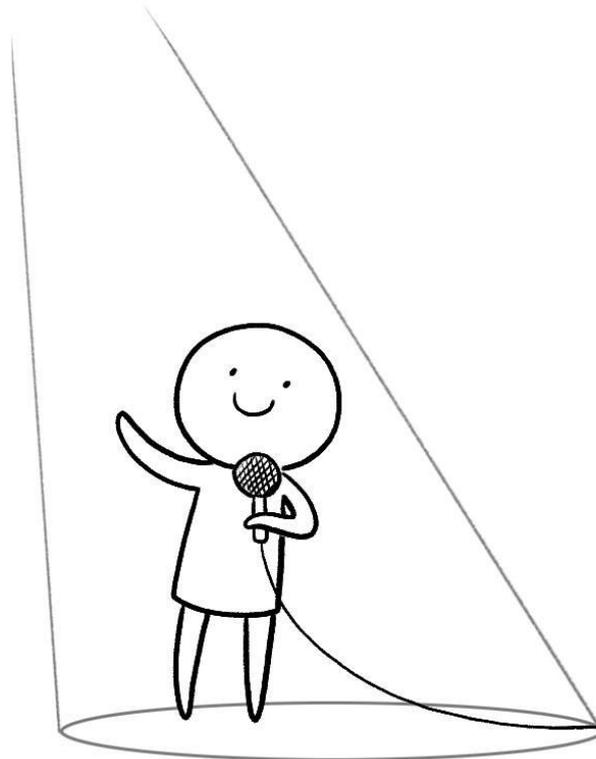


Introduction

Through video, audio, and short written exercises we will be looking at how certain types of thoughts can play a part in procrastination. We'll also look at evidence-backed ways you can break free when you find yourself struggling with thoughts that turn you towards procrastination and get in the way of what matters. Over the course of the 40 minutes to an hour that it usually takes to complete this workbook we hope to help you break out of procrastination and get working on what matters to you in education and in life broadly.



**YOU DON'T HAVE TO FEEL RELAXED AND FEARLESS ON THE INSIDE
TO DO WHAT MATTERS TO YOU
YOU CAN HAVE FEELINGS OF ANXIETY AND DO IT ANYWAY**



TheHappinessTrap
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When thoughts get in the way of what matters

You might wonder what we mean when we say getting caught up in our thoughts might act as barrier to doing what matters.

Think of someone who has an important essay to work on but is finding it very difficult. They might be having thoughts like:

“I’m no good at essay writing”

“I never do well in assignments”

“I don’t know how to do this”

“I’m not smart enough”

These thoughts for most of us can be difficult to be with and can often seem quite convincing. With thoughts popping up such as these one might decide to put off doing the essay until later even though that might not be in line with what is important (completing the essay; earning a good grade).

Fusion, defusion, and learning objectives

From the theory we’re interested in and work from, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, we would call my buying into those thoughts cognitive fusion or just fusion. In a nutshell, fusion is getting caught up in our thoughts and allowing them to dominate what we do in our lives. So it’s getting entangled in our thoughts, really buying into them, and allowing them to steer the direction we go in.

So as you work through this workbook, we will be talking about ways we can break free when we are caught up in our thoughts. The ACT or technical term for this is defusion. When we are defused from our thoughts we can look at our thoughts rather than from them; we can just notice our thoughts and allow them to come and go without getting caught up in them or holding on to them.

We’re hoping that you’ll be a bit more aware of the ways you are entangled or caught up in your thoughts, how this might be influencing your procrastination, and learn about some ways you can do something different with your thoughts so they don’t steer us away from the life we want to live.

In essence, we hope you’ll be able to see thoughts a bit more as they are-language, words, and pictures; to respond to them in terms of how helpful they are rather than how true they are. How we’ll do this is by watching our thoughts and learning that our thoughts needn’t control our actions.

Passengers on a Bus

I want us now to begin to notice our thinking a little and to begin to be aware of the types of thoughts that may be playing a part in our procrastination. To help us with this we are going to watch this video:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z29ptSuoWRc>

The unruly passengers represent uncomfortable and unwanted thoughts and feelings triggered by a task; steering away from the task, or procrastinating, temporarily relieves the stress of experiencing these sensations. The desire to get to the task remains, however, so the pattern repeats; as the driver steers once more toward the task, noisy and belligerent passengers begin heckling until the course is again changed away from the task. Eventually, either the driver gives up trying to get to that destination or decides to speed over to the destination as quickly as possible, yelling at and arguing with the bellicose passengers all the way. Neither giving in to the passengers' demands nor fighting with them leads to a satisfactory result. The passengers stay on the bus, repeating the cycle whenever triggered by a similar destination.

I want us now to begin to take note of some of the passengers on each of our buses. As best you can I want you to bring to mind a current or recent task you were procrastinating with. On the worksheet I want you to note what the passengers on your bus were shouting, screaming, and cajoling you with.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Reason giving _____ (15 minutes)

You may have noticed earlier, when we talked about someone who might be procrastinating on working on an important essay, that many of the thoughts that popped up for them were reasons.

"I'm no good at essay writing"

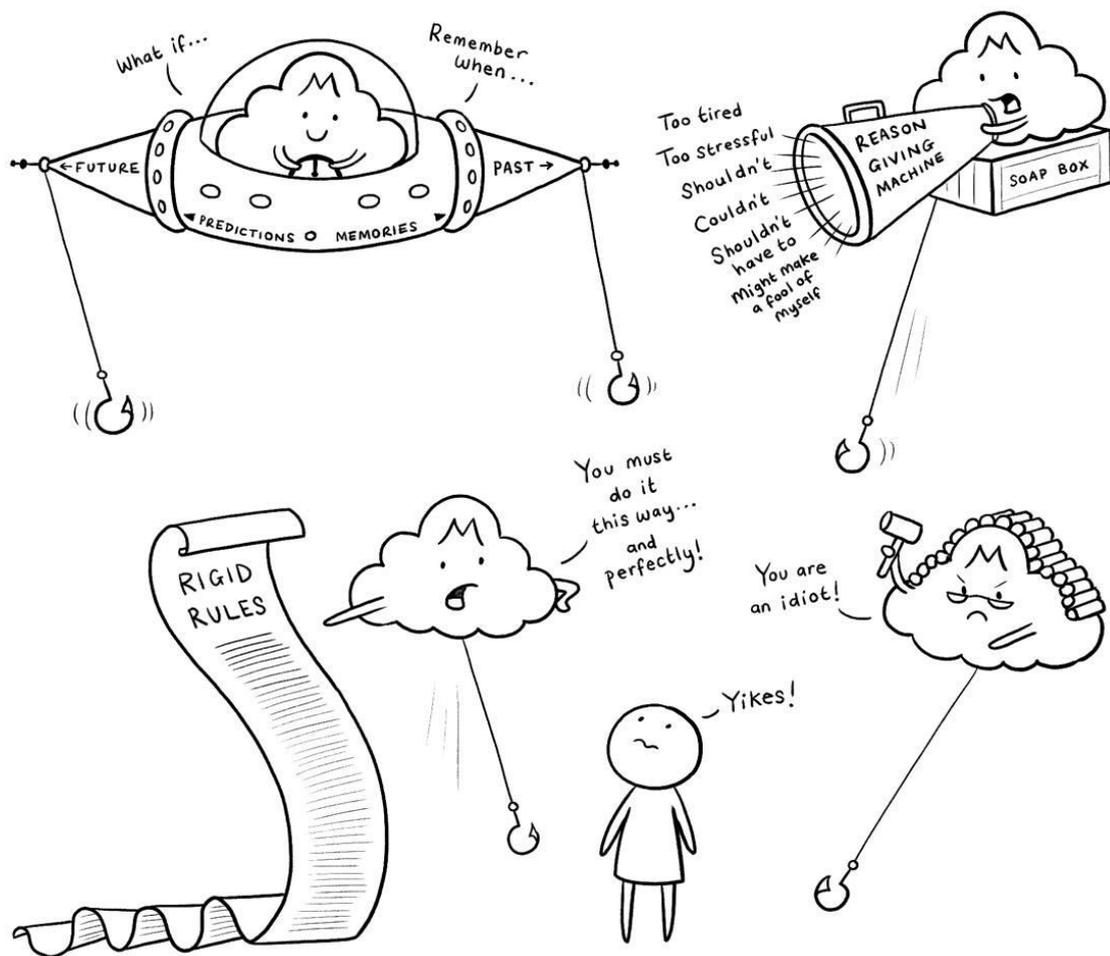
"I never do well in assignments"

"I don't know how to do this"

"I'm not smart enough"

We're all very good at making up reasons for why we can't or shouldn't do things that take us out of our comfort zone. The trouble is, the things that matter almost always live outside our comfort zone.

Our minds are amazing things but they're also reason-giving machines. Here is a picture of a wild reason-giving machine.



**PRACTICE RECOGNISING WHEN YOUR MIND IS HOOKING YOU
AND NOTICE WHAT IT IS HOOKING YOU WITH**



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As we mentioned earlier, the mind is excellent at throwing up reasons not to engage in what is important to us and to procrastinate instead. Each time we begin to do something that matters but which is uncomfortable the mind flicks the switch on the reason giving machine.

I'm too tired...it's too hard...I'll fail...It's too expensive...It'll take too long...I'm too depressed/anxious...My parents/friends/partner wouldn't approve...It's not the right time...I shouldn't have to do this...It'll all go wrong.

But while the mind may offer many, many, many reasons we can still choose to do what matters. While the mind may make a reasonable case, we can chose to do what is important, even if that might be a bit difficult and uncomfortable, all the same.

To help us to tune into the reason-giving machine a little more, we are going to think about the actions of three people: Alex, Michael, and Jane. Your job is to give as many reasons as you can come up with for why they might have behaved as they did.

Alex ate the entire packet of chocolate biscuits.

Michael argued with his partner.

Jane shouted at her secretary after making a minor clerical error.

Hopefully this has illustrated just how easily it is for the mind to come up with many reasons for behaving in a certain way. As you look back at these reasons, you may also notice that many have an

emotional element to them. Perhaps they involve pushing away or avoiding certain difficult thoughts, feelings, or experiences.

Unhooking/Defusion

Now that we are a bit more aware of the type of thoughts that can get us into procrastination, we need to find some ways to unhook from these thoughts and from the reason-giving machine.

We're going to begin by inviting you to do a mindfulness-based exercise with me where we're just going to begin to observe our thoughts. For this, you might like to put in your earphones or pop on headphones as it will involve listening to an audio.

Leaves on a stream

https://youtu.be/iIJ0wf_nXZY?t=50

Well done doing something different with your thoughts!

Another way we can unhook from thoughts and reasons is by noticing that these are just thoughts and putting the prefix "I'm having the thought that..." before the thought.

This can give us a little distance from a thought. Supposing I'm having the thought that I'm stupid, I might now say

"I'm having the thought that I'm stupid".

"I'm having the thought that I'm too tired to start my essay".

"I'm having the thought that I'm too upset to study for my exam".

Write one of your thoughts that you identified during the passengers on a bus exercise earlier here:

Now try putting "I'm having the thought..." first. Type it here:

We can extend this even further by adding "I'm noticing". So "I'm noticing I am having the thought that I'm too stressed to work on my project".

Lastly, try putting "I'm noticing I am having the thought that..." before the thought. Type it here:

Academic Values Clarification

When opening up to our thoughts and changing our relationship to consider how helpful they are versus how truthful they are it is important to know what is important to us in life. So we want to tune into our values, what gives us meaning in life. So what we're going to invite you to do now is to clarify what values each of us have when it comes to education and learning. For each of the values on the exercise below, rate how important each is to you: very, quite, or not important to you at all.

EXERCISE: Clarify Your Values

Below are some common values. (They are not 'the right ones'; merely common ones.)

Please read through the

list and write a letter next to each value, based on how important it is to you: V = very important, Q = quite important, and N = not important.

1. Acceptance/self-acceptance: to be accepting of myself, others, life, etc.
2. Adventure: to be adventurous; to actively explore novel or stimulating experiences
3. Assertiveness: to respectfully stand up for my rights and request what I want
4. Authenticity: to be authentic, genuine, and real; to be true to myself
5. Caring/self-care: to be caring toward myself, others, the environment, etc.
6. Compassion/self-compassion: to act kindly toward myself and others in pain
7. Connection: to engage fully in whatever I'm doing and be fully present with others
8. Contribution and generosity: to contribute, give, help, assist, or share
9. Cooperation: to be cooperative and collaborative with others
10. Courage: to be courageous or brave; to persist in the face of fear, threat, or difficulty
11. Creativity: to be creative or innovative
12. Curiosity: to be curious, open-minded, and interested; to explore and discover
13. Encouragement: to encourage and reward behavior that I value in myself or others
14. Excitement: to seek, create, and engage in activities that are exciting or stimulating
15. Fairness and justice: to be fair and just to myself or others
16. Fitness: to maintain or improve or look after my physical and mental health
17. Flexibility: to adjust and adapt readily to changing circumstances
18. Freedom and independence: to choose how I live and help others do likewise
19. Friendliness: to be friendly, companionable, or agreeable toward others
20. Forgiveness/self-forgiveness: to be forgiving toward myself or others
21. Fun and humor: to be fun loving; to seek, create, and engage in fun-filled activities
22. Gratitude: to be grateful for and appreciative of myself, others, and life
23. Honesty: to be honest, truthful, and sincere with myself and others
24. Industry: to be industrious, hardworking, and dedicated
25. Intimacy: to open up, reveal, and share myself, emotionally or physically
26. Kindness: to be kind, considerate, nurturing, or caring toward myself or others
27. Love: to act lovingly or affectionately toward myself or others
28. Mindfulness: to be open to, engaged in and curious about the present moment
29. Order: to be orderly and organized
30. Persistence and commitment: to continue resolutely, despite problems or difficulties.
31. Respect/self-respect: to treat myself and others with care and consideration
32. Responsibility: to be responsible and accountable for my actions
33. Safety and protection: to secure, protect, or ensure my own safety or that of others

- 34. Sensuality and pleasure: to create or enjoy pleasurable and sensual experiences
- 35. Sexuality: to explore or express my sexuality
- 36. Skillfulness: to continually practice and improve my skills and apply myself fully
- 37. Supportiveness: to be supportive, helpful and available to myself or others
- 38. Trust: to be trustworthy; to be loyal, faithful, sincere, and reliable
- 39. Other: _____
- 40. Other: _____

Of the values you identified as most important. Now pick **five** which you regard as your five most important.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

Choice Point

5 mins



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OV15x8LvAQ>

As we move on for today, we want to encourage you as best you can to notice when your actions are taking you away from what is important and into procrastination. We invite you as best you can to move toward what is important. To move toward your values. Let them be your compass. As best you can, try to unhook from the reason-giving machine so that you may untangle from reasons and other difficult thoughts to do what matters.