

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Identifying Your Own Values

It's good to know what your values are – what really matters to you and what you really care about. When you recognise what really counts for you, this can help you to work out how you can live in line with your values. For example, if you realise that being physically fit is something that you value highly, you can easily recognise various actions that will increase and maintain your fitness. We can identify our important values by recognising strong FEELINGS we have in particular situations – for example, if we overhear people saying certain things about us. So if we'd love to hear somebody say “Sam is a fantastic singer” this indicates that “singing talent” is something we really value. If we're not bothered what anyone thinks about our singing, this shows that singing isn't one of our key values!

They're Talking About Me

This activity will help you to recognise some of your own important values. Imagine you phone a friend, but due to a technical fault you can hear your friend talking to somebody else who knows you very well. And very soon, you realise that they are talking about YOU! You'll obviously be very interested in what they are saying about you... so you continue listening. Think about what you would most like to hear them say about you – this will point to your values. So, if you'd love to hear one of them say: “Sam always stands by his/her friends”... this would show that you value loyalty. “Sam always looks on the bright side” would show that you value positivity. And if you would like to hear someone say: “Sam always goes out of the way to help people”... this shows that you value kindness. So, for this activity, think of 4 things that you would really like to overhear people saying about you, and work out the value that each one relates to.

I'd like to overhear people saying this about me

This means I value...

1

2

3

4

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Living by Your Own Values

When you have identified your values, you will be able to work out what you can DO to live your life in tune with these values. So, if one of your strong values is kindness, think of various things that kind people might do, acts of kindness such as...

Supporting friends in need

Offering to help people

Donating to charity

Volunteering

Recognising the types of actions that count as acts of kindness will point to things that you can do, or can do more often, to live more fully in line with this personal value.

For example, you might think about how you can regularly give some of your time to work with people in need, or how you might offer to help a friend or someone else who you think may be struggling at the moment. Value-driven actions are often outside the comfort zone and offering help, especially to a stranger, may feel uncomfortable. Wondering how your offer might be taken, you might feel anxious or embarrassed. So it may be a case of “I’m bound to feel embarrassed – but I’m going to do it anyway!”

You will be able to link particular actions to other personal values. For example, if you value being a loyal friend, eating healthily, being studious or being sporty, what actions might you associate with each of these?

So now link the values you identified in the previous activity (what you’d like to hear people saying about you) to specific actions that will help you to live in tune with these values.

Start by choosing one of your important personal values, and then link this to four actions.

The personal value I’ll focus on is _____

Four actions I could do regularly to help me live more in line with this personal value

1

2

3

4

(You can do the same thing for your other personal values on a separate sheet of paper)

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Increasing Your Flexibility

We are creatures of habit and do many things without giving them much thought and without considering alternatives. So we may become set in our ways, never venturing beyond our familiar territory or stepping outside our ‘comfort zone’ and just doing the same things again and again. This makes life easy, but it can also be boring, and it’s certainly not the way to make the best of life. If we loosen up and act thoughtfully rather than simply according to habit, this should make our life more interesting and we will be able to take advantage of new opportunities when they arise.

There are real advantages in loosening up, and ACT has identified a number of simple ways of increasing psychological flexibility. These involve deliberately going beyond what you normally do and, in many cases, going beyond what feels comfortable. Such strategies will increase our flexibility and broaden our ‘comfort zone’. It will open up new possibilities – so that our life may become more adventurous and more fulfilling.

The three activities suggested here progress from gentle nudges to more ambitious and challenging activities that will certainly increase your flexibility if you are brave enough to do them! In addition to the specific ideas we suggest, you may wish to invent your own ways of increasing your flexibility. Ask yourself “how can I loosen up?”

Just to be Different

Think of things that you do in a routine way without ever giving them any thought, and then come up with ways of doing them a little differently. The idea is not to change what you do in a permanent way, but just to break away from your usual pattern by exercising conscious control – thus increasing your flexibility. Here are some examples: if you always walk to a local shop along the same route, occasionally take a different route ‘Just to be Different’. And if you always have a particular type of coffee in a coffee shop (Americano, Flat White or Cappuccino, for example) occasionally order another type – ‘Just to be Different’. Think about what you usually watch on TV, about newspapers or magazines you often buy, about the places you visit, and about the things you usually eat and drink – and then think of how you can disrupt these habitual actions – to exercise some control and ‘Just to be Different’.

The changes you make will be minor, and temporary, and so they are not important in themselves. But deliberately doing something different, taking conscious control and putting yourself in the driving seat, will increase your flexibility.

	What I usually do	How I’ll do it... Just to be Different
1	_____	_____
2	_____	_____
3	_____	_____
4	_____	_____

Beyond the Comfort Zone – Being Brave

We often prefer to do things that are familiar and that feel safe, but this tendency to stick to what feels comfortable reduces our flexibility and stops us doing things that could make us feel good and would expand our horizons. You can increase your flexibility by deciding to step beyond your comfort zone and do things that are different, challenging and brave. This activity involves you thinking of 3 things you would LIKE to do, or that you feel it would be RIGHT to do, but which you have not done because you believe that it might make you feel anxious, embarrassed or frightened.

We're not encouraging you to be reckless – as always, be sensible and be wise. This activity encourages you to be brave, to accept any uncomfortable feelings, but to DO things that take courage, determination and commitment! Remember, some of the most rewarding things that we do make us feel very uncomfortable – at least at first. It's good to stick your neck out once in a while – it can help you see a little further!

Three brave things I'm going to do – Beyond My Comfort Zone!

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

Being 'Outrageous' – For A Change

This activity is the most challenging – and of course it's entirely up to you whether you want to go this far. But if you are brave enough, it could dramatically increase your flexibility and help you recognise that you are in control and can steer your life in the direction you want.

The activity invites you to do something way beyond your comfort zone, something out of character and fairly outrageous! If you are up for this, think of an action that would make you feel really uncomfortable – and then make plans to go for it. The activity involves you deliberately putting yourself in a situation you would normally avoid at all costs, and allowing yourself to FEEL AND ACCEPT certain negative feelings (probably, embarrassment).

Why would you do this? Why would you deliberately expose yourself to fairly extreme embarrassment? The answer is that this will teach you a very important lesson – that your great fear of embarrassment has been exaggerated. You may tell yourself "If I can do that, I can do almost anything." And that confidence will increase your flexibility.

Here are some ideas for an 'outrageous action' – wear a really stupid hat; ask a stranger a weird question; walk down a street singing out loud (such activities are probably best done away from your own neighbourhood!). Deliberately doing something that you know will make you look silly (your worst fear?) is a powerful way for you to instantly increase your realisation that you really are in charge of your actions. (Final thought – you might want to link an outrageous action to a charity fund-raising event).

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Making Commitments – and Keeping Them!

A key aspect of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is, of course, commitment. ACT helps people to identify what really matters to them, to recognise actions that will help them to live in line with their own values, and then to make – and to keep – commitments to carry out and carry on with these actions. So, consider significant changes you can make that will help you to live more in line with the things that really matter to you. Considering your most important values, what concrete actions can you commit to that will promote a lifestyle that is more in tune with your cherished values?

So, make three firm resolutions – three solid commitments – regarding things you will do differently from now on in order to live your life more in tune with your values.

1 Commitment 1: From now on, I will

2 Commitment 2: From now on, I will

3 Commitment 3: From now on, I will

And remember, people often make a commitment but then break it. If this happens, don't think you have failed and give up. Make your commitment, and if you do break it, then MAKE IT AGAIN... make the extra commitment to keep on with your commitments!

EXTRA ACTIVITY

Mindful Activities

Mindful Showering

When taking a shower, focus your attention on all of the sensations you can feel. Notice the sensations as the water splashes on your body and notice the pressure and the temperature of the water. Listen to the cascade of sounds and be aware of the smell of any soap or shower gel or shampoo you are using. Notice, too, how your body feels as you rub your skin with soap or gel. When you shampoo your hair, tune in to the sensations as you massage your scalp and as the warm water runs through your fingers and your hair. If your attention wanders, notice that this is happening and gently bring it back to the here and now, so that you focus on every sensation available to you as you experience the shower.

Mindful Full Body Scan

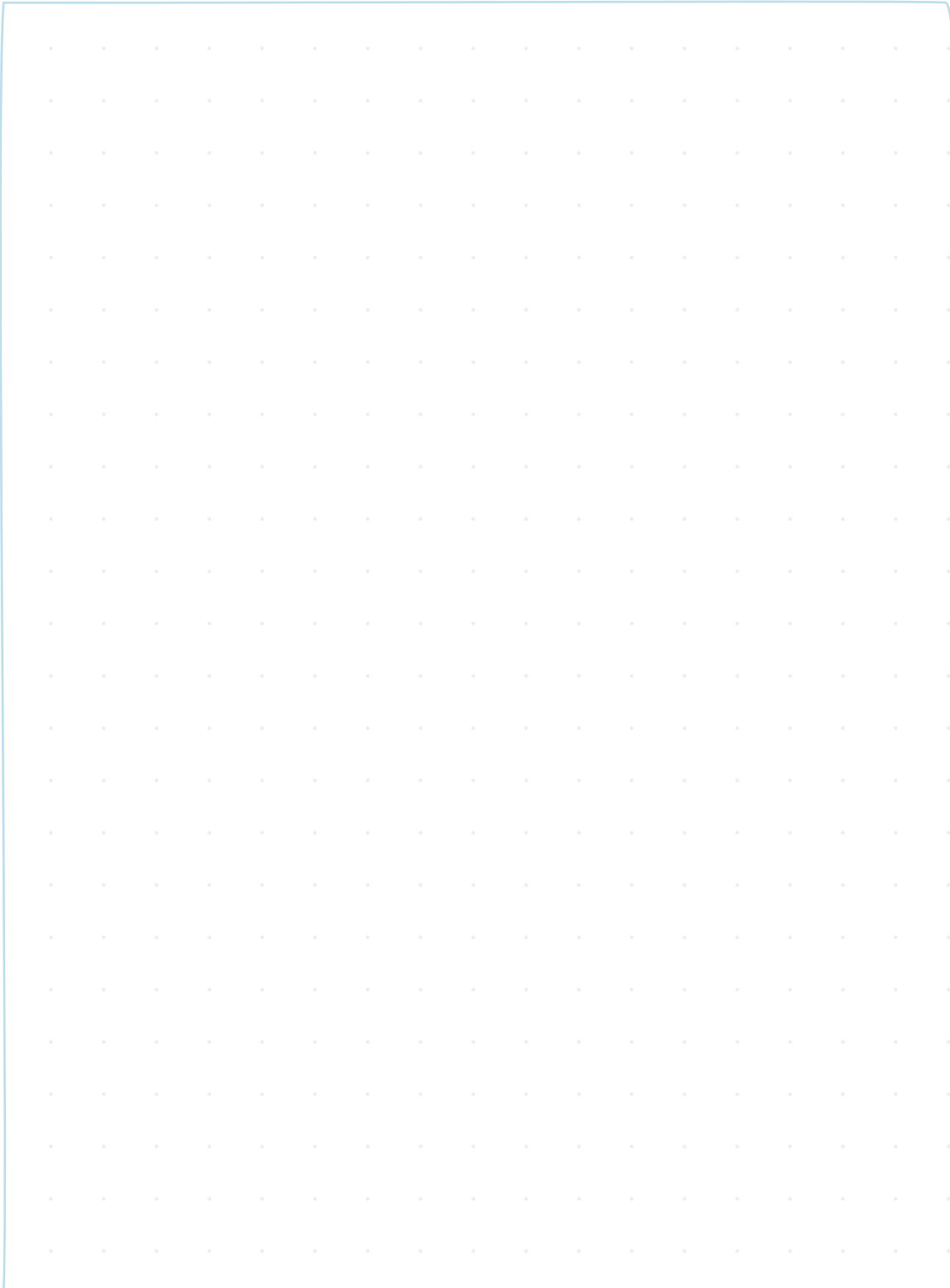
Get into a comfortable position somewhere where you won't be disturbed and settle down for a 'full body scan'. It's best if you are lying down and resting on your back, and you may also want to close your eyes. The body scan involves focusing your attention on different parts of your body in turn, so that you experience the full range of sensations coming from each part. The activity may be relaxing, but its main purpose is simply for you to notice all of the bodily sensations you are able to experience. Don't do anything to control your body or to change anything. Just tune in to different parts of your body in turn. For example, move your attention slowly from your feet up to your chest, then from your hands to your shoulders, and finally focus on your head. As you move your attention to different parts of your body, notice all of the sensations coming from that part. Scanning your whole body very slowly and gradually will probably take at least 15 minutes, and it may take considerably longer (and you might wish to use the recording of a guided full body scan that is available on the ACTivate Your Life website).

Mindful Nature Focus

Find a green and open space – a garden, maybe, or a park or a forest. Whether you stay in one place or walk around, open yourself up to all aspects of the natural environment. Notice what there is to see, listen to the sounds, tune in to any smells, sense the temperature and feel any movements in the air. Try to maintain this focus for some time (at least 10-15 minutes), and when your Mind wanders just bring your attention gently back to focus on what you can experience right now, with all your senses, in the natural environment.

ACTivate Your Life – Notes

Use the space below to write down any thoughts and feelings about what you have learned from the ACTivate Your Life course and how it may have changed your ideas or has changed the things you do. Such reflection will help you to get the most from the course.



Remember to keep your Activity Sheets in a safe and private place.

EXTRA READING

Some books about ACT and Mindfulness

ACTivate Your Life is a stand-alone course – everything you need is included in the four films, the Activity Pack and the optional Guided Mindfulness recordings. But if you want to know more about ACT – or about Mindfulness – here are some recommended books.

Russ Harris (2008) *The Happiness Trap: (Based on ACT: A Revolutionary Mindfulness-Based Programme for Overcoming Stress, Anxiety and Depression)*. London: Robinson.

Russ Harris (2009) *Act Made Simple: An Easy-to-Read Primer on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Steven Hayes and Spencer Smith (2005) *Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life: The New Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Mark Williams and Danny Penman (2011) *Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World*. London: Piatkus

Vidyamala Burch and Danny Penman (2013) *Mindfulness for Health: A Practical Guide to Relieving Pain, Reducing Stress and Restoring Wellbeing*. London: Piatkus