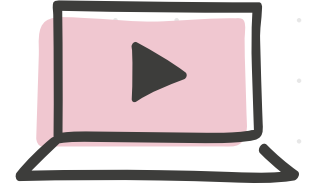


ACT 3

Being Mindful



Your Mind often confuses descriptions and evaluations – and invents judgments about you (often critical and cruel) which it puts forward as true descriptions – as facts!

Your Mind would never say...
 “You’re stupid – in my humble opinion”

It states such opinions as true descriptions...
 “You’re stupid – and that’s a fact!”

So – don’t be fooled into ‘buying’ your Mind’s evaluation of you .

	Description	Evaluation
The woman is...	aged 30	old
This chair is...	blue	comfortable
The price is...	£50	expensive

Confusing descriptions and evaluations means that we confuse things that are factual or real with mere opinion. “She is 30” is either right or wrong. “She is old” can only ever be an opinion.

Thoughts and Reality

1 We often become very distressed by our own thoughts. Our Mind will often frighten us and bring us down when there is nothing happening here and now to trigger such feelings. It may dredge up memories from the past, or worry us with thoughts and fantasies about what could happen in the future. Unfortunately, when we confuse thoughts and reality we get upset by many things that are not real (and the kind of confusion that we’re talking about here is what is often labelled ‘fusion’).

2 If I was shopping and I suddenly had the thought that I could steal something from the shop, it would be a BIG MISTAKE for me to feel that I have done something wrong – as if I’d stolen something. The thought is just a thought. Having a thought that just pops into your head is something that happens to you... it is NOT something you do.

Many ACT strategies help people overcome fusion. These are known as ‘de-fusion’ techniques.

Fusion

We endure a lot of unnecessary suffering because our Mind confuses...

THOUGHTS and REALITY

IMAGES and REALITY

WORDS and REALITY

Thus we sometimes confuse words and images with the things they represent. This is Fusion.

Mindfulness

The ultimate defusion strategy – Mindfulness – involves paying attention to what is happening now with openness, curiosity and detachment, without getting caught up in thoughts and feelings or being overwhelmed by them.

Mindfulness involves simply noticing your own mental activity, noticing your thoughts, images, emotional feelings and the sensations from all five of your senses as they naturally come and go.

Mindfulness doesn’t involve changing your Mind, or changing what you think. It does involve changing how you respond to your thoughts and feelings – so that you simply notice your mental processes in a gentle, curious, detached way.

There are two ways of being Mindful

1 The first way involves working things out, making careful judgments, using our knowledge to inform our decisions and actions. So we can shop Mindfully (not just impulsively buying anything we fancy!), taking into account quality and price, etc. before deciding whether something is 'a good buy'.

2 The other way of being Mindful is not to be judgmental or weigh up any pros and cons but just to notice what is happening right here and right now, without getting involved in any thoughts. This is Mindfulness.

Mindfulness History and Uses

Mindfulness has a 3000 year history. It has strong links with many different religious and spiritual traditions (especially Eastern) and also with martial arts. Over the past 25 years Mindfulness has been shown to be a powerful way of reducing the suffering generated by pain and emotional distress – so Mindfulness is now a key element in several psychological therapies – including ACT. It can be very useful as a way of helping people with depression, anxiety, chronic physical pain, sleep problems, intrusive thoughts, addictions, etc.

Mindfulness and Sleep

When we can't sleep at night, we may lie in bed and TRY VERY HARD to get to sleep. But such efforts may well keep us awake!

On the other hand, truly ACCEPTING the fact that we are awake, and not fighting it, may help us to sleep. Mindfulness is good for us, and sleep is good for us. So practising Mindfulness when you want to sleep is a good thing – either way you win!

Mindfulness is NOT...

...a way of controlling our thinking (but it helps to prevent our thinking from controlling us)

...a way of finding peace or ecstasy, or of having a blank Mind

...a relaxation technique (practicing some forms of Mindfulness may well relax you, but you can also practice Mindfulness when you are running, lifting weights or hanging out clothes!)

Mindfulness and ACT

Mindfulness increases our flexibility and extends the range of our responses, giving us greater freedom to do what we choose to do – and therefore helping us to lead a meaningful and fulfilling life.

ACT aims to help people become wiser and more flexible in their actions – and Mindfulness is a very powerful way to do this.

Things you can do Mindfully

Meditate

Eat

Drink tea

Breathe

Watch a candle

Queue in a shop

Swim

Listen to music

Watch clouds

Tie your shoe

Stroke the dog

Take a shower

Go for a walk

Look at a leaf

Just sit