mind is telling you. This skill is very useful in making value-based decisions in the workplace.</p> <p>The facilitator asks the group whether there have ever been occasions that their mind told them to behave in a certain way in the workplace that was not in accordance with their values (e.g., to avoid a feeling or by following a thought). A discussion continues where the facilitator emphasizes that we can act in different ways to what our mind instructs.</p> <p>Summary:</p> <p>This exercise is making a distinction between the way that we think and the way that we act. It empowers participants to recognise that just because we think something, we do not need to follow through. It helps participants to make decisions in the workplace that are not only based on their thoughts and emotions at the time.</p>	

Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
MODULE 9. Lesson 2: Activity 3			
 Jump Exercise	15 min	<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To acknowledge that seeking to avoid commitment to a decision by only partially doing things is not efficient; actions must be completed in order to be efficient in getting the desired results.</p> <p>Procedure:</p> <p>The facilitator will explain that when one decides to make a ‘new path’ decision at work, it needs to be done completely, not partially, even if it feels strange or awkward. For example, you can either chose to ask for a raise or not, but there is no in-between.</p> <p>Therefore, committing to a value-based decision in the workplace could be compared to jumping.</p> <p>You can jump off lots of things, but you can’t partially jump. You can choose what you jump off of. Sometimes it can be something that’s very close to the ground, like a book. (The facilitator takes a book [if possible], stands on it, and then jumps off.) Other times it can be jumping out of something that’s thousands of feet up in the air, like skydiving out of an airplane.</p> <p>Now, suppose you went skydiving, but when you got up in the plane and it was time to jump off, you felt scared and so you decided you only wanted to jump a little. Is that a choice you can make? You can choose what you jump off</p>	Group activity and discussion

Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
		<p>of—whether it’s a book or a plane—and you can choose whether to jump or not jump, but can you choose to jump a little? Committing to a decision is like that.</p> <p>Using THE EFFECTS OF MY DECISIONS AT WORK HANDOUT 3, participants choose certain decisions (up to 3) from the new path.</p> <p>They choose one that would represent an easy jump for them, one that would be moderately difficult and a very difficult one for them. Participants present their new path decisions and their level of difficulty in the group after completing JUMPING INTO MY DECISIONS HANDOUT 4 (Appendix 4).</p> <p>Later, with the help of the facilitator and the group, they identify intermediate steps (e.g., skills to practice) towards these value-based new path decisions.</p> <p>The facilitator points out that these steps are progressive heights for jumping off from. Thus, the participants understand that making value-driven decisions implies making actions that must be completed in order to achieve the desired outcome. This might act as a motivator to persist in actions when difficulty arises.</p> <p>Summary:</p> <p>In this exercise participants view acting on new decisions in the workplace as jumps into the unknown. Although this can be challenging to them, the exercise allows them to consider practicing additional skills to reinforce this direction.</p>	

Steps	Duration	Description	Resources, activities & materials
MODULE 9. Lesson 2: Activity 4			
Conclusion questions	5 min	<p>Purpose: To reinforce the key points covered in the lesson, encourage participant engagement through questions, and introduce the topic of the next module in a general manner.</p> <p>Procedure:</p> <p>The facilitator emphasises the key points of the lesson, ensuring participants have a clear understanding of the concepts discussed.</p> <p>Participants are encouraged to ask questions, fostering an interactive learning environment and addressing any uncertainties or concerns they may have.</p> <p>Finally, the facilitator introduces the topic of the next module, providing a brief overview of what will be covered to prepare participants for future sessions.</p> <p>Summary:</p> <p>This session effectively reinforces participants' understanding of key lesson points and encourages active participation through questions. Additionally, the facilitator sets the stage for the next module by providing a preview of topics to be covered, facilitating continuity and coherence in the learning process.</p>	Key points

APPENTICES

Appendix 1

HANDOUT 1: JOIN THE D.O.T.S.

Join the D.O.T.S. - Part 1: What have you tried?

We all try to avoid, or get rid of, difficult thoughts and feelings. The aims of this exercise are a) to find out which methods you use, and b) how they work in the long term.

*NB: Please **do not** judge these methods as 'good' or 'bad', 'right' or 'wrong', 'positive' or 'negative'.*

The aim is simply to find out if these **methods** are workable – i.e. do they give you a rich and meaningful life? (Obviously, if any of these methods *do* improve your life *in the long term*, keep doing them!)

What are the main thoughts, feelings, sensations, memories, emotions, urges that you do not want?

D - Distraction: what do you do to distract yourself from, or 'take your mind off', painful thoughts and feelings? (e.g. movies, TV, internet, books, computer games, exercise, gardening, gambling, food, drugs, alcohol).

O - Opting out: what important, meaningful, or life-enhancing activities, events, tasks, challenges, or people, do you avoid, quit, escape, procrastinate, or withdraw from? (If they're not important, meaningful or life-enhancing, then opting out is no problem!)

T- Thinking strategies: how do you try (consciously or not) to think your way out of pain?

Tick any of the following that you have ever done, and add more ideas:

- Worrying
- Dwelling on the past
- Fantasising about the future
- Imagining escape scenarios (e.g. leaving your job or your partner) or revenge scenarios
- Thinking to yourself 'It's not fair ...' or 'If only ...'
- Blaming yourself, others, or the world
- Talking logically and rationally to yourself
- Positive thinking
- Positive affirmations
- Judging or criticising yourself
- Giving yourself a hard time
- Analysing yourself (trying to figure out 'Why am I like this?')
- Analysing the situation (trying to figure out why this happened)
- Analysing others (trying to figure out why they are like this)
- Planning
- Strategising
- Constructive problem- solving
- Making To Do lists
- Repeating inspirational sayings or proverbs
- Challenging or disputing negative thoughts
- Telling yourself 'This too shall pass' or 'It may never happen'.
- Other thinking strategies:

S – Substances & other Strategies: what Substances do you use to avoid, or get rid of, pain: food, drinks, cigarettes, recreational drugs, naturopathic & herbal remedies, over the counter & prescription medications?

Any other Strategies you ever use in response to unwanted thoughts and feelings?

For example, have you tried:

yoga, meditation, focusing on relationships, aggressiveness, Tai Chi, massage, exercise, picking fights, dancing, music, suicide attempts, self-harming, prayer, smashing things, staying in bed, self-help books, seeing a therapist or doctor or other health professional, getting angry at life or other people? Ever tried ‘tolerating it’, ‘putting up with it’ or ‘sucking it up and getting on with it’? Ever tried giving up?

Join the D.O.T.S. - Part 2: How has it worked? What has it cost?

Most of these strategies give you short-term relief from painful thoughts and feelings. But do they permanently get rid of those unwanted thoughts and feelings, so they never come back?

Most of the time, with most of these strategies, how long does your pain go away for before it returns?

*Now clearly, some of these methods are helpful, if you use them **flexibly, moderately, sensibly** – in which case, keep using them!*

However, when we over-use or over-rely on these methods – when we use them **excessively, rigidly, or inappropriately** – they have significant costs. When you have over-used them, what have these methods cost you in terms of health, money, wasted time, relationships, missed opportunities, work, increased pain, tiredness, wasted energy, frustration, disappointment, etc?

How many of these methods give you relief from pain in the short-term, but keep you stuck, or make your life worse, or have significant costs in the long-term?

‘none’ ‘a few’ ‘about half’ ‘most’ ‘all’

You’re Not Lazy or Stupid

You’ve tried very hard for a long time to get rid of these thoughts and feelings. No one can call you lazy! And you’re not stupid! These are methods that everyone uses to some extent, to avoid or get rid of pain. We all try to distract ourselves; we all opt out of things that are difficult; we all try to think our way out of our pain; and we all put substances of one form or another into our bodies. And our friends, family, and health professionals often actively encourage us to do all these things!

However ... no matter how hard we try to avoid or get rid of these thoughts and feelings in the long-term, they keep coming back!

Are You Stuck In A Vicious Cycle?

Unfortunately, often what we do to get short-term relief from painful thoughts and feelings, tends to make our life worse in the long-term. In other words, we get stuck in a vicious cycle. And most people find it painful once they realise this. What difficult thoughts and feelings does this bring up for you?

Can you take a moment to acknowledge just how painful and difficult it is to be caught in this vicious cycle? (Is there something kind you can say to yourself or do for yourself?)

Given that:

- a) no matter what you do, your painful thoughts and feelings *keep coming back*, and
- b) many of the ways you respond to them are making your life worse *in the long-term*, would you be open to something new? Would you be interested in learning a brand-new way of responding to them; a method that is radically different to everything else you’ve tried?

Appendix 2

HANDOUT 2: THE MIRACLE QUESTION EXERCISE

Situation	Action	Consequences	Is it desirable?	Possible alternative action
What would you do with your life?				
What sort of person you want to be?				
What do you want to stand for in life?				
How would you act at work?				
What sort of person you want to be at work?				
What do you want to stand for in your work life?				

Appendix 3

HANDOUT 3: THE EFFECTS OF MY DECISIONS AT WORK

My old path



Work-related decisions from my old path:

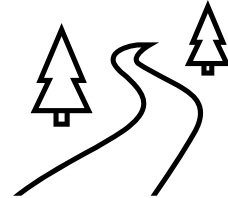
(tick what fits)

- Avoiding discussing important information
- Keeping secrets
- Ignoring requests from employer and colleagues
- Not listening to feedback
- Not seeking help
- Blaming others, bullying or discrimination
- Shouting at others
- Using substances at work
- Avoiding tasks or quitting
- Doing something unethical
- Interrupting or disrupting others
- Challenging authority
- Wasting time

Possible consequences of old path decisions?

- Conflict at workplace
- Negative relationships at workplace
- Job loss
- No rewards in the workplace
- Low satisfaction in the workplace
- Stress
- Disappointment

My new path



Work-related decisions on a new path:

(tick what fits)

- Discussing problems and questions
- Being honest about needs and concerns
- Being open to feedback
- Clearly ask for help
- Recognise your mistakes
- Respect others' differences
- Talk to others respectfully
- Avoid the use of mind-altering substances
- Keep focusing on tasks
- Keep your actions within ethical boundaries
- Make requests in a respectful way
- Discuss your needs in accordance with yours and others' rights
- Use your time constructively

Possible consequences of new path decisions?

- Peaceful workplace
- Stronger and positive work relationships
- Job maintenance
- More possible to get rewards at work
- Feeling calmer
- Feeling more satisfied

Appendix 4

HANDOUT 4: JUMPING INTO MY DECISIONS

From the list of the 'new path' work-related decisions choose 3; one for each difficulty level (low, medium and high) for you to apply at work.

Connect each of them to a personal value from the list and then think of whether you need to practise any skills to be able to put in action.

1. **New path decision:** _____

Level of difficulty for me: low medium high

Personal value that this decision relates to: Trust , Loyalty , Security , Friendship , Communication , Commitment , Safety , Respect , Connect with others , Help , Fairness

What skills, if any, do I need to practise for this decision?

2. **New path decision:** _____

Level of difficulty for me: low medium high

Personal value that this decision relates to: Trust , Loyalty , Security , Friendship , Communication , Commitment , Safety , Respect , Connect with others , Help , Fairness

What skills, if any, do I need to practise for this decision?

3. **New path decision:** _____

Level of difficulty for me: low medium high

Personal value that this decision relates to: Trust , Loyalty , Security , Friendship , Communication , Commitment , Safety , Respect , Connect with others , Help , Fairness

What skills, if any, do I need to practise for this decision?
