

Doing What Matters in Times of Stress: An Illustrated Guide



Doing what matters in times of stress: an illustrated guide

ISBN 978-92-4-000391-0 (electronic version)

ISBN 978-92-4-000392-7 (print version)

© World Health Organization 2020

Some rights reserved. This work is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo>).

Under the terms of this licence, you may copy, redistribute and adapt the work for non-commercial purposes, provided the work is appropriately cited, as indicated below. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that WHO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the WHO logo is not permitted. If you adapt the work, then you must license your work under the same or equivalent Creative Commons licence. If you create a translation of this work, you should add the following disclaimer along with the suggested citation:

This translation was not created by the World Health Organization (WHO). WHO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original English edition shall be the binding and authentic edition".

Any mediation relating to disputes arising under the licence shall be conducted in accordance with the mediation rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization.

Suggested citation. Doing what matters in times of stress: an illustrated guide. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020. Licence: [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo).

Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) data. CIP data are available at <http://apps.who.int/iris>.

Sales, rights and licensing. To purchase WHO publications, see <http://apps.who.int/bookorders>. To submit requests for commercial use and queries on rights and licensing, see <http://www.who.int/about/licensing>.

Third-party materials. If you wish to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, it is your responsibility to determine whether permission is needed for that reuse and to obtain permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

General disclaimers. The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of WHO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted and dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

The mention of specific companies or of certain manufacturers' products does not imply that they are endorsed or recommended by WHO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned. Errors and omissions excepted, the names of proprietary products are distinguished by initial capital letters.

All reasonable precautions have been taken by WHO to verify the information contained in this publication. However, the published material is being distributed without warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied. The responsibility for the interpretation and use of the material lies with the reader. In no event shall WHO be liable for damages arising from its use.

Contents

Preface

Preface

Stress Management: A Practical Guide is a WHO stress management guide for coping with adversity. This illustrated guide supports implementation of WHO's recommendation for stress management.

There are many causes of stress, including personal difficulties (e.g. conflict with loved ones, being alone, lack of income, worries about the future), problems at work (e.g. conflict with colleagues, an extremely demanding or insecure job) or major threats in your community (e.g. violence, disease, lack of economic opportunity).

This guide is for anyone who experiences stress, ranging from parents and other carers to health

Book review (with a citation at time of review)

Book reviewers included Mona Alqazzaz (WHO), Ebert Beate (Aschaffenburg, Germany), Cécile Bizouerne (Action Contre la Faim), Margriet Blaauw (War Trauma Foundation), Kate Cavanagh, (University of Sussex), Rachel Cohen (Geneva, Switzerland), Elizabeth De Castro (Children's Rights Resource Center), Manuel De Lara (WHO), Rabih El Chammay (Ministry of Public Health, Lebanon), Mohamed El Nawawi (Wintherthur, Switzerland), Boaz Feldman (Geneva, Switzerland), Kenneth Fung (UHN – Toronto Western Hospital), Anna Goloktionova (IMC), Brandon Gray (WHO), Elise Griede (War Child Holland), Jennifer Hall (WHO), Fahmy Hanna (WHO), Louise Hayes (Melbourne, Australia), Tiina Hokkanen (Fida International), Rebecca Horn (Queen Margaret University), Lynne Jones (Harvard School of Public Health), Mark Jordans, (Healthnet TPO), Dévora Kestel (WHO), Bianca King (Geneva, Switzerland), Nils Kolstrup (UiT The Arctic University of Norway), Aiysha Malik (WHO), Carmen Martinez (Médecins Sans Frontières), Ken Miller (War Child Holland), Mirjam Fagerheim Moiba (Njala University), Lynette Monteiro (University of Ottawa), Eva Murino (WHO), Sebastiana Da Gama Nkomo (WHO), Brian Ogallo (WHO), Patricia Omidian (Focusing International), Andrea Pereira (Geneva, Switzerland), Bhava Poudyal (Kathmandu, Nepal), Beatrice Pouligny (Washington DC, USA), Megin Reijnders (WHO), Patricia Robinson (Mountainview Consulting Group), Shekhar Saxena (WHO), Alison Schafer (World Vision Australia), Pratap Sharan (All India Institute of Medical Sciences), Marian Schilperoord (UNHCR), Andrew Thomson (Car Gomm), Mikai and Hana van Ommeren (Divonne-les-Bains, France), Peter Ventevogel (UNHCR), Matthieu Villatte (Evidence-Based Practice Institute), Sarah Watts (WHO), Wietse Tol (HealthRight International's Peter C. Alderman Program), Nana Wiedemann (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), Inka Weissbecker (International Medical Corps), Mike Wessells (Columbia University), Ross White (University of Glasgow), Eyad Yanes (WHO) and Diana Zandi (WHO), and all emergency-affected people in Syria, Turkey, Uganda and Ukraine who participated in adaptation and field-testing of the book and its images.

Testing (alphabetical)

The following organizations supported development of this book through field testing: HealthRight International's Peter C. Alderman Program (in collaboration with Ministry of Health Uganda, UNHCR, WHO Country Office in Uganda), International Medical Corps, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Médecins du Monde, the University of Verona and other members of the RE-DEFINE consortium, and the WHO Country Office in Syria. Acknowledgements of the contributions of colleagues involved in the testing of the SH+ course will be included in the publication of the course and articles describing its evaluation.

Funding (alphabetical)

European Commission; Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises (R2HC) Programme (managed by Elrha); United Nations Fund for Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict; and the WHO Country Office in Syria.

Note on translation and adaptation of this guide

WHO will publish a translation of this work into Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, and Spanish.

To avoid duplication of translations, please consider contacting WHO at <http://www.who.int/about/licensing> prior to starting an adaptation.

If you are experiencing stress, you are not alone.

Right now, there are many other people in your community and all around the world who are also struggling with stress.

We will help you to learn practical skills for dealing with stress. You will see us throughout this book, as we teach you the skills you need.


Enjoy your journey of learning how to do what matters in times of stress!



How to use this book

This book has five sections, each containing a new idea and technique. These are easy to learn and can be used for just a few minutes each day to help you reduce stress. You can read one section every few days and take time to practise the exercises and use the learning in the days in between. Or, you can read the book through once, applying whatever you can, and then read it again, taking more time to appreciate the ideas and practise the techniques. Practising and applying the ideas to your life is key for reducing stress. You can read the guide at home, during break or rest periods at work, before you go to sleep or any other time when you might have a few moments to concentrate on taking care of yourself.

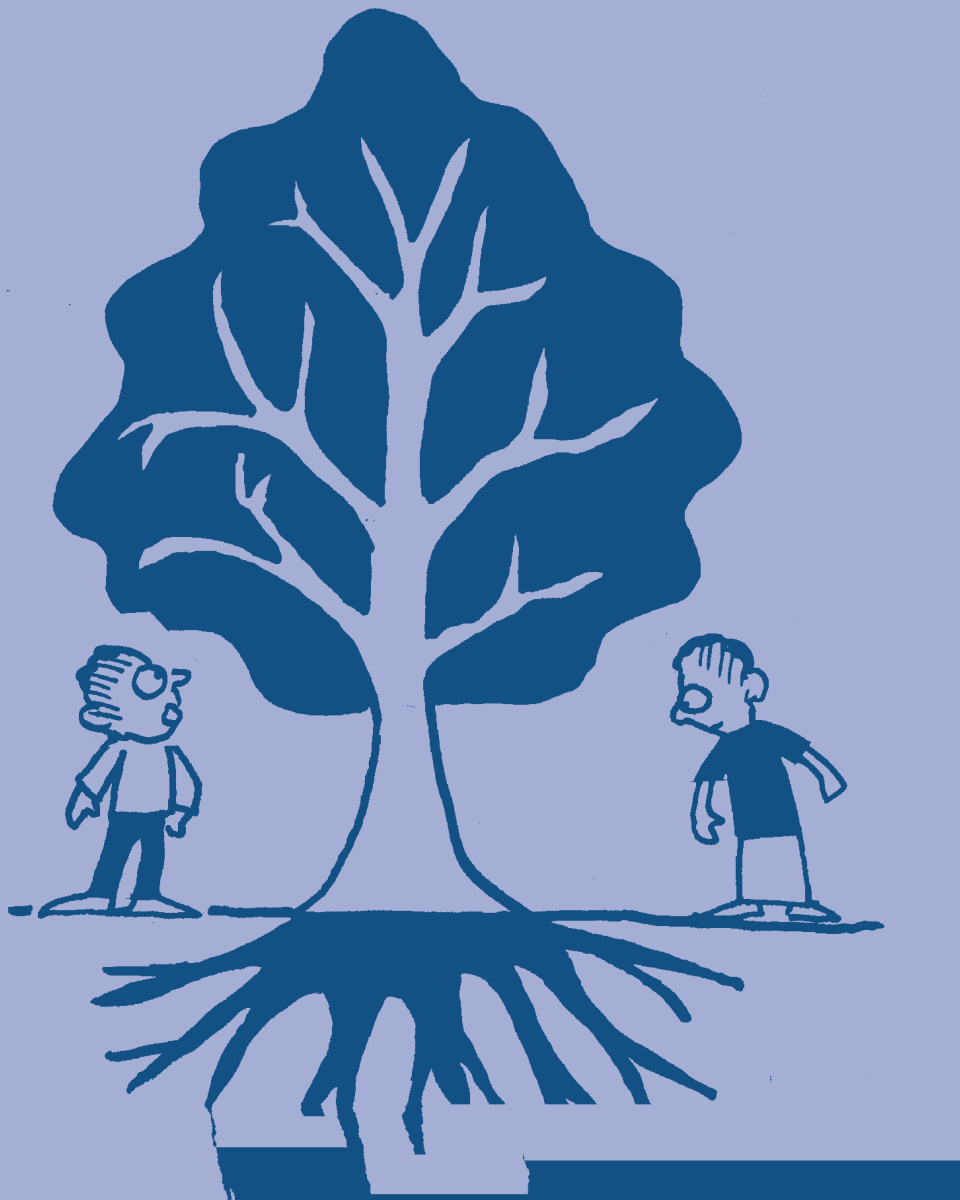
If you find that doing the exercises in this book is not enough for you to cope with intolerable stress, then please seek help from relevant health or social services, or from trusted people in your community.

If you have a device for accessing the Internet and storing audio files, when you see the symbol  in the book you can download an audio version of the exercise from <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/9789240003927> to support your practice.

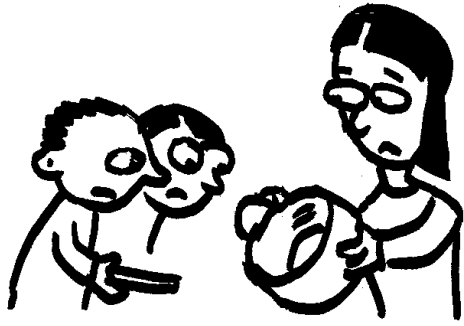
If you are not able to access the online audio files, you can still get similar benefit from reading and carefully following the instructions and exercises in this book.

Part 1

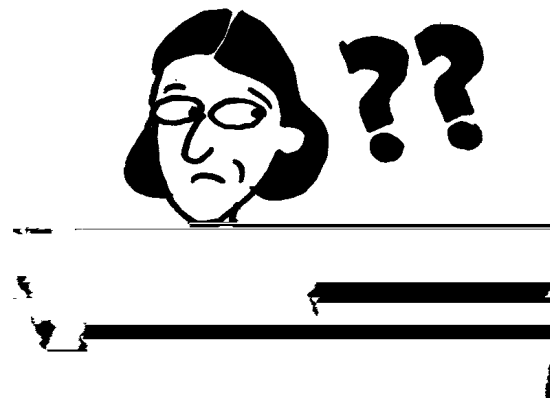
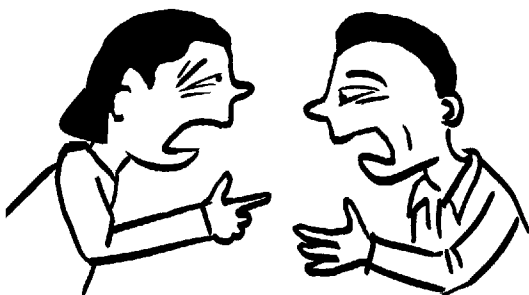
GROUNDING







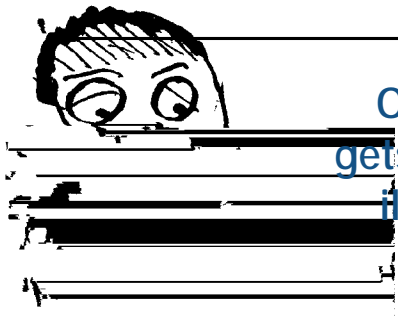
...or smaller problems.





Everyone experiences stress at times. A little bit of stress is not a problem.

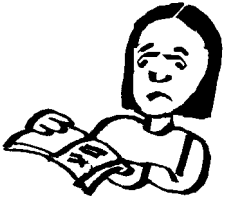
But very high stress often affects the body. Many people get unpleasant feelings.



Other people find their body gets sick – skin rashes, infections, illnesses or bowel problems.

When they are stressed, many people ...

...cannot focus



...get angry easily



...cannot sit still



...have difficulty sleeping



...feel sad or guilty



...worry



...cry



...feel very tired



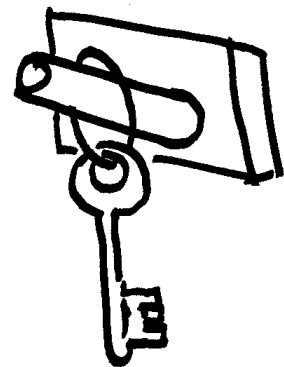
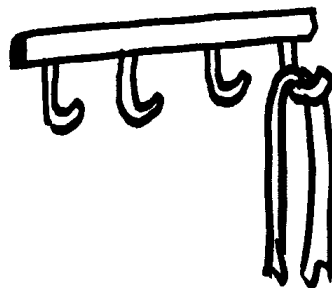
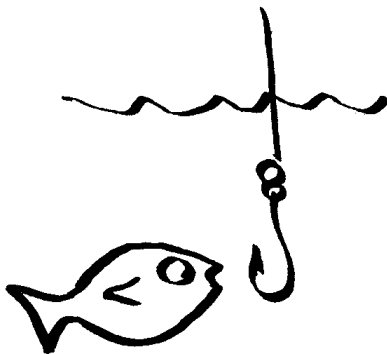
...have changes in appetite.



These powerful thoughts and feelings are a natural part of stress.
But problems can occur if we get “hooked” by them.

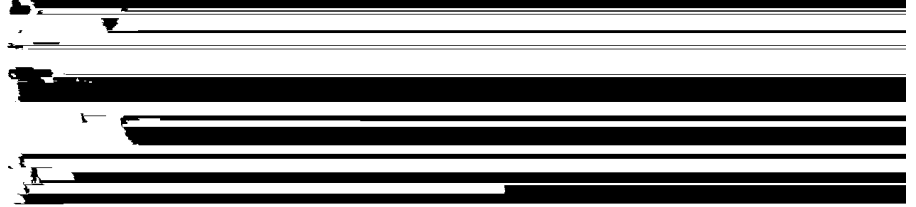


What does “hooked” mean?
Well, there are many types of hooks.

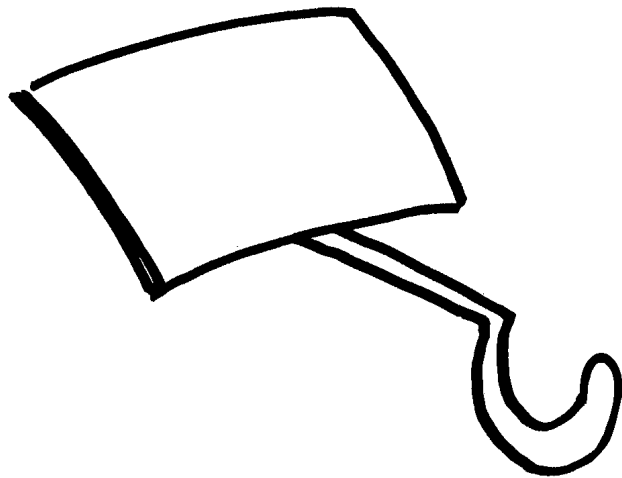




When something is on a hook,
it cannot get away.
The hook traps it.



In the same way, we can get
hooked by our difficult thoughts
and feelings.



One moment, you might be
playing with children...



...and the next moment,
you might be hooked by difficult
thoughts and feelings.



One moment, you might be enjoying sharing a meal...

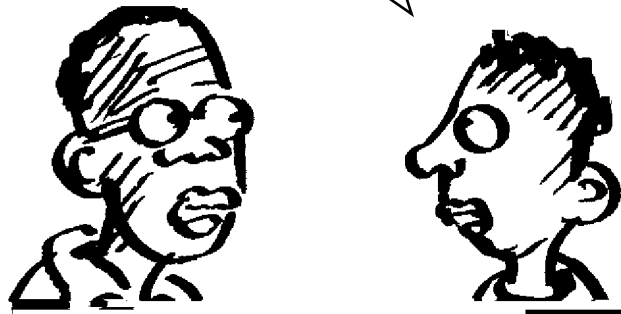


... and the next moment, you might be hooked by angry thoughts and feelings. You may feel as if you are being pulled away by anger, even if you are still there.

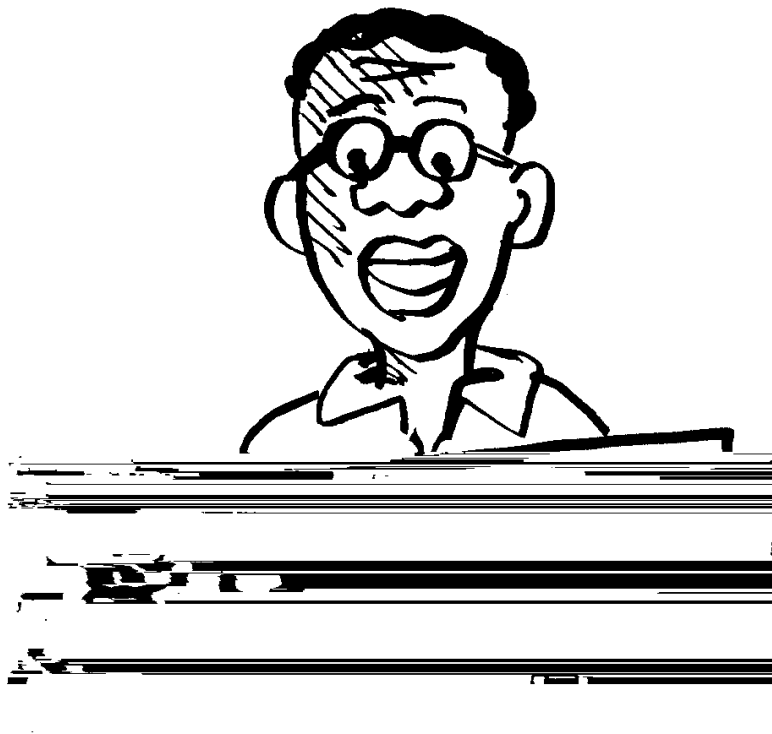


So these difficult thoughts and feelings "hook" us and pull us away from our VALUES.

What are values?



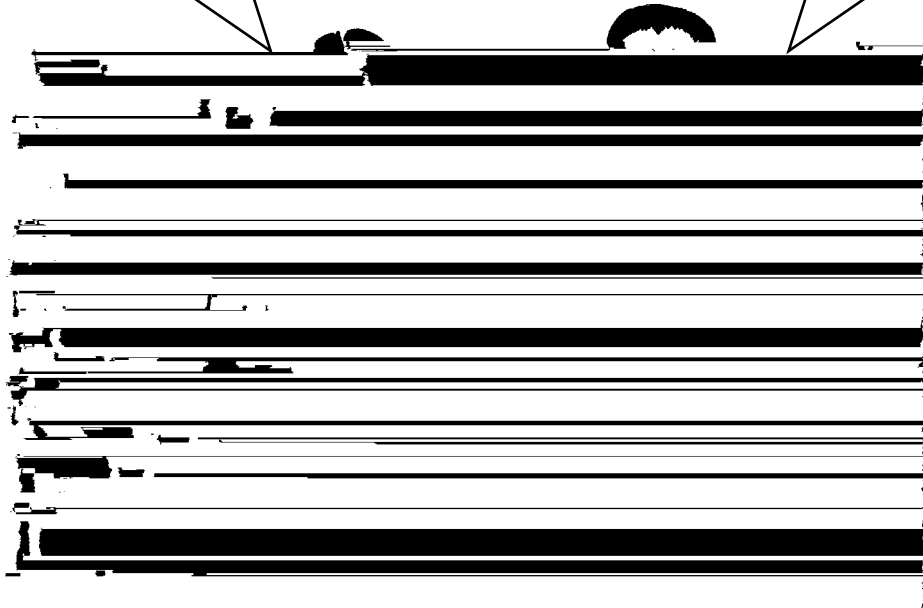
Values are your deepest desires for the sort of person you want to be.



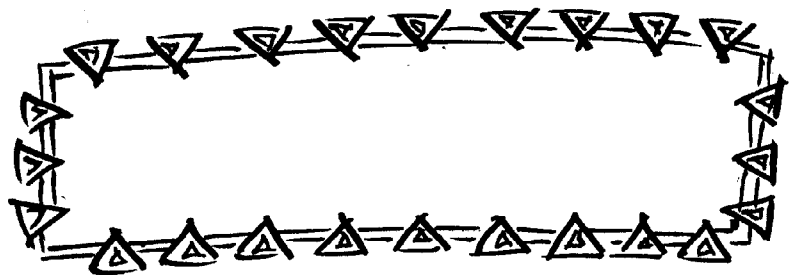
Just reading this book means you are likely acting on some of your values. Do you see how?

Yes, I am reading this book because I care about my family.

Yes, and I care about my well-being.



That is correct. So likely you are acting on one value that is important to many people:
CARING.



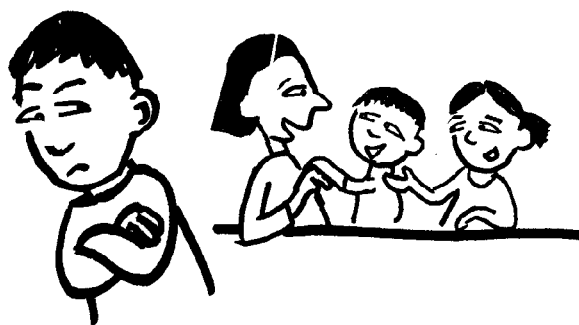




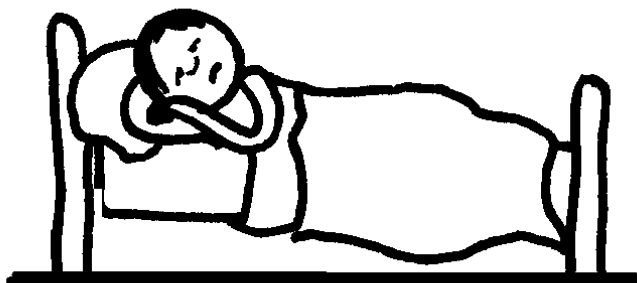
Thoughts where we worry
about others.



Or we might withdraw
and stay away from people
we love.



Or we might spend
a lot of time lying in bed.







When you are drinking something, do you give it your full attention? Do you savour the smell and the taste?





When you give your full attention to any activity, we say you are "engaged" with it.

But when hooked by thoughts or feelings, you are "disengaged" or "distracted".



When you give your full attention to any activity, we say you are "focused".

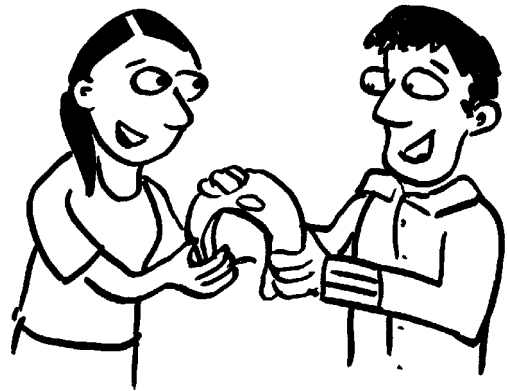
But when hooked by thoughts





So, if you can learn to be more engaged,
and focus better, then you will handle
stress better.

For example, you will find your
relationships with others more
satisfying.



And, you will be able
to do important things
much better.





There are many ways
to practise engaging
in life or focusing on
what you are doing

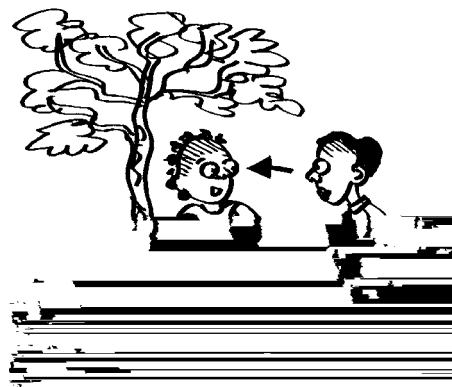


You drink
it as slowly
as possible,
savouring
the taste,
noticing the



temp-1.2 7Fture.ETq218.894.96.008 333.77.46 24 811 req/CS0 cs 0 0 0

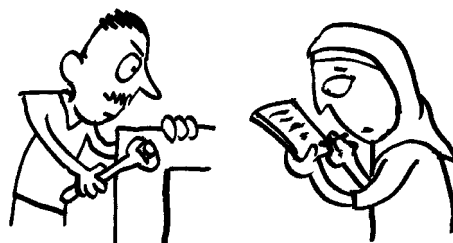
You could practise while talking to family or friends. Notice what others are saying, their tones of voice and their facial expressions. Give them your full attention.



You could practise this while playing a game or doing some other activity with children, like teaching them to read. You simply give your full attention to the children and to the game.



You could practise this while washing, cooking or doing chores. You simply give your full attention to the activity.



And whenever you notice you get hooked...



We unhook
by refocusing
and engaging in what
we are doing.

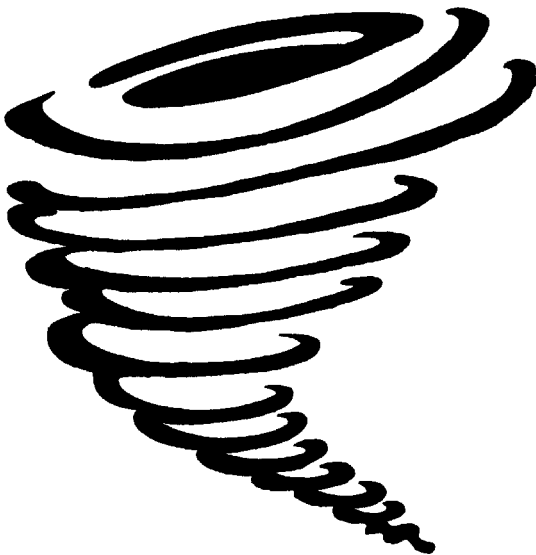


Okay!
I can do that when
my thoughts
and feelings
are not
too difficult.



But sometimes my feelings and stories are just so painful.

Yes, sometimes they are so overpowering they turn into "emotional storms".



An "emotional storm" means that you experience intensely difficult thoughts and feelings. They are so strong they are like a mighty storm, and they can easily overpower you.



When an emotional storm appears we must learn how to "ground ourselves".

What does that mean?



Imagine you are high in a tree when a storm begins.



Would you want to stay in the tree?



While you are in the tree, you are in great danger!



You need to get down to the



On the ground, you are much safer.



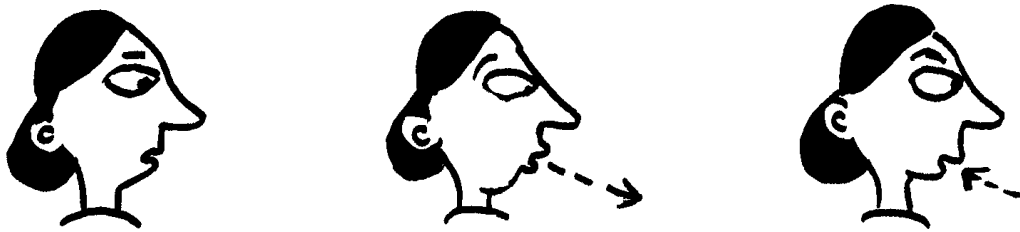
And on the ground, you can help others.
For example, you could comfort others
while the storm rages.



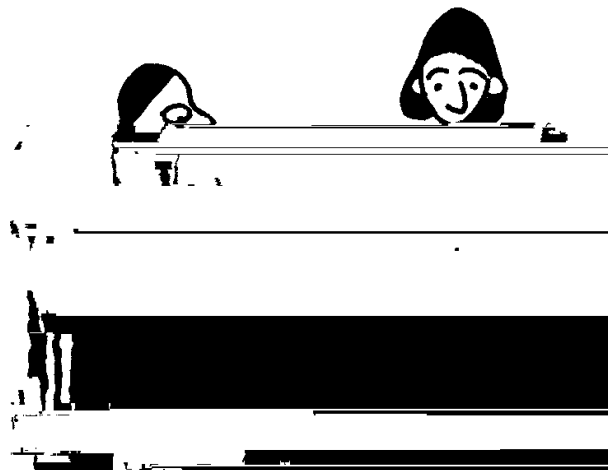
And if there is somewhere safe for you to hide,
you can only get there after you are on the ground.



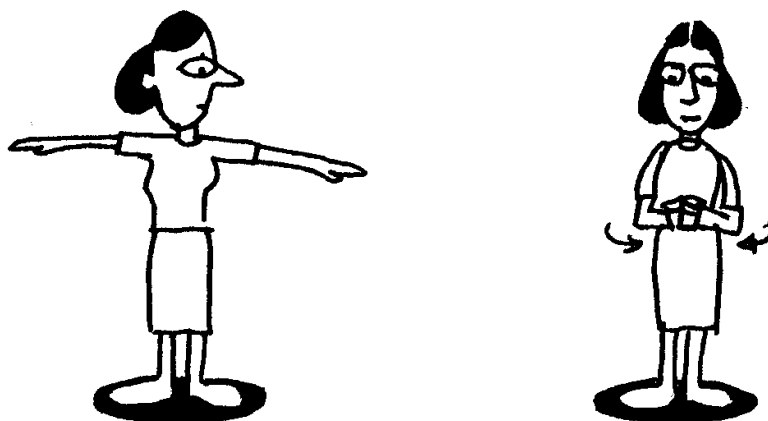
Next, **SLOW DOWN** and **CONNECT** with your body.
Slow your breathing. Empty your lungs completely.
Then let them refill as slowly as possible.



Slowly press your feet into the floor.



Slowly stretch your arms, or slowly press your hands together.

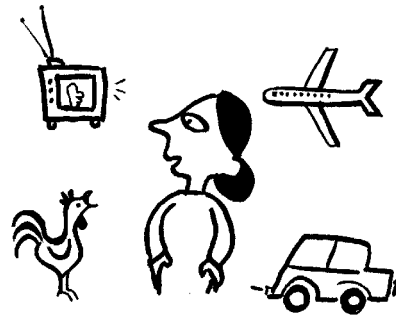


The next step in grounding is to REFOCUS on the world around you.

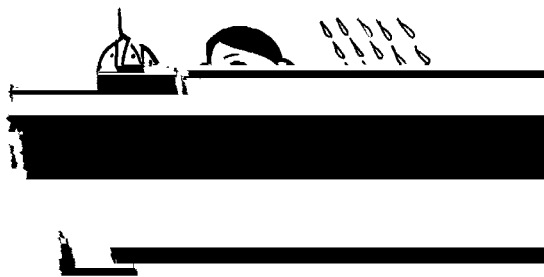
Notice where you are. What are five things you can see?



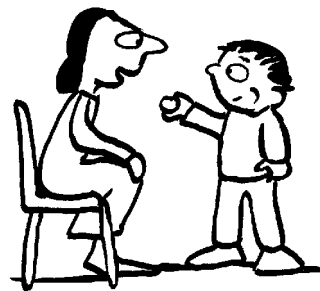
What are three or four things you can hear?



Breathe the air. What can you smell?



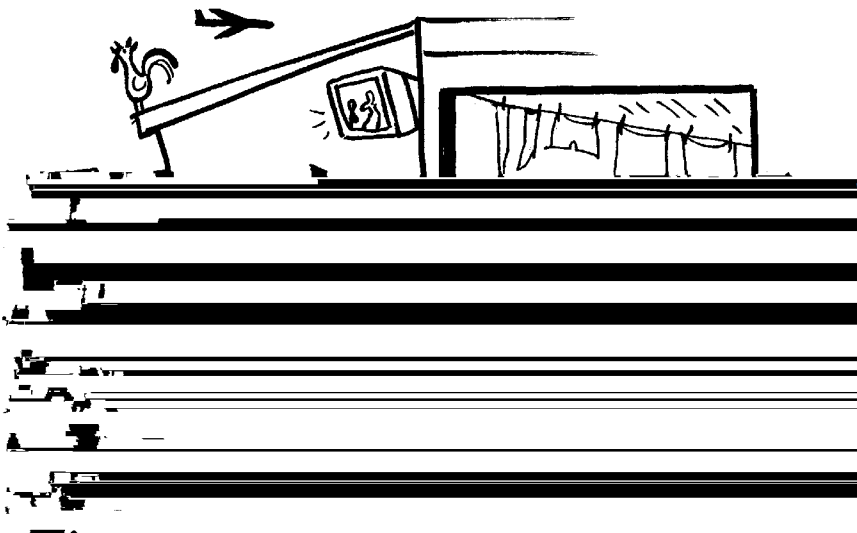
Notice where you are and what you are doing.



Touch your knees, or the surface beneath you, or any object you can reach. Notice what it feels like under your fingers.



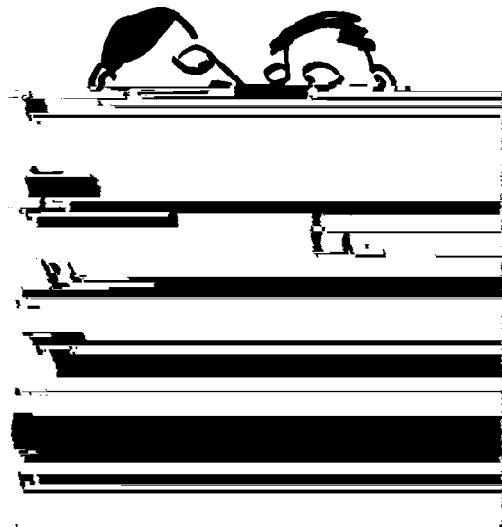
So notice there are difficult thoughts and feelings appearing...



...and there is also a world around you that you can see and hear and touch and taste and smell.

And you can also move your arms and legs and mouth – so if you want to, you can act in line with your values.

You can go to this [LINK](#) and listen to, or download **E 1**. Or, you can simply follow the pictures and instructions in this book.





Grounding does not make your emotional storms disappear. It just keeps you safe, until the storm passes.

Some storms last a long time.



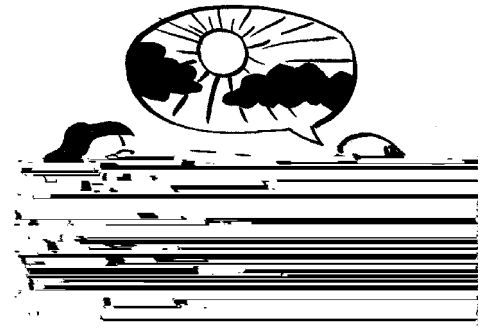
Others pass quickly.



Do you mean these unhooking and grounding exercises will not get rid of my difficult thoughts and feelings?

Correct! That is not their

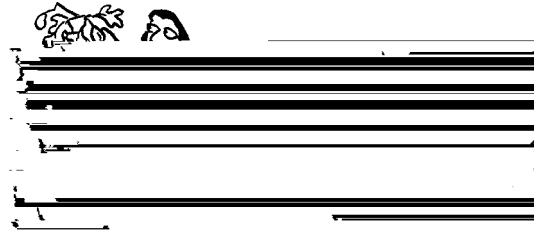
The purpose of the unhooking and grounding exercises is to help you "engage" in life. For example, to help you give your full attention to family and friends.



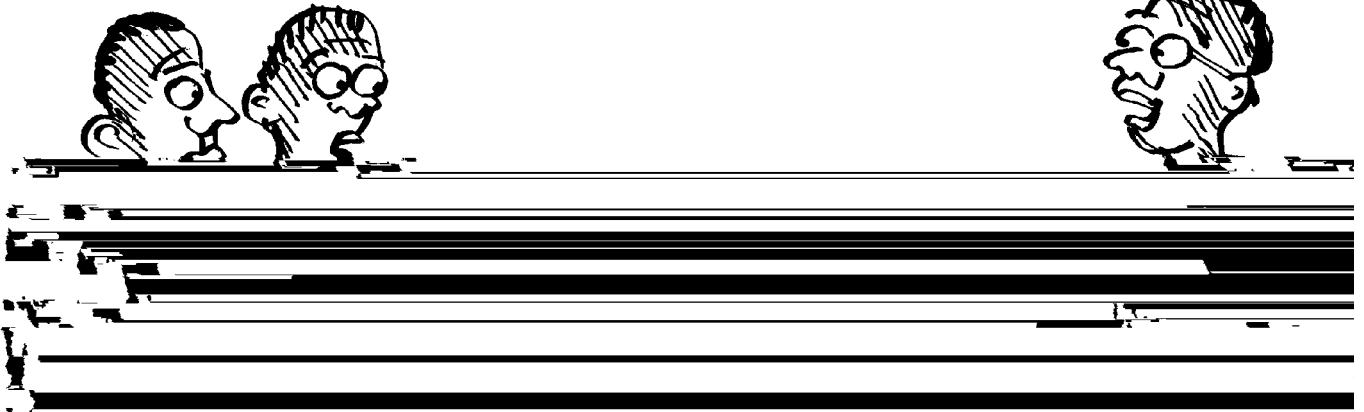
It is also to help you move towards your values; to help you behave more like the kind of person you want to be.



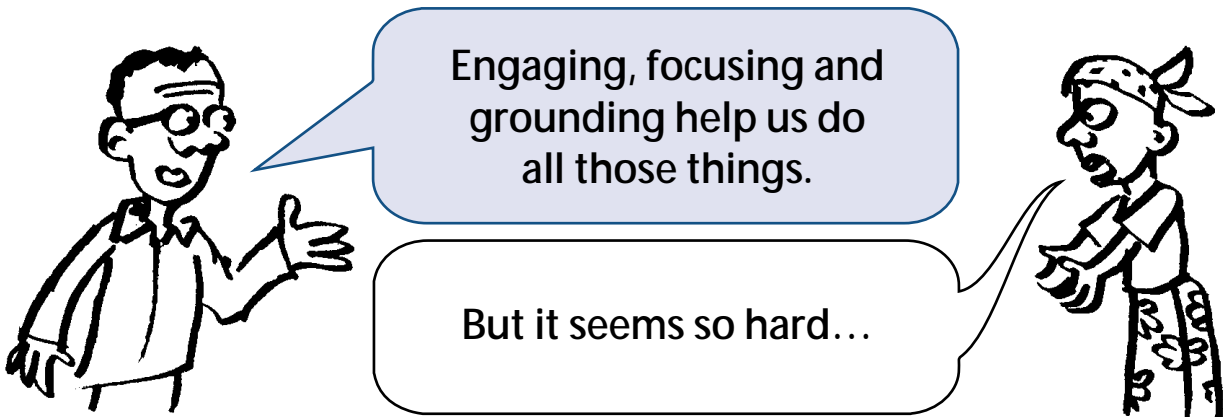
And to help you focus on what you are doing, so you can do it well.



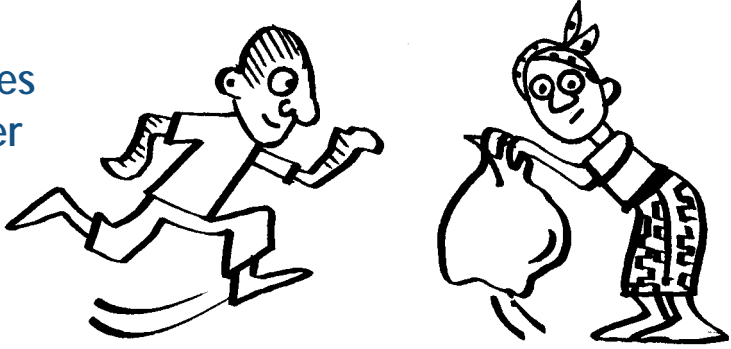
When you pay attention and engage fully in any activity you may also find it



When we engage in life, pay attention to others, focus on what we're doing and live by our values, we manage stress much better.



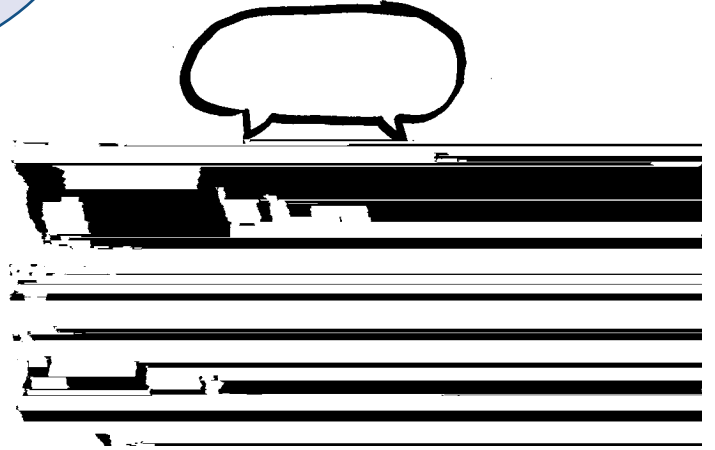
It is like building your muscles to run faster or to lift heavier loads. With practice, your muscles get bigger!



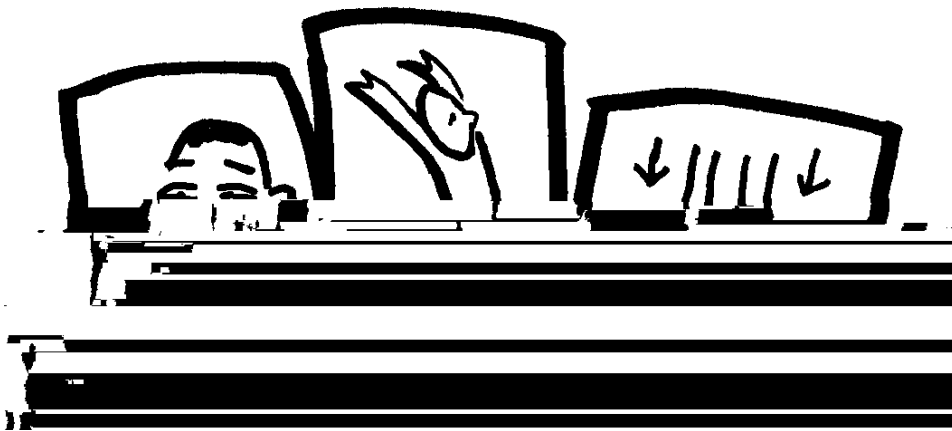
There are many ways to practise these engaging and grounding skills. We will practise them now!



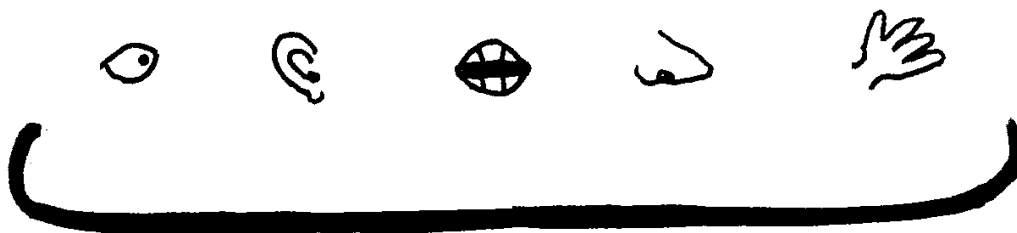
As you read this book, follow the instructions. Do not simply read about it; actually do it!



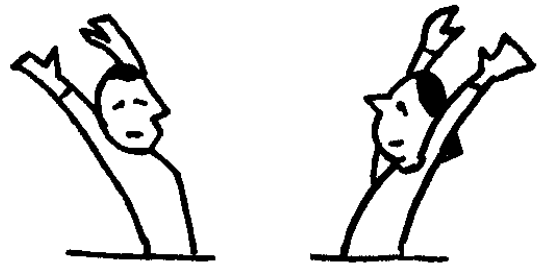
First, NOTICE how you are feeling and what you are thinking. Then, SLOW DOWN and CONNECT with your body. Slowly breathe out. Slowly stretch. Slowly push your feet into the floor.



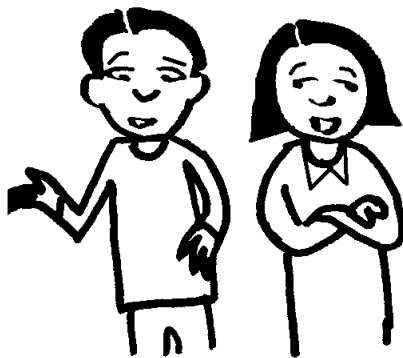
Now REFOCUS on the world around you. Pay attention with curiosity to what you can ...



Now have a good stretch.
Engage with the world. Notice
where you are, who is with you,
and what you are doing.



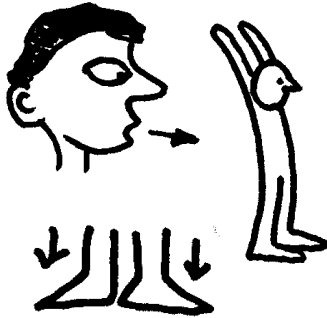
That exercise should take
you about 30 seconds.
You can do it anytime,
anywhere.





Now here is a longer grounding exercise to practise. First, NOTICE how you are feeling and what you are thinking.

Next, SLOW DOWN and CONNECT with your body. Slowly breathe out. Slowly stretch. Slowly push your feet into the ground.



Now slow your breathing even more. Slowly and gently, empty your lungs.



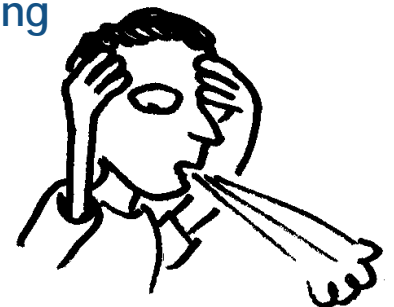
Make sure you breathe SLOWLY and GENTLY.

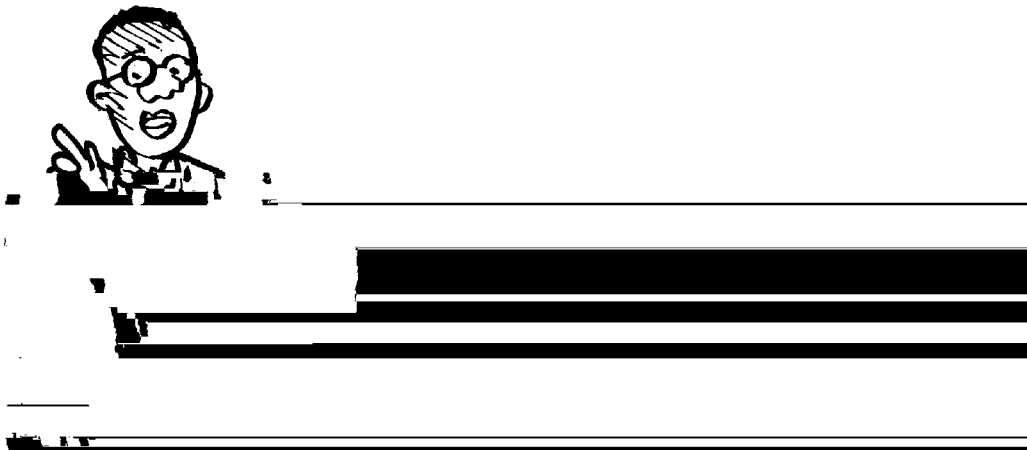
If you breathe too hard or too quickly, it could make you feel panicky, anxious, dizzy or short of breath.



And as you breath IN, also do so SLOWLY and GENTLY.

If you start to feel dizzy or light-headed, you are breathing too deeply, too hard or too quickly.

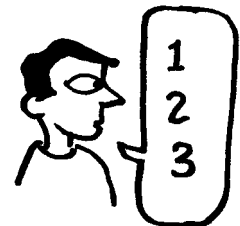




Now notice your breathing with **CURIOSITY** – as if it is the first time you have ever encountered breathing.



Now breathe out even more **SLOWLY**. And after your lungs are empty, silently count to three before you breathe in again. Then let your lungs refill as **SLOWLY AS POSSIBLE**.



You are training your ability to stay engaged and focused. Can you keep your attention on your breath?

As you do this, from time to time thoughts and feelings will hook you and pull you out of the exercise.



As soon as you realize this has happened, REFOCUS on your breathing. Give it your full attention.



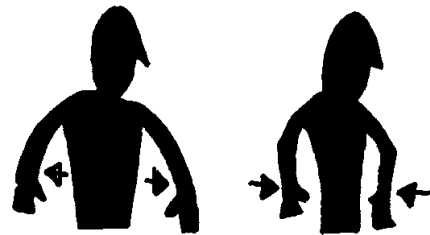
Notice the air as it flows in and out of your nostrils.



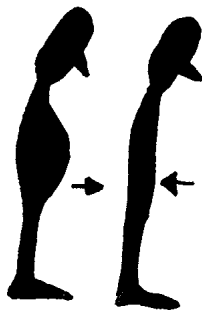
Notice the gentle movements of your shoulders.



Notice your chest moving in and out.



Notice how your belly moves in and out.



Again and again and again, you will get hooked.



So as soon as you realize this has happened ...



To finish the exercise, once again ground yourself.

SLOW down.
Slowly breathe out.
Slowly stretch.
Slowly push your feet into the floor.



Then
REFOCUS and
ENGAGE with
the world.
Pay attention
with curiosity
to what you
can...



Notice where you are, who is with you and what you are doing.

You can go to this [LINK](#) and listen to, or download **E 3**. Or, you can simply follow the pictures and instructions in this book.

And take a moment to acknowledge that each time you practise this...



I am living by my values of caring...

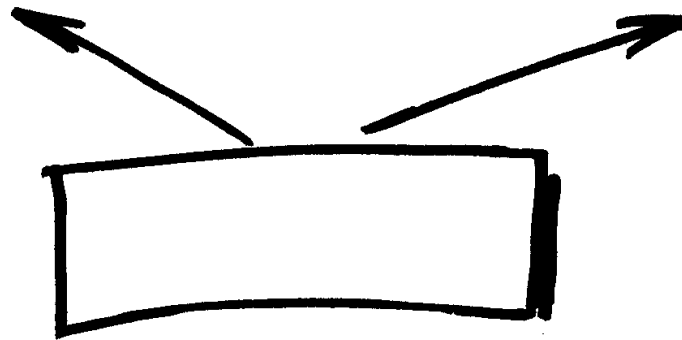
...for the health of myself, others and my community.





That's right! Because these skills help you to engage, focus and unhook from difficult thoughts and feelings...

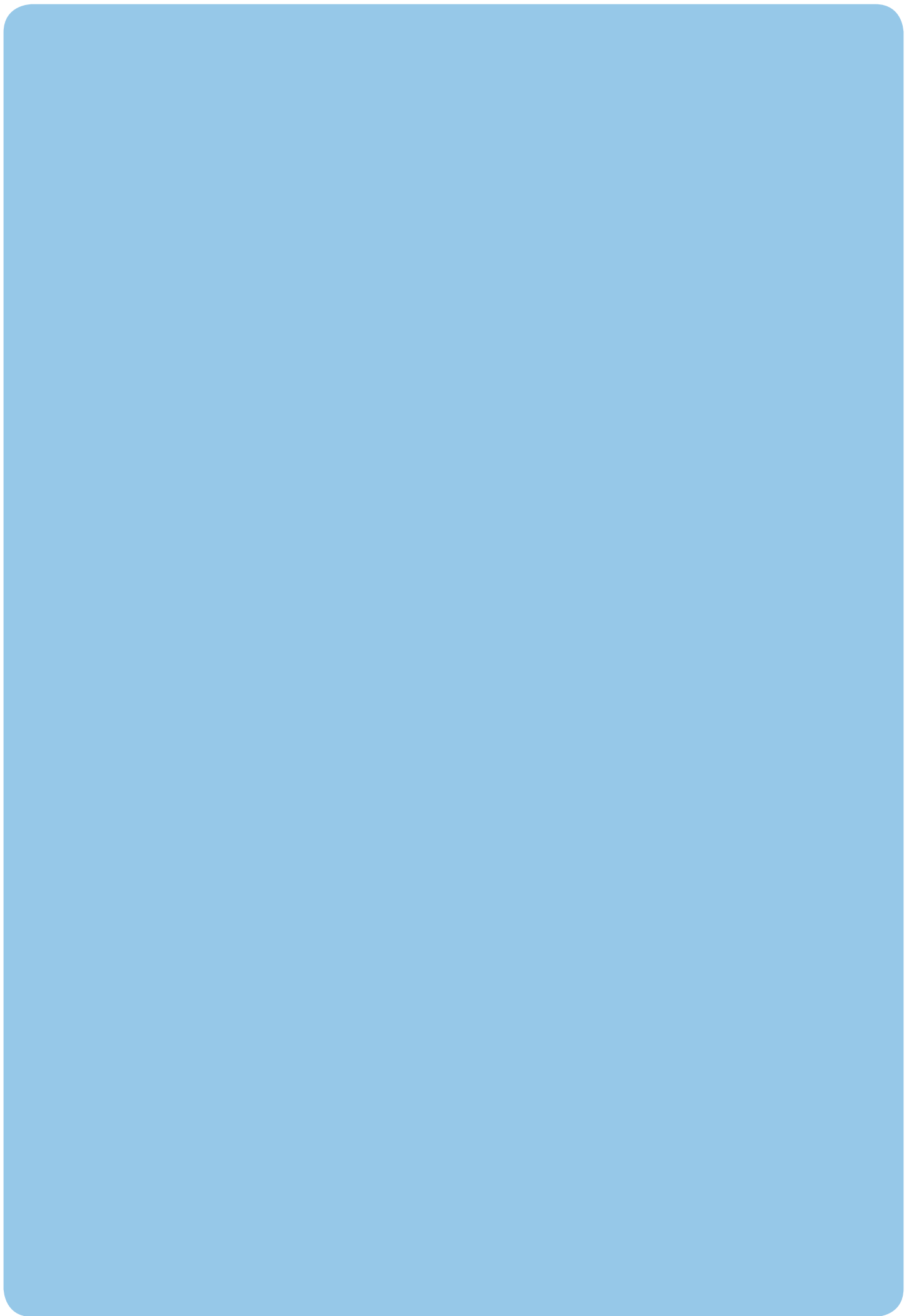
... so you can move towards your values.



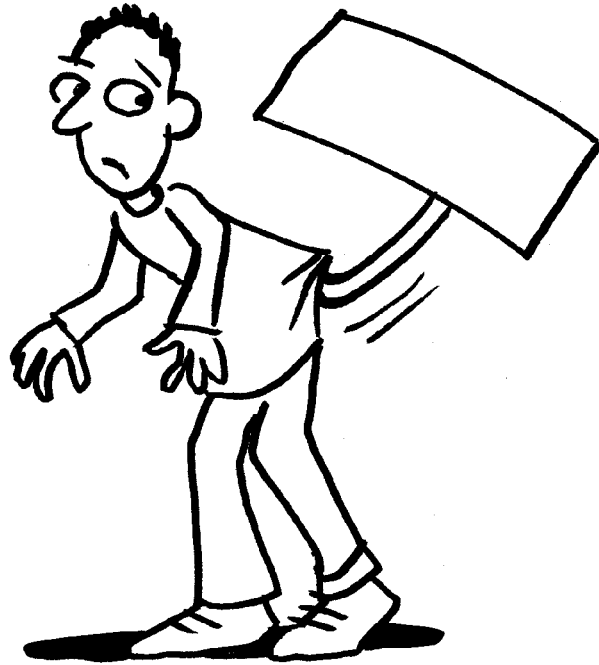
So remember, practise these skills throughout the day, at every chance you get.

It can help to make a plan. For example, think about when, where and how many times each day you will practise grounding. Practising does not need to be inconvenient! You can practise anytime, anywhere, even just for 1–2 minutes. Ideally, take at least a day or two to practise the skills from this section, before going on to the next section.

At the end of the book you'll find brief descriptions of every skill, which can remind you of the key points.



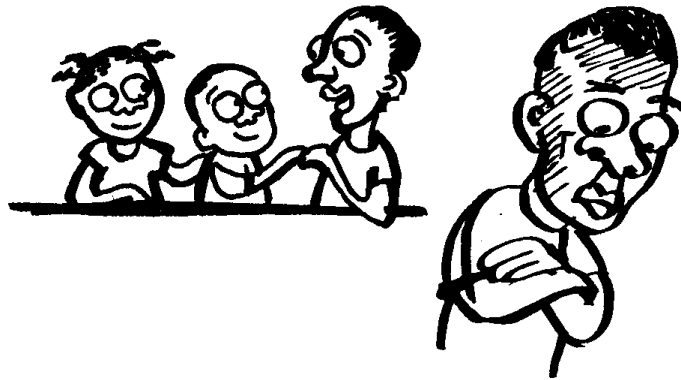
When we get hooked by difficult thoughts and feelings, we tend to make “away moves” – moving away from our values.



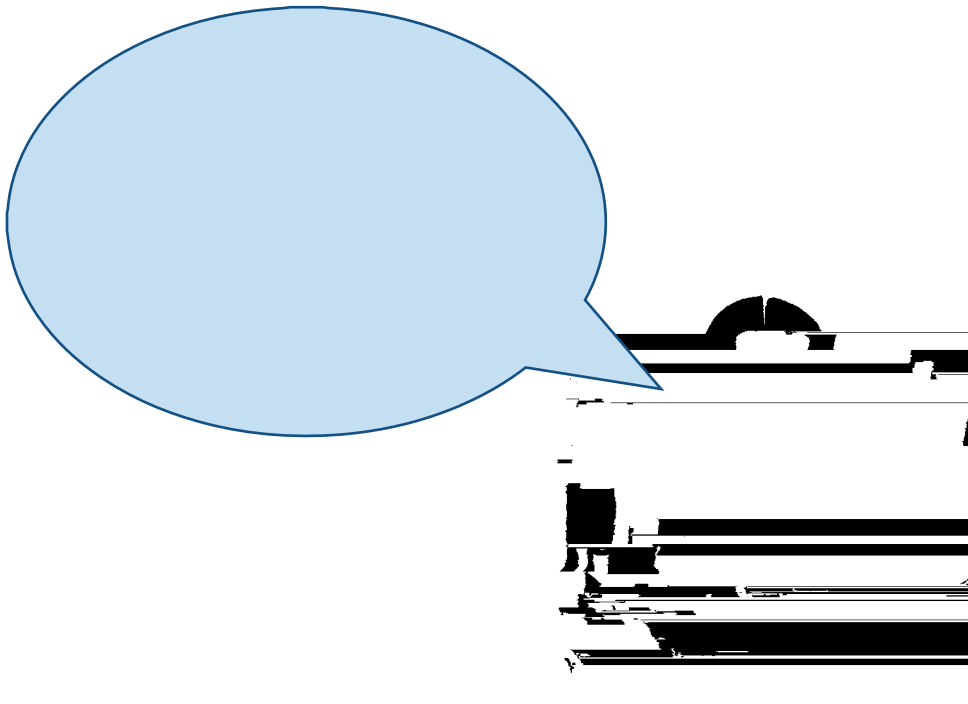
We might get into fights, arguments or disagreements.



Or we might withdraw and stay away from people we love.



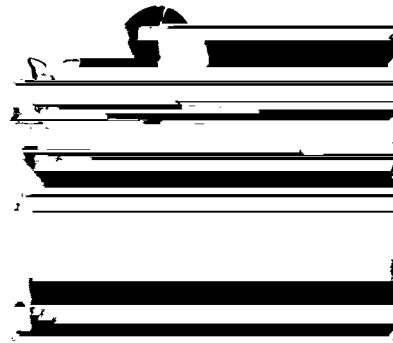
Or we might spend a lot of time lying in bed.





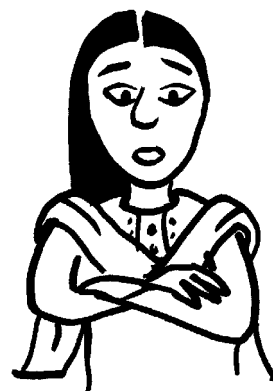
Can we burn them like rubbish?

Can we lock them up, hide them away?



Can we bury them in a hole?

Can we run off and leave them behind?



Most people try at least some of these strategies:

Yelling!



Trying not to think about it



Avoiding people, places or situations



Staying in bed



Isolating yourself



Giving up



Alcohol



Tobacco

Blaming or criticizing oneself

Illicit drugs

Starting arguments

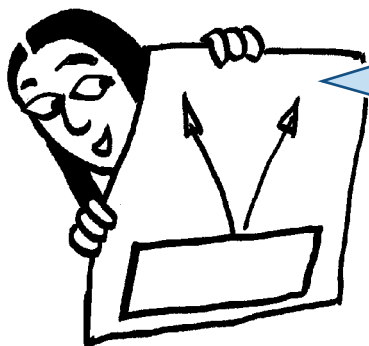
What else have you tried?

Take a moment to think about or write down the things you have tried for getting rid of difficult thoughts and feelings.

Of course, many of these methods make thoughts and feelings go away.

But not for long!

They soon come back!



And how many of these methods pull away from your values?

Most of them!

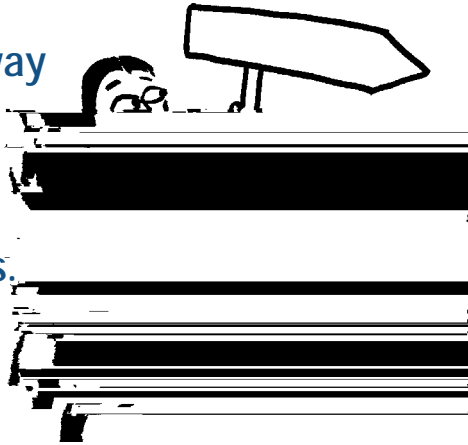


Exactly! So when we try to get rid of thoughts and feelings...

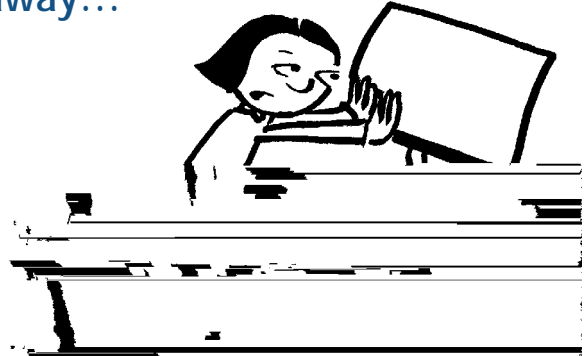
...our life usually gets worse!

So are you open to a new way?

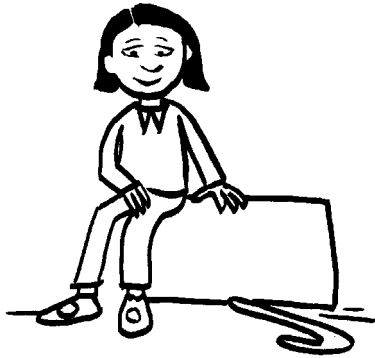
It is a new way of handling difficult thoughts and feelings.



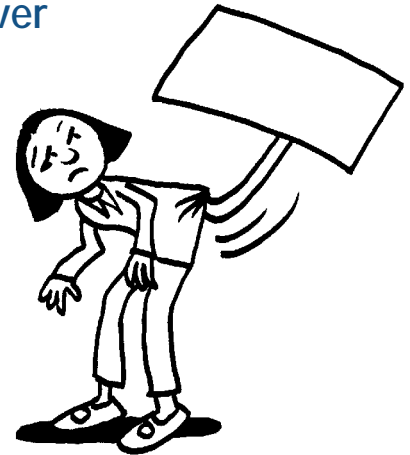
Instead of trying to push them away...



You stop struggling with them.



And whenever you get hooked by them...



...you unhook yourself again.

How do we do that?

I will show you soon. But first let us identify – what thoughts and feelings are hooking you?



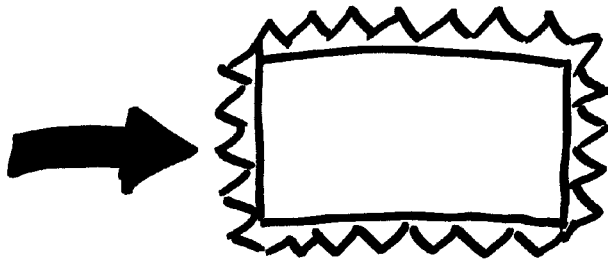
Are you being hooked by thoughts about...



Write some of
the thoughts
that hook you:

A rectangular box with a decorative border and horizontal lines for writing.

The first two steps in unhooking are:



First you NOTICE that a thought or feeling has hooked you.
Then you NAME it. To name it, you silently say
to yourself something like...

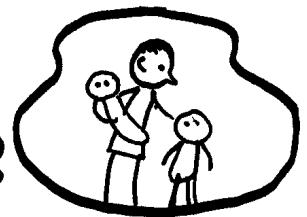
Here is
tightness in
my chest.



Here is
pressure in
my forehead.



Here is a
painful
memory.



Here are
fears about
the future.

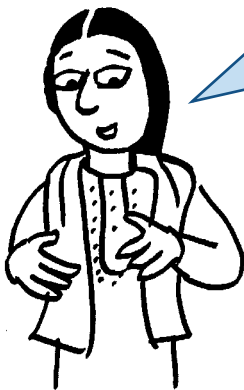
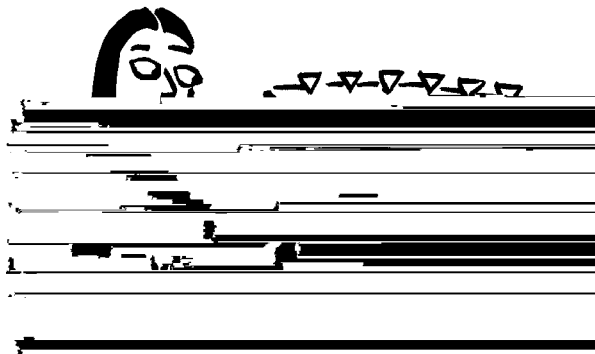






So naming begins by silently saying, "Here is a thought" or "Here is a feeling".

However, if we then add the phrase, "I notice", we usually find it unhooks us a bit more.



Try this now and see what happens.



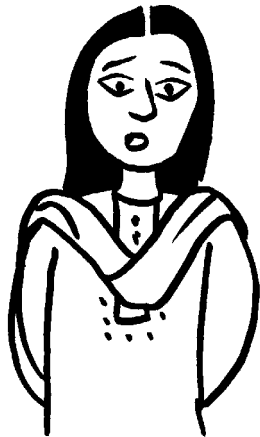
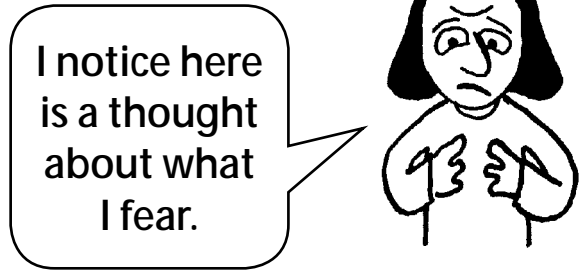
I notice here is a heaviness in my chest.



I notice here is a painful memory.

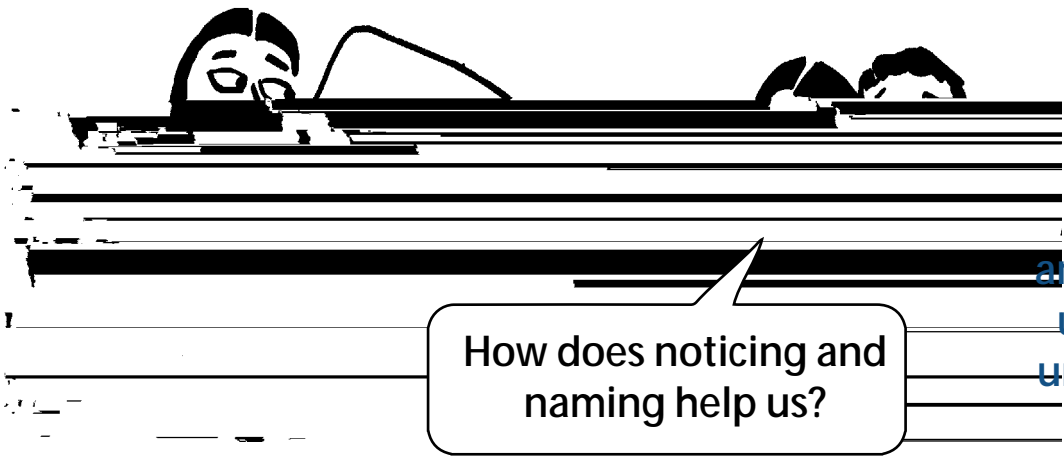


I notice here is anger.



Please try this now before you read any more. NOTICE and NAME a thought or feeling that has been present for you today.

You can go to this [LINK](#) and listen to, or download the exercise. Or, you can simply follow the pictures and instructions in this book.



Well, thoughts and feelings hook us when we are unaware of them.

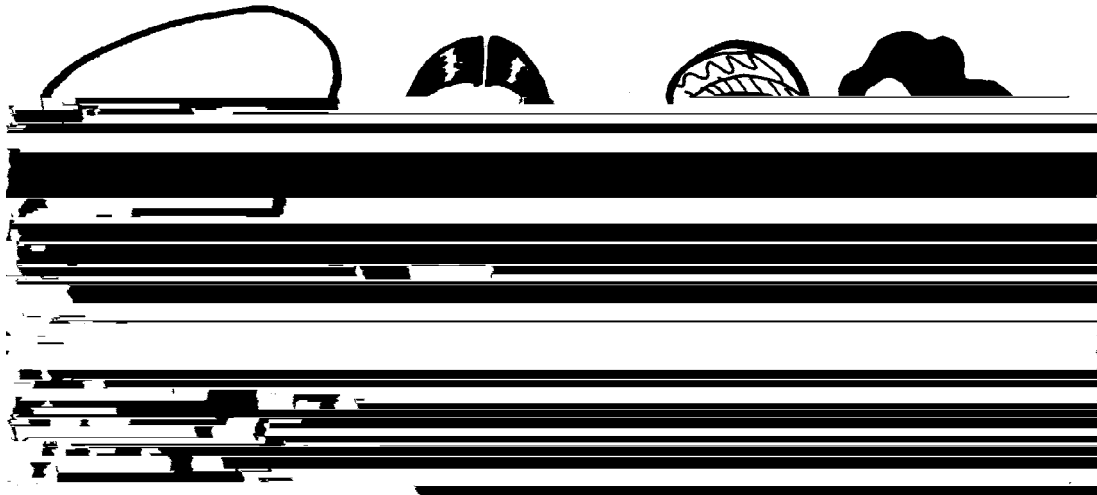
One moment you are talking to a friend, interested in what she is saying...



...and then in the next moment, you are hooked.



Suddenly, you are no longer really listening to your friend.

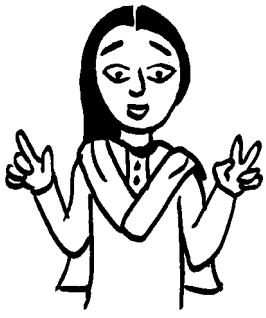


You might still be talking to your friend...



...but you are not really "engaged" in the conversation.

You are only half-listening.
You are not giving her your full attention.
Why? Because you are hooked
by your thoughts or feelings.

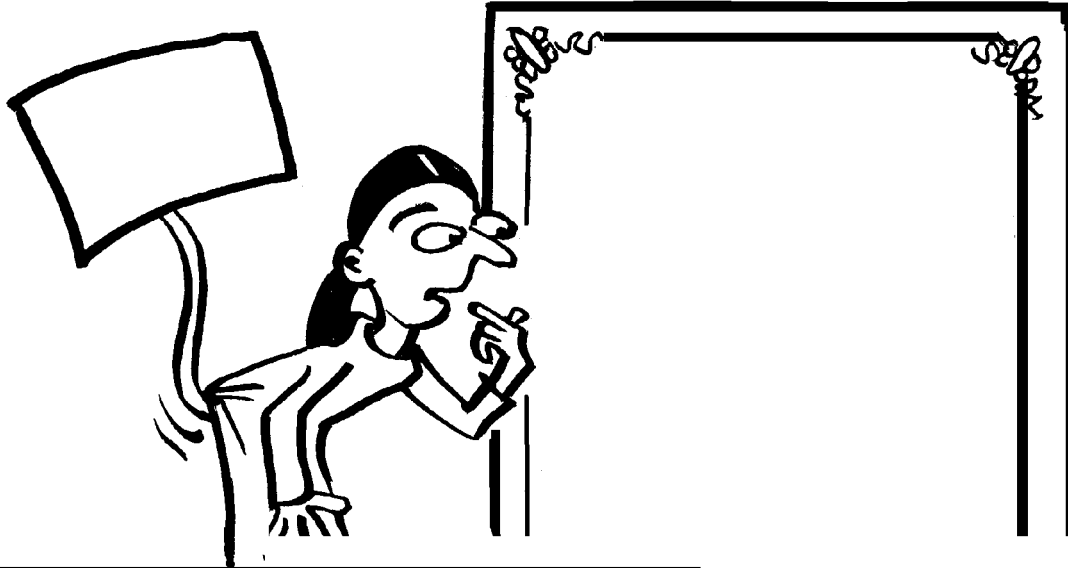






And even with this difficult thought, I choose to act on my values of being attentive and caring towards my children.

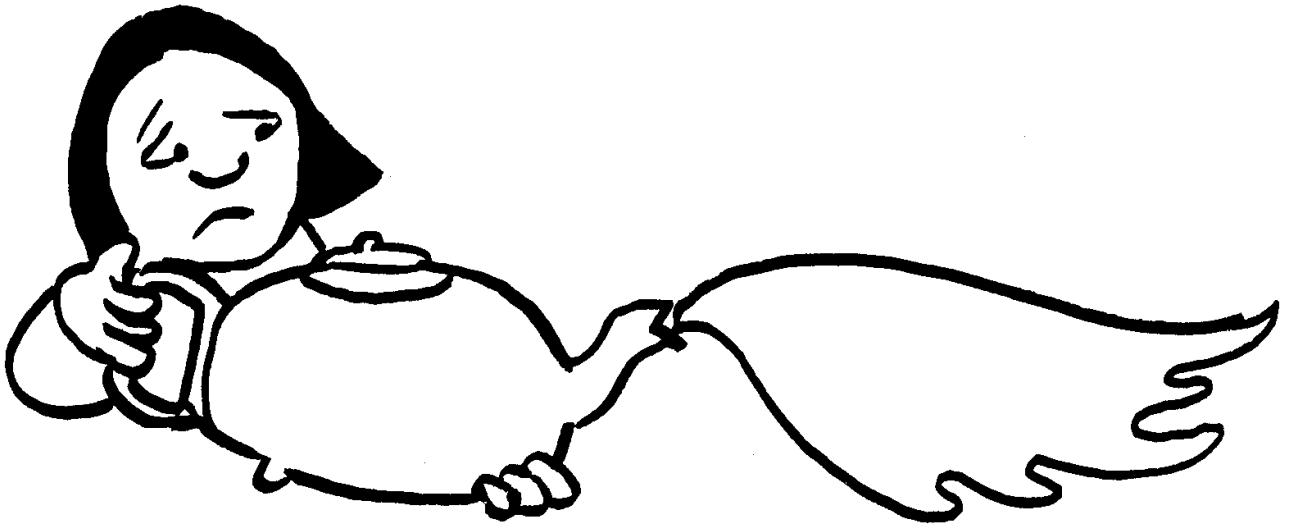
So to unhook from thoughts and feelings...



The more you practise this, the better you will get. See if you can practise this over and over again, all day long as you're going about your daily activities. Every time you notice that you have been hooked, run through these steps.

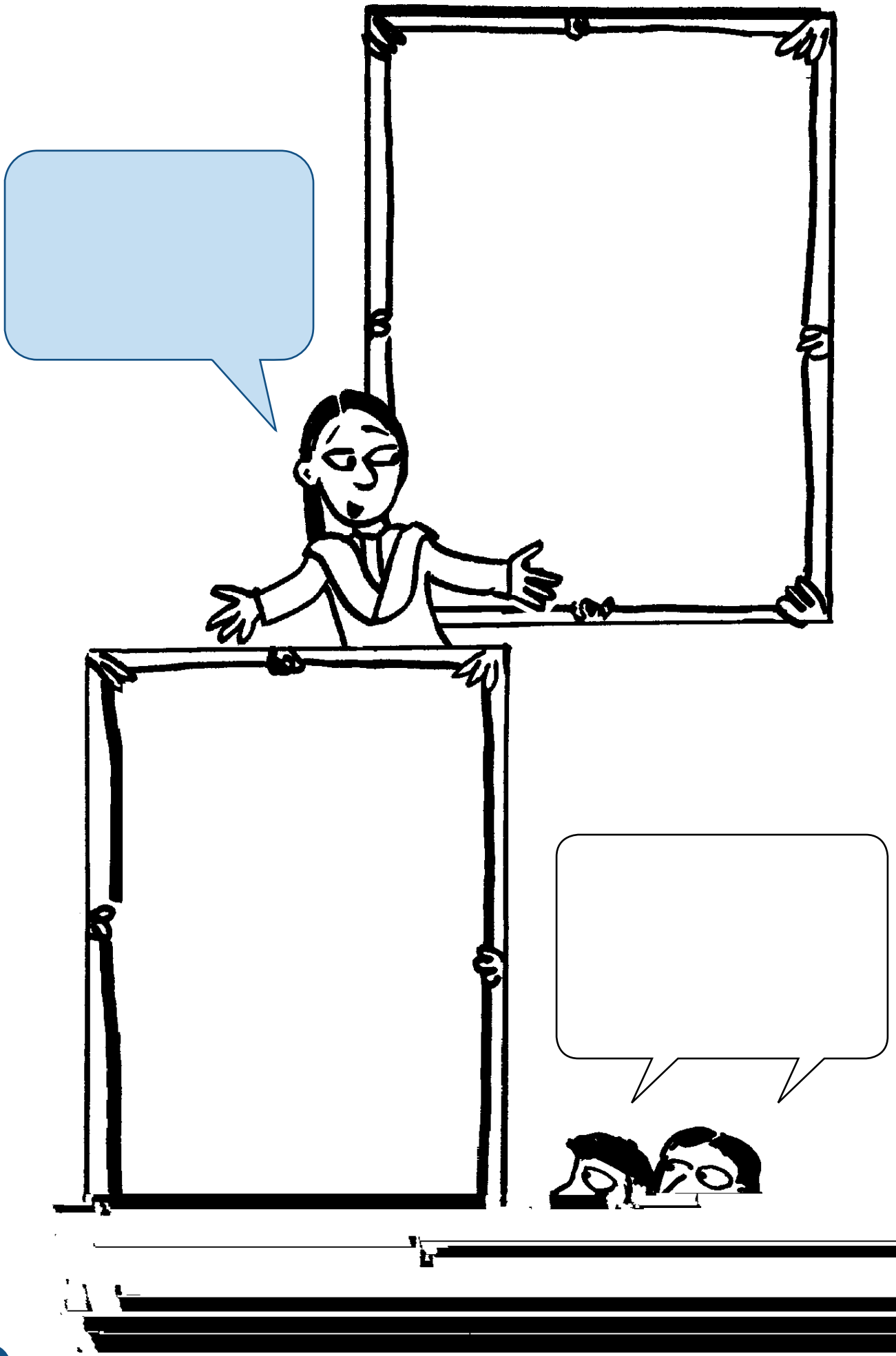
And remember it is natural
to have difficult thoughts and feelings
appear when we are stressed.

This happens to everyone!

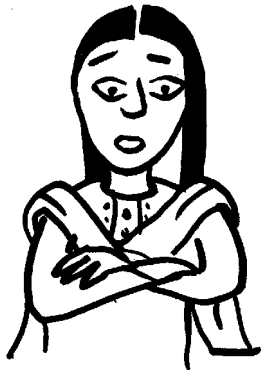


There are many ways
to NAME a thought or
feeling, after
we NOTICE it.

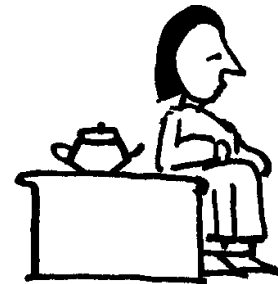




Of course,
some people
forget to
practise.



So set times aside to regularly practise these skills.
For example, in bed, or before or after a meal.



You can go to this [LINK](#) to
listen to, or download all of the
exercises you have learned so far. Or,
you can simply follow the pictures and
instructions in this book.

Think of some times, places or
activities for regular practice.



And whenever you are lying
awake in bed at night, and cannot
sleep, then practise slowing down
and connecting with your body.

It probably will not make you
sleep (although sometimes it
does), but it will help you feel
rested.





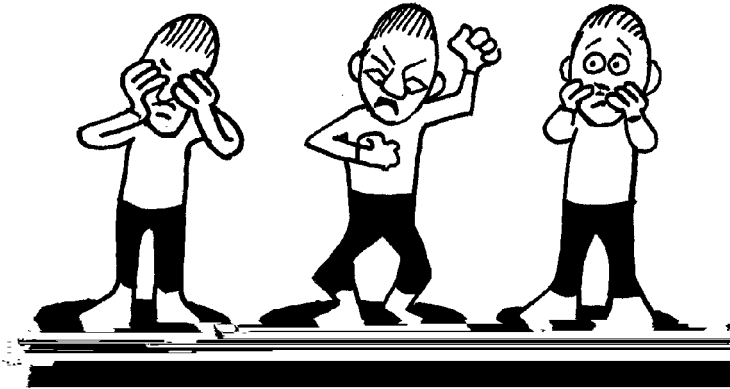
Other things can also get in the way of practising with these tools.

Maybe you feel too tired...

Too tired!



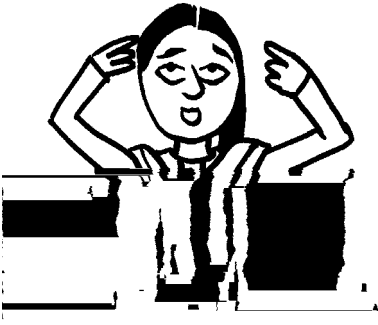
Maybe you feel too sad or angry or scared...

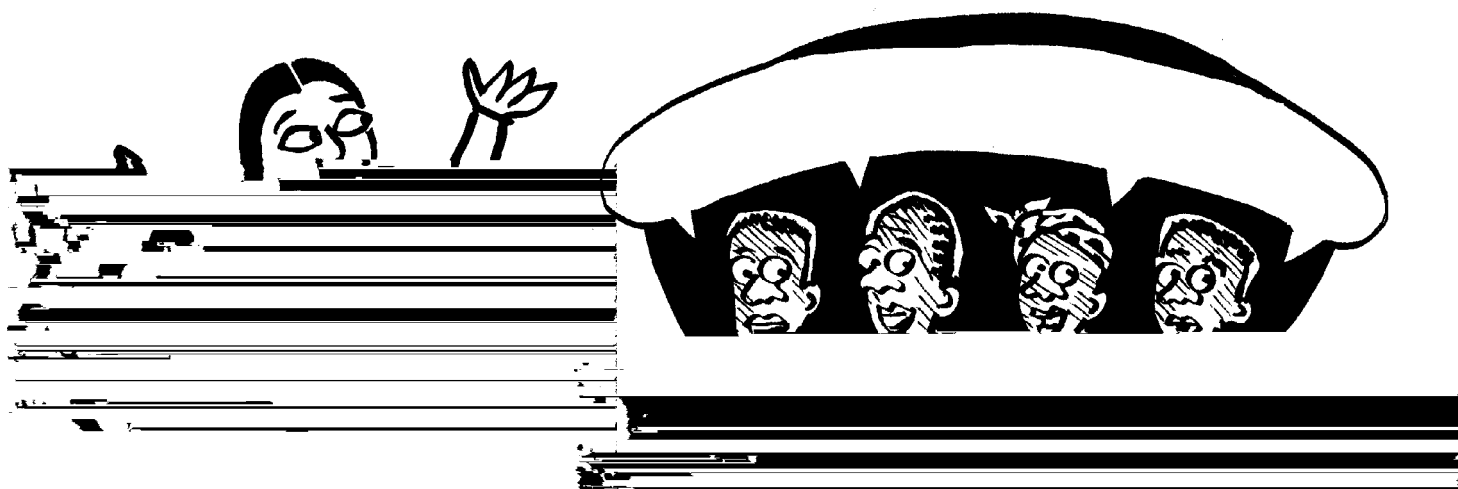


Maybe you just can't be bothered...

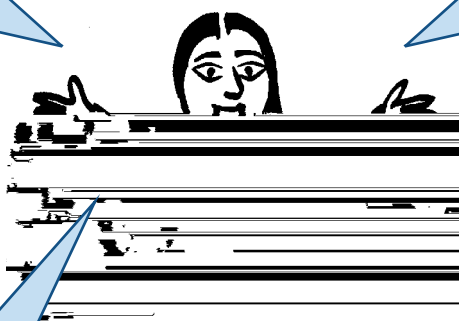
This is useless!







Yes, that's right. And in the next part of this book, we will explore values in more depth.



But before continuing with the next part, please take a day or two to practise what we've covered in this chapter.

And remember, at the end of the book you'll find short descriptions

Part 3

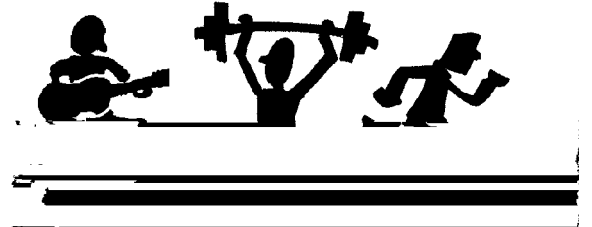
ACTING ON YOUR VALUES





Welcome back.
Have you been
practising
unhooking and
grounding?

Remember, doing these exercises
is like learning any new skill.
With practice, you get better
and it becomes easier.



Now we are
going to look at
values in more
depth.

Your values describe what
kind of person you want to
be; how you want to treat
yourself and others and the
world around you.

Are values
the same
goals?



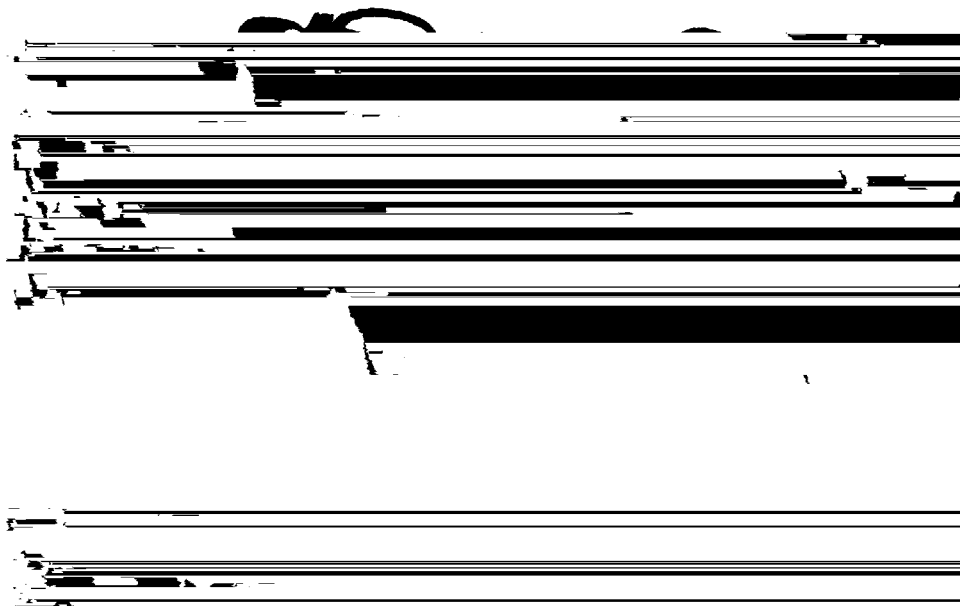
No!

Goals describe what
you are trying to get.
Values describe the
sort of person you
want to be.



Suppose your goal is to get a job so you can support the people you care about.

And suppose your values – the way you want to be with your family, friends or people around you – are to be kind, to be caring, to be loving and to be supportive.





It might be impossible to achieve your goal...

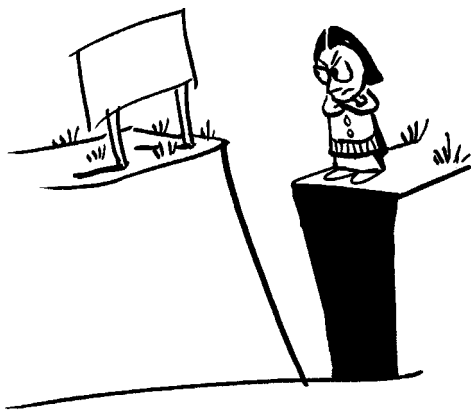


...but you can still live your values of being kind, caring, loving and supportive towards your family, friends or people around you.

And even if you are facing a very difficult situation and are separated from your family and friends, you can still live your values of being kind, caring, loving and supportive. You can find little ways to act on these values with the people around you.



Many of your goals might be impossible right now.



But you can always find ways to act on your values.



Why does that matter?





Because the way you
influence the world
around you is through
your **ACTIONS**.

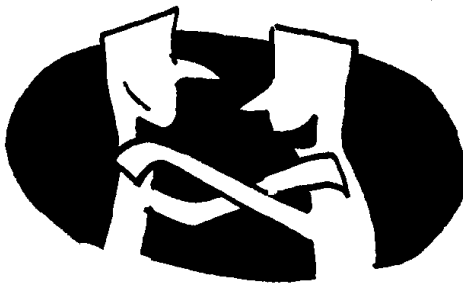
If your country is at war, you can't stop all the fighting...



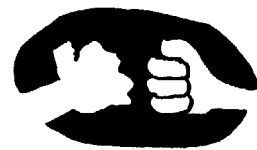
...but you can stop arguing with people in your community...

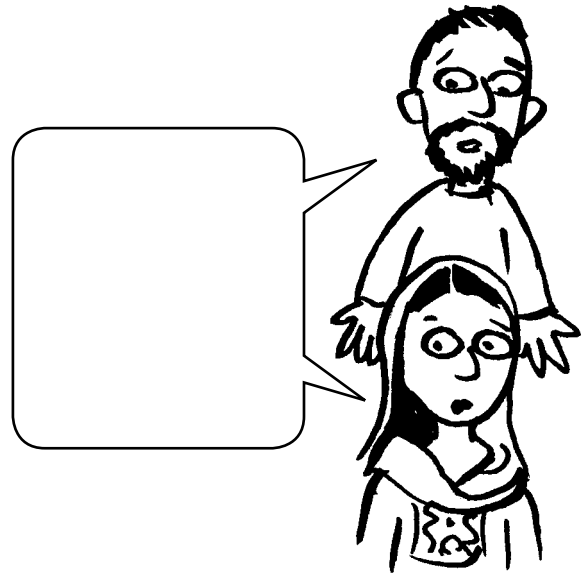
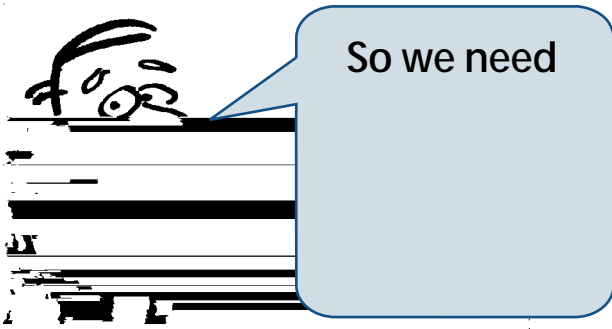


...and instead, act on your values

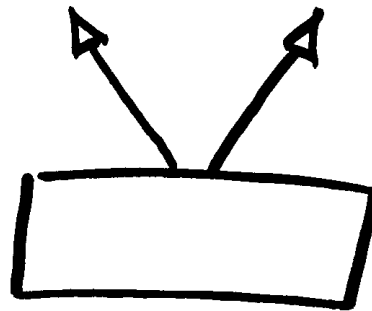


And notice: you may influence the people around you through your **ACTIONS.**





Yes. Are your actions moving you towards or away from your values?



To help you clarify your values, here is a list. These are not the “right” values or the “best” ones – they are simply some common ones.

- To be kind
- To be caring
- To be generous
- To be supportive
- To be helpful

- To be patient
- To be responsible
- To be protective
- To be disciplined
- To be hardworking
- To be committed

- To be brave
- To be persistent
- To be forgiving
- To be grateful

- To be loyal
- To be respectable/honourable
- To be respectful
- To be trustworthy
- To be fair/just
- To be...
- To be...



Now select three or four of those values that seem most important to you, and write them in the box below.

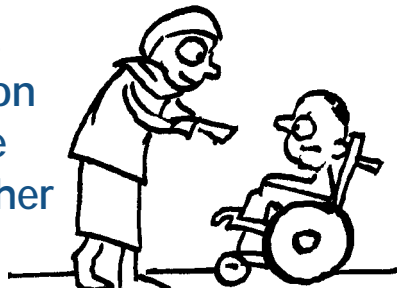
Now we will do another exercise. Think of a role model in your community; someone you look up to.



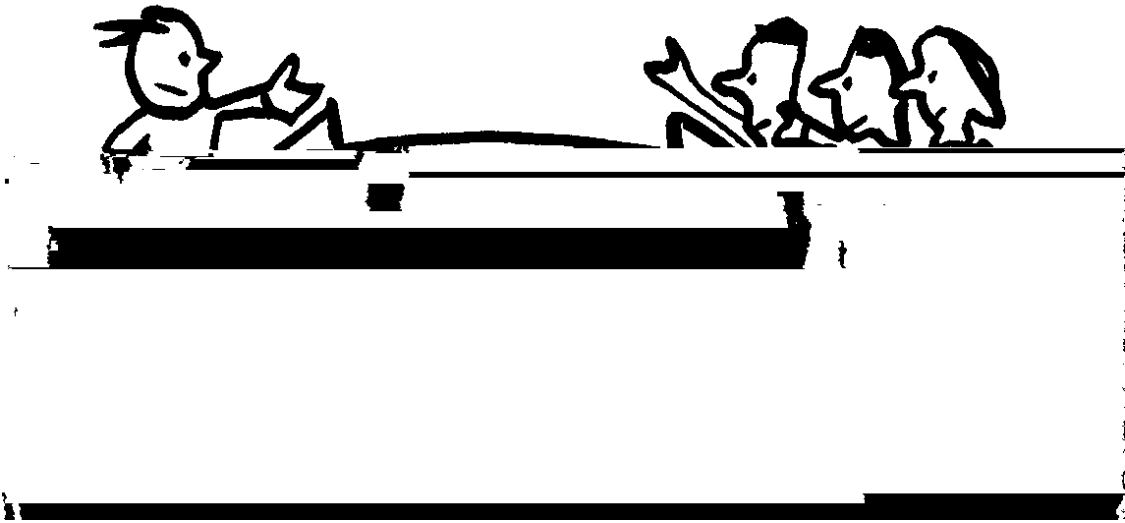
What does this person say or do that you admire?



What values does the person demonstrate through his or her actions?



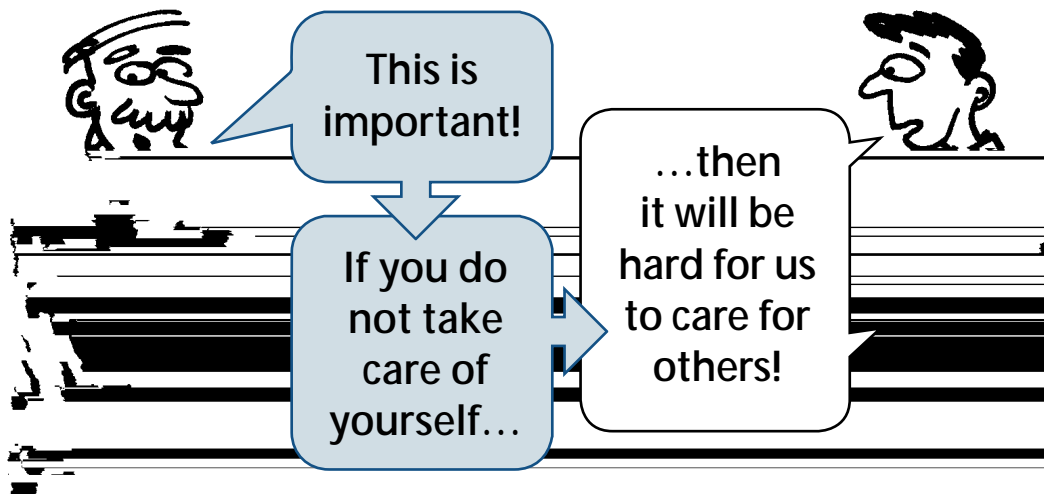
Values go both ways: towards yourself and towards others.



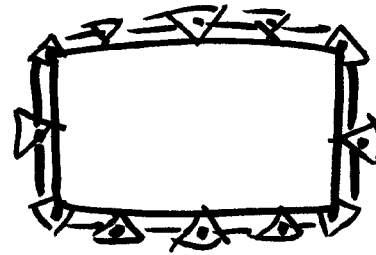
So if your values are caring and kindness...



...then you aim to live those values towards both yourself and others.



So now it is time to put your values into action.



Pick an important relationship; choose someone you care about a lot, who you see on a regular basis.



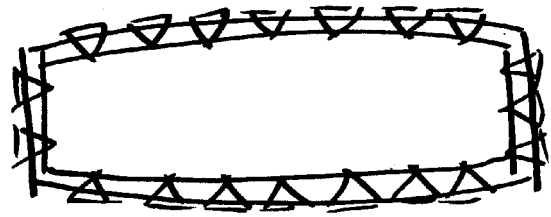
What values do you want to live by in this relationship?



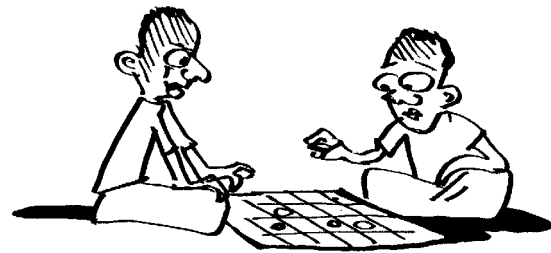
For example, suppose you choose your child.



And the values you want to act on are:



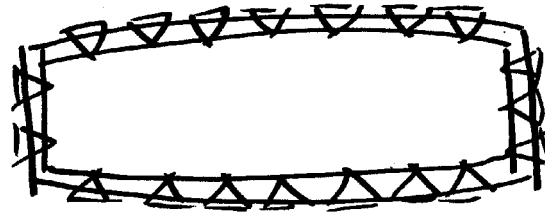
Then a small step might be to play with or to read to your child for 10 minutes every day.



Or suppose you choose a relative.



And the values you want to act on are:



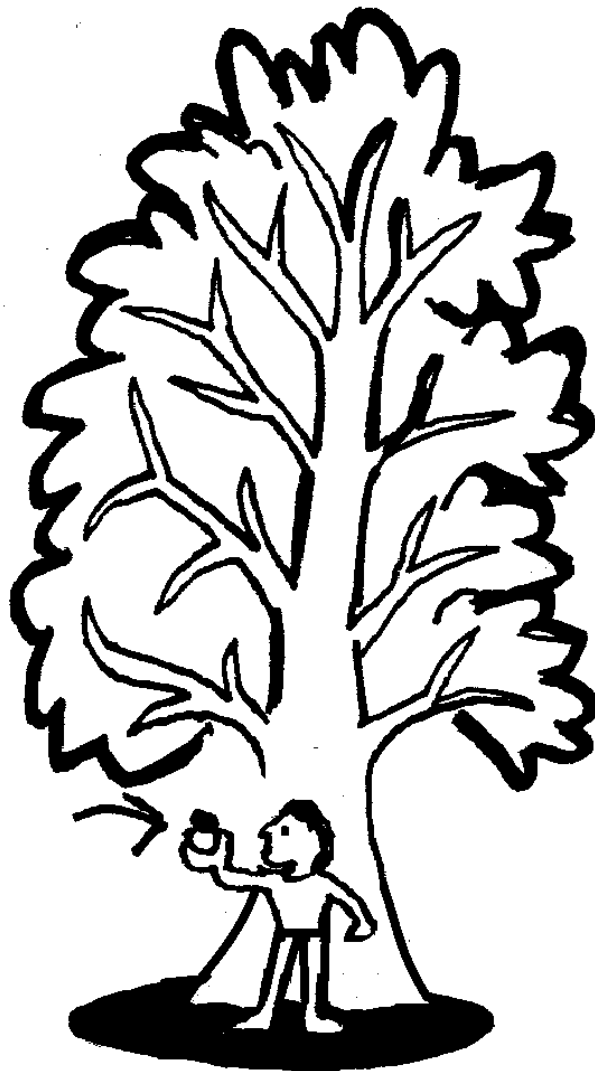
Thank you Uncle, for all the help you have given me.

Then a small step might be to greet that person warmly and express your gratitude.

Remember, even the tiniest actions matter.

A giant tree grows from a tiny seed. And even in the hardest or most stressful of times, you can take small **ACTIONS** to live by your values.

When you act on your values, you will begin to create a more satisfying and fulfilling life.





Think in terms of ACTIONS.
What will you say with your mouth?
What will you do with your hands
and arms and legs and feet?





If your plan seems too difficult – if you do not believe you can do it – pick something smaller and easier.



OKAY!

Please make this action plan now, before reading further. It is important!



Pick an important relationship. Who is someone you care about, who you see on a regular basis?

What values do you want to live by in this relationship? You can look at page 85 for some examples of common values.

With this person, what one or more **ACTIONS** could you take over the next week to act on your values? What specifically will you do, or what will you say to this person?

Does your plan seem realistic to you? If not, choose something smaller, simpler and easier.

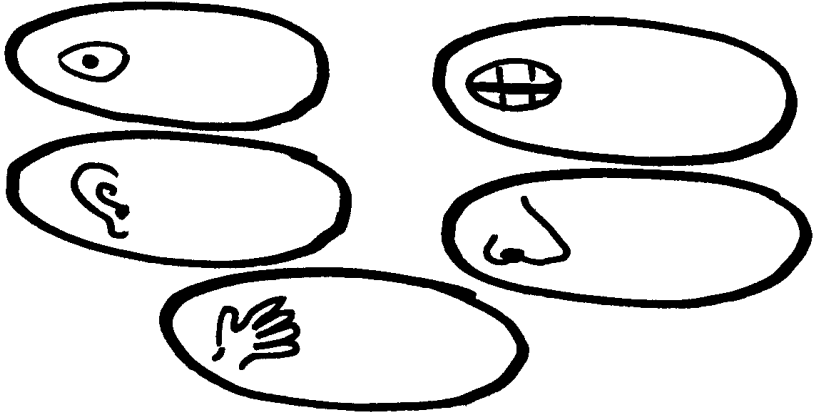
Now notice: are difficult thoughts and feelings starting to hook you and stop you from following your action plan?



NOTICE and NAME them.



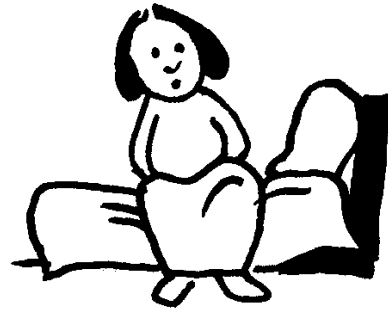
And ENGAGE with the world around you.





Aim to start each day thinking of two or three values you want to live by.

While you are still in bed, or while you are getting up.



Look for ways to act on those values.

And throughout the day...



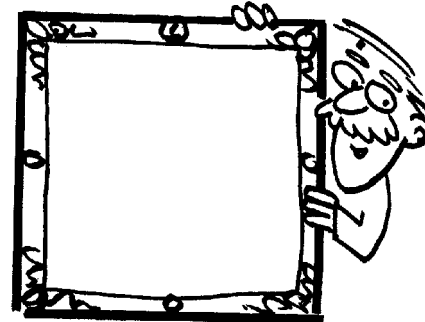
Yes! Even tiny actions matter!



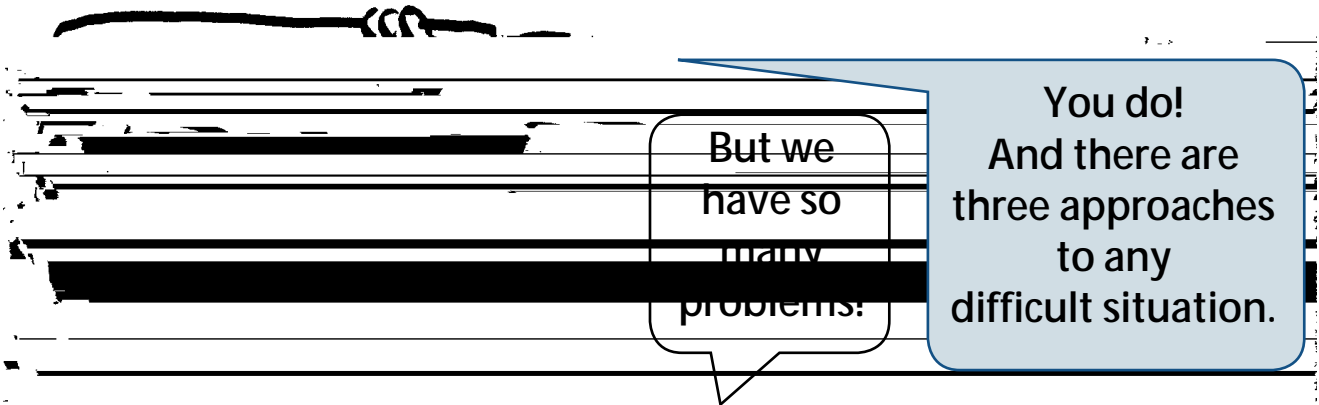
The journey of 1000 miles begins with one step!



This is the next tool in your toolkit.



A large, empty rectangular box with a thick black border, intended for writing or drawing.



What are they?

1. LEAVE.
2. CHANGE WHAT CAN BE CHANGED, ACCEPT THE PAIN THAT CANNOT BE CHANGED, AND LIVE BY YOUR VALUES.
3. GIVE UP AND MOVE AWAY FROM YOUR VALUES.



But sometimes you cannot leave... for example, if you are in prison, or if leaving is worse than staying.

True! If so, you must choose between options two and three.





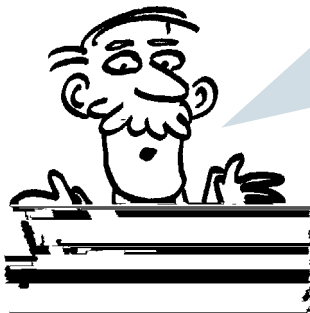
So then
option two
is what is
left.



CHANGE WHAT CAN BE CHANGED,
ACCEPT THE PAIN THAT CANNOT BE CHANGED,
AND LIVE BY YOUR VALUES.



CHANGE WHAT CAN BE CHANGED...



AND LIVE BY YOUR VALUES.



So if there is nothing you can do to improve the situation...

We find other ways to live by our values.



**CHANGE
WHAT CAN
BE CHANGED,
ACCEPT THE
PAIN THAT
CANNOT BE
CHANGED,
AND LIVE BY
YOUR VALUES.**

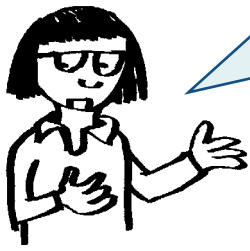
Yes! So commit this to memory, and use it to help deal with your problems.

And now, it is time for some

There IS something you can do that will improve any difficult situation, at least a little bit.

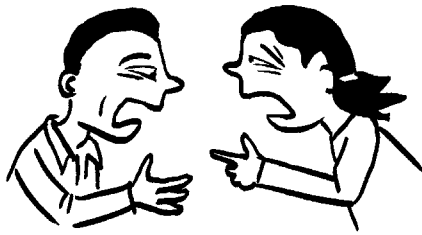
What is it?

Good question! That is what we will explore in the next section. But first, remember to take a day or two to practise what we've covered in this section. You can use the summaries at the end of the book to remind yourself of how to use the tools we've learned so far.



No matter
how bad your
situation

Or in a family argument...

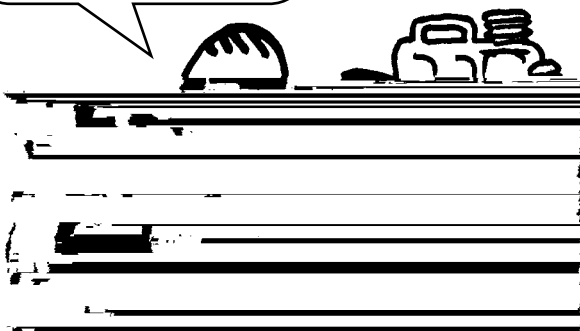


...you are always better off if you
have a friend by your side.



Someone who says kind things
when you are in pain.

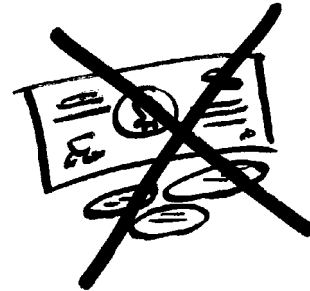
I can see this is
hard for you.
Let me help.



Whether you are in danger...



Or without income...



Someone who is kind and
caring and helpful...



Yet many of us are not kind
to ourselves when we are in
difficult situations.



Often, we
get hooked
by unkind
thoughts.

I am weak

I am
crazy

I am
bad

I did
the wrong
thing.



It is my fault

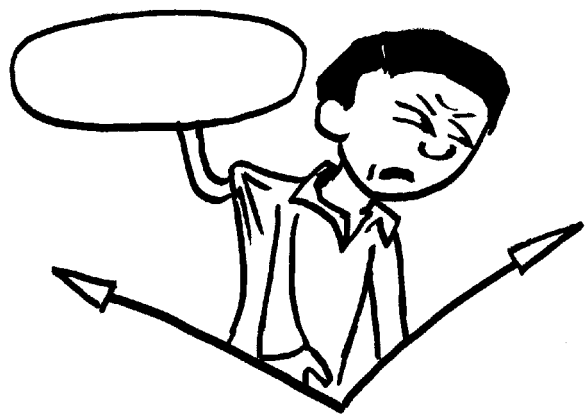
I can
never
forgive
myself

I should
not have
done that





...when we get hooked by these unkind thoughts, we get pulled away from our values.



So we need to NOTICE and NAME them, to unhook from them.

Try this now. Choose an unkind thought about yourself.

I am a bad mother.

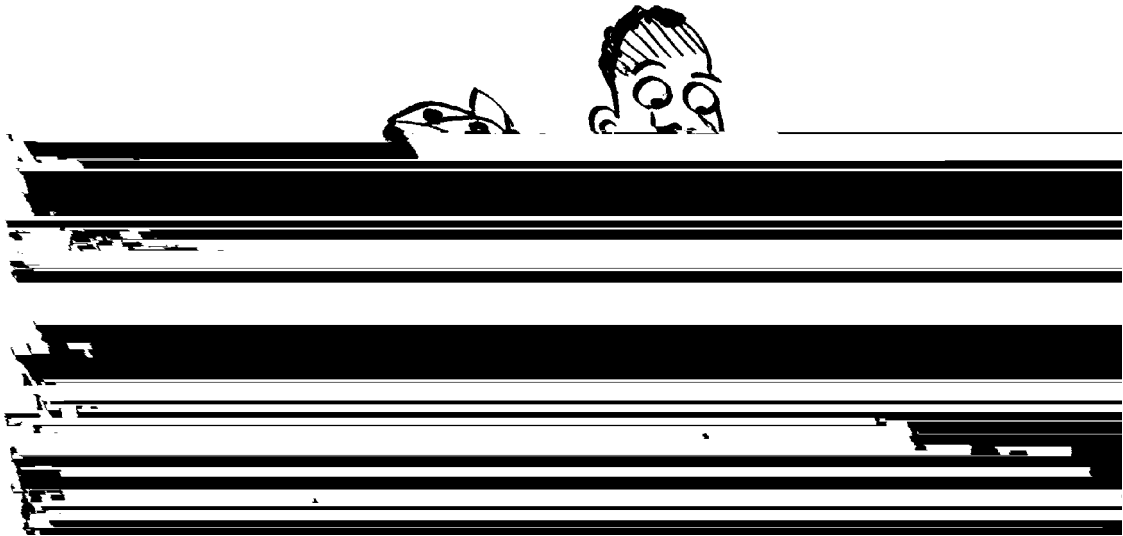
I am weak.



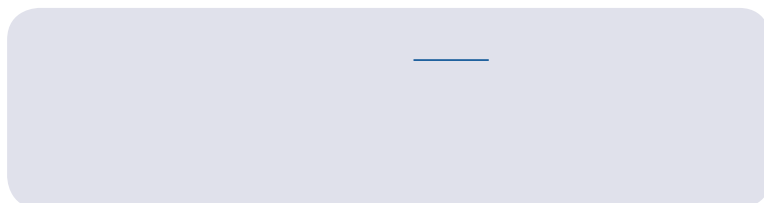
And silently say to yourself...



Then add the words "I notice".



Then GROUND yourself and ENGAGE with the world around you.

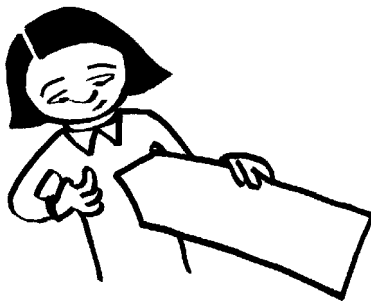




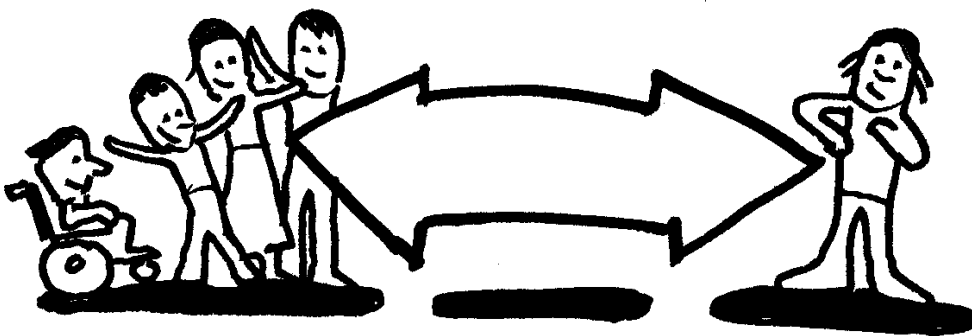
And we should be kind to ourselves, too.



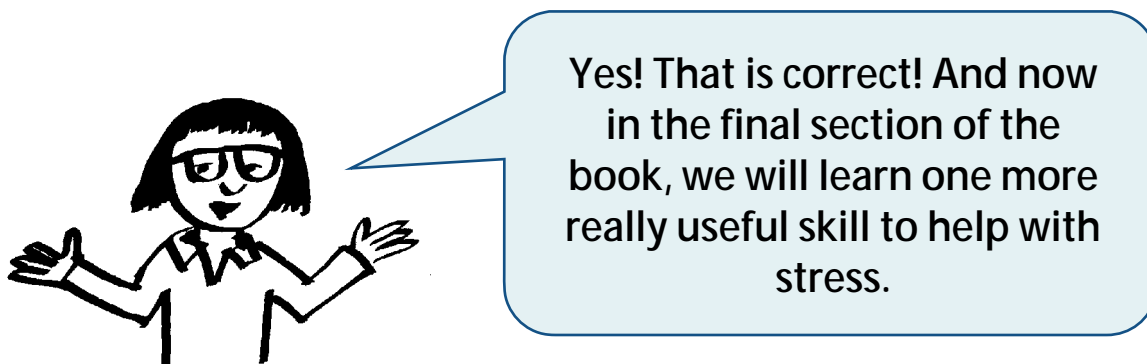
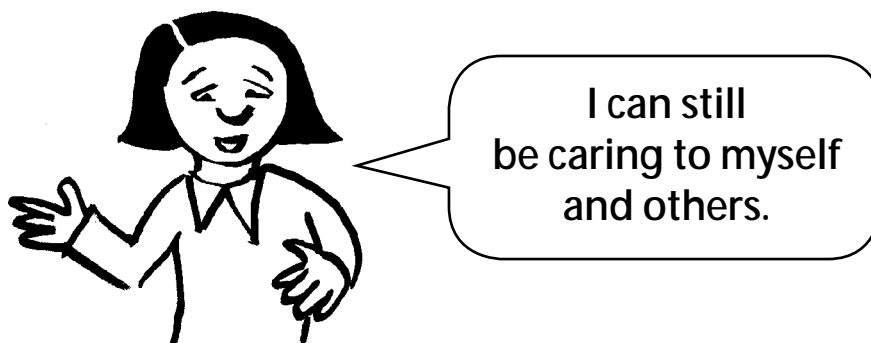
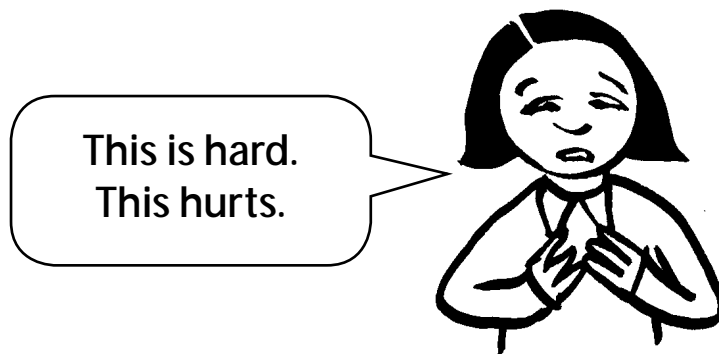
So unhook from thoughts like...



Remember: like all values, kindness goes both ways.

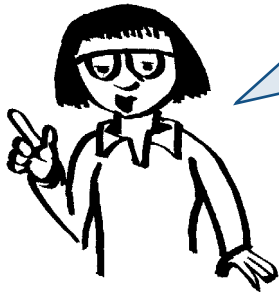


So speak to yourself kindly.



Before continuing with the final section, please remember to take at least a day or two to practise what we've covered in this section. The summaries at the end of the book will also remind you how to practise all of the skills you've learned so far.





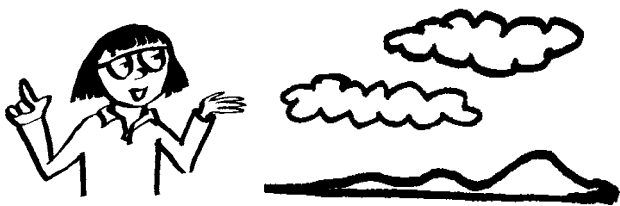
On pages 56–57, we looked at the common problems that happen when we struggle with our thoughts and feelings: trying to push them away, avoid them or get rid of them. If you have forgotten, please



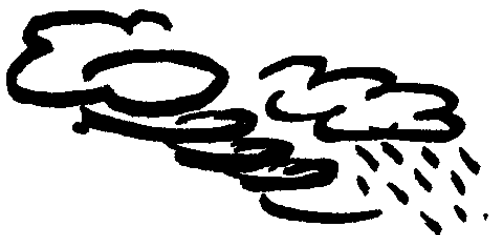
So UNHOOKING is one way to stop struggling with our thoughts and feelings.



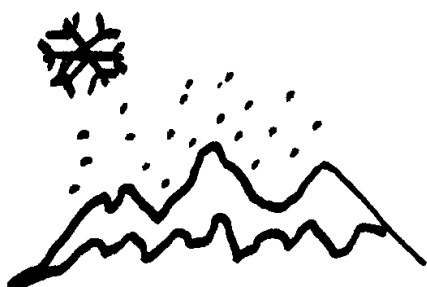
To learn this skill, it is useful to think about the sky.



...the sky has room for it!



...or freezing cold.



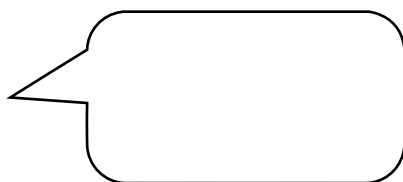
No matter how severe the weather...

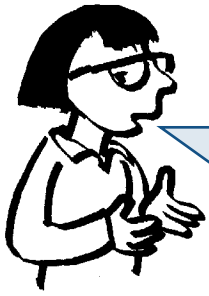


And the sky can never be hurt or harmed by the weather; whether it is intense heat ...

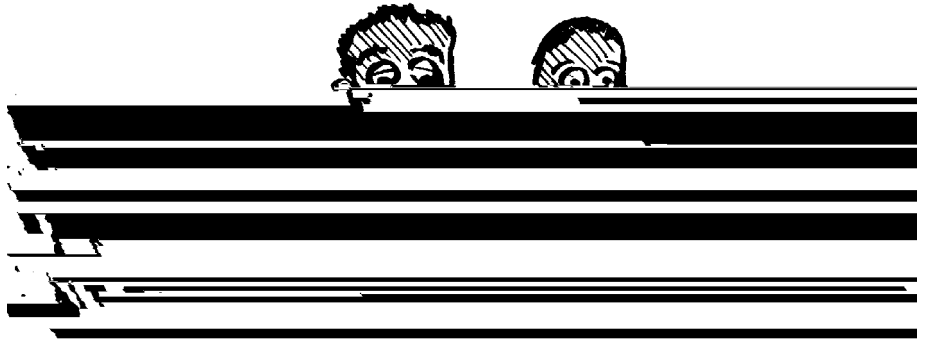
And sooner or later, the weather always changes.

And we can learn to be like the sky, and make room for the "bad weather" of our difficult thoughts and feelings without being hurt by it.





So try this now. First, silently NOTICE and NAME.



Notice these thoughts and feelings with CURIOSITY.

And imagine these thoughts and feelings are like the weather ...



And you are like the sky...

Focus your attention on a difficult thought or feeling.

NOTICE and NAME it, then observe it with curiosity.



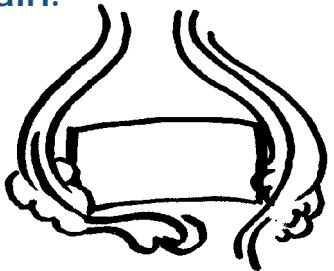
...for the weather.



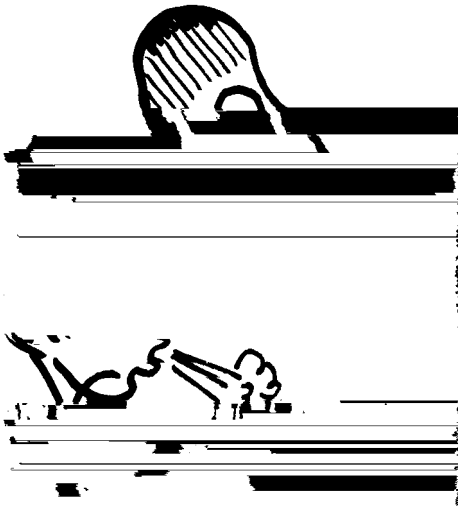
And as you do this, breathe out slowly. Then once your lungs are empty, pause for a count of three.



Then breathe in slowly, and imagine your breath flows into and around your pain.

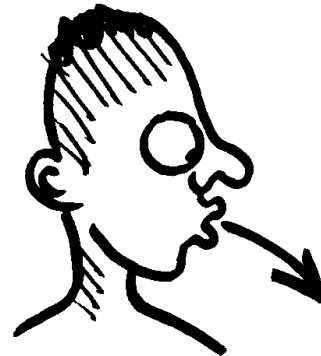


Imagine this any way you like.



Breathing in slowly...

Breathing out, emptying your lungs...



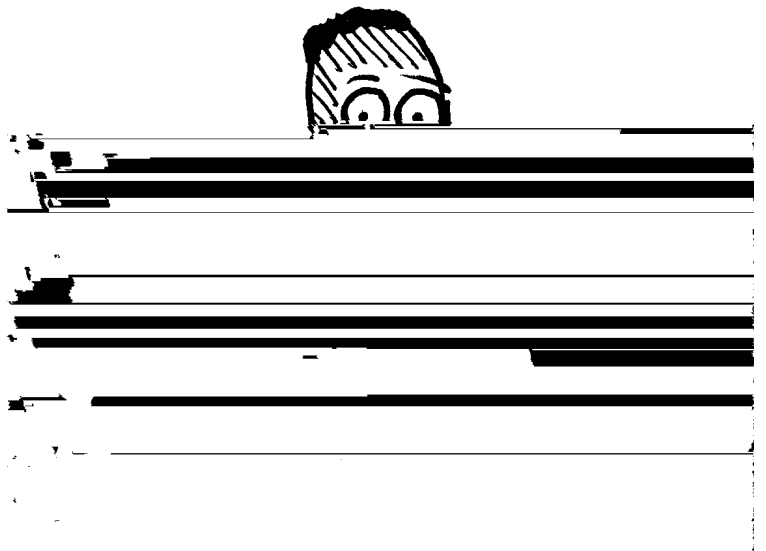
Breathing into and around your pain...



Opening up and making room for it...



Allowing it to be there...



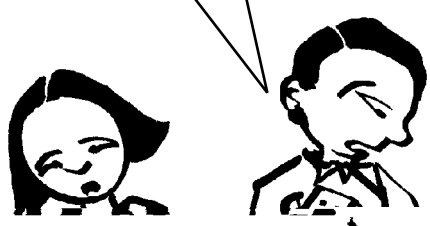


It often helps to imagine a painful feeling as an object.

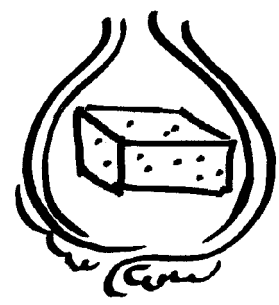
Imagine it has a size and a shape and a colour and a temperature.



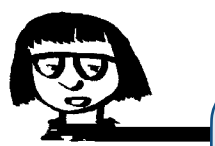
Like a heavy cold brown brick on my chest.



And imagine breathing into and around this object – making room for it.

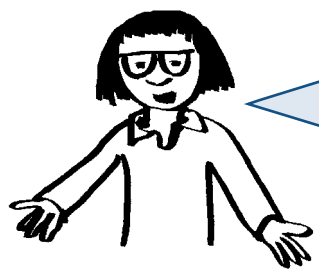


You can go to this [LINK](#) and listen to, or download the exercise. Or, you can simply follow the pictures and instructions in this book.



And it often helps to imagine a difficult thought...

...as words or pictures on the pages of a book.



Please try this now.

Notice your difficult thought...



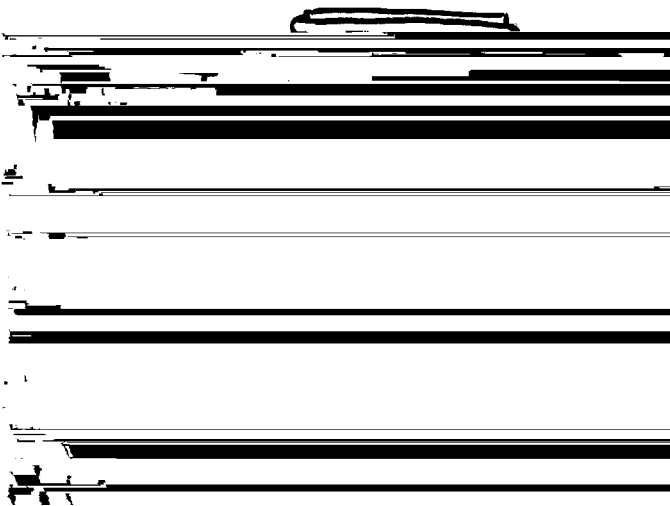
...and imagine it as words and pictures on the pages of a book.



...and imagine it gently resting it on your lap...



... and ENGAGE with the world around you.

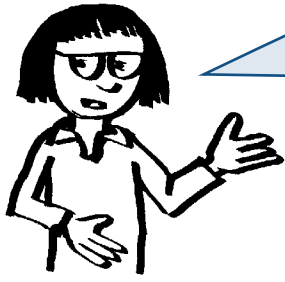


You can also imagine tucking the book under your arm, and taking it with you.



So the thought is still with you, but you can ENGAGE with the world around you.



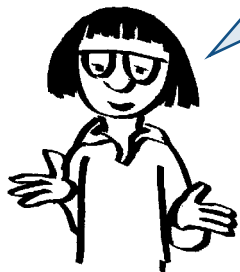


To begin with, this exercise might take a few minutes. But like learning any new skill...



With practice it gets easier!

And much quicker!



So please go back and practise these exercises now, before reading further. You can also practise during your day, whenever you experience difficult thoughts and feelings.

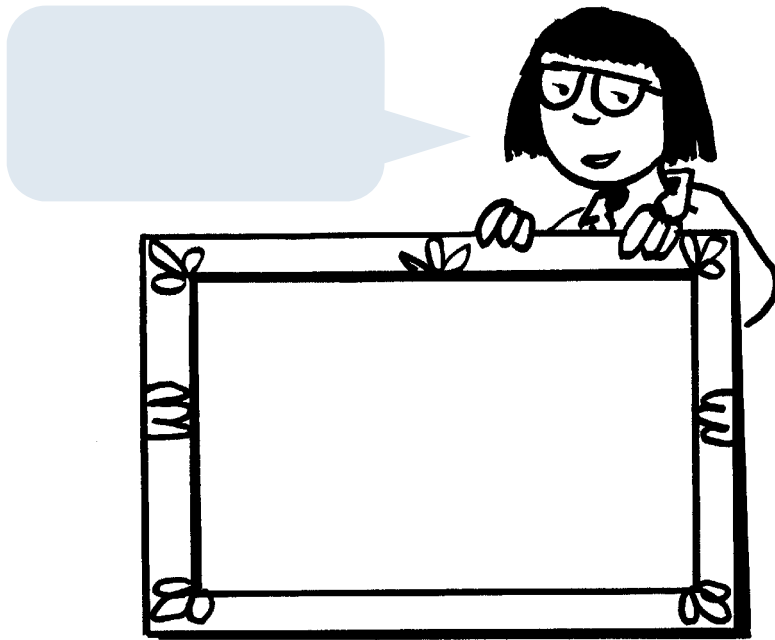
Remember: it is like learning any new skill.



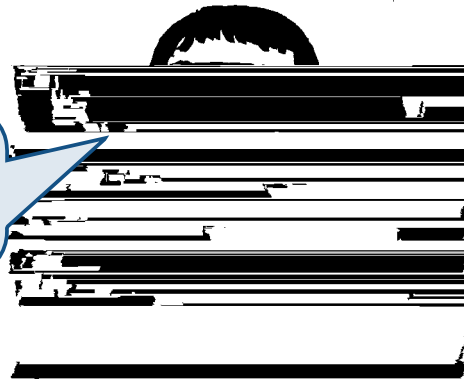
And after you MAKE ROOM, you then ENGAGE with the world around you.

NOTICE where you are, who is with you, and give your full attention to the activity you are doing.





And remember: practise,
practise, practise.

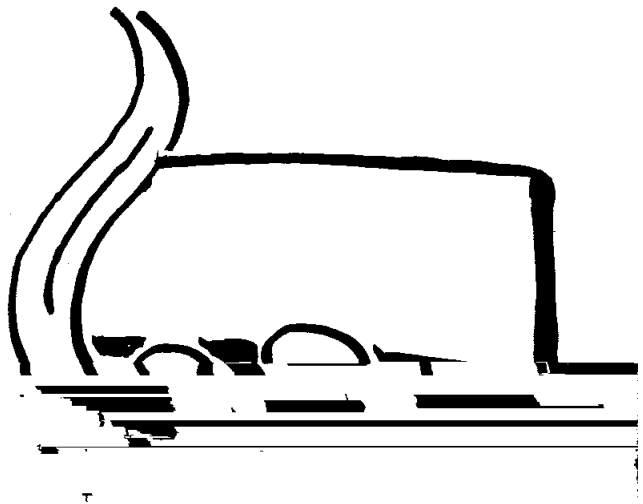


Especially if you are in bed and can't sleep;
you can combine MAKING ROOM with your breathing exercises.

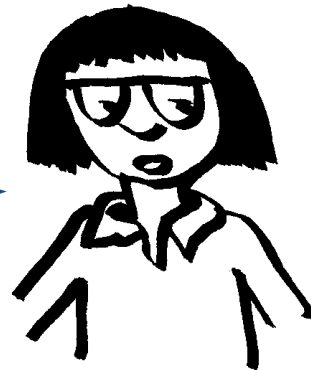


You breathe into the difficult thoughts and feelings...

...and let the breath flow into and around them.



If you feel pain
in your body,
notice it with



Notice its shape, size, and temperature ...

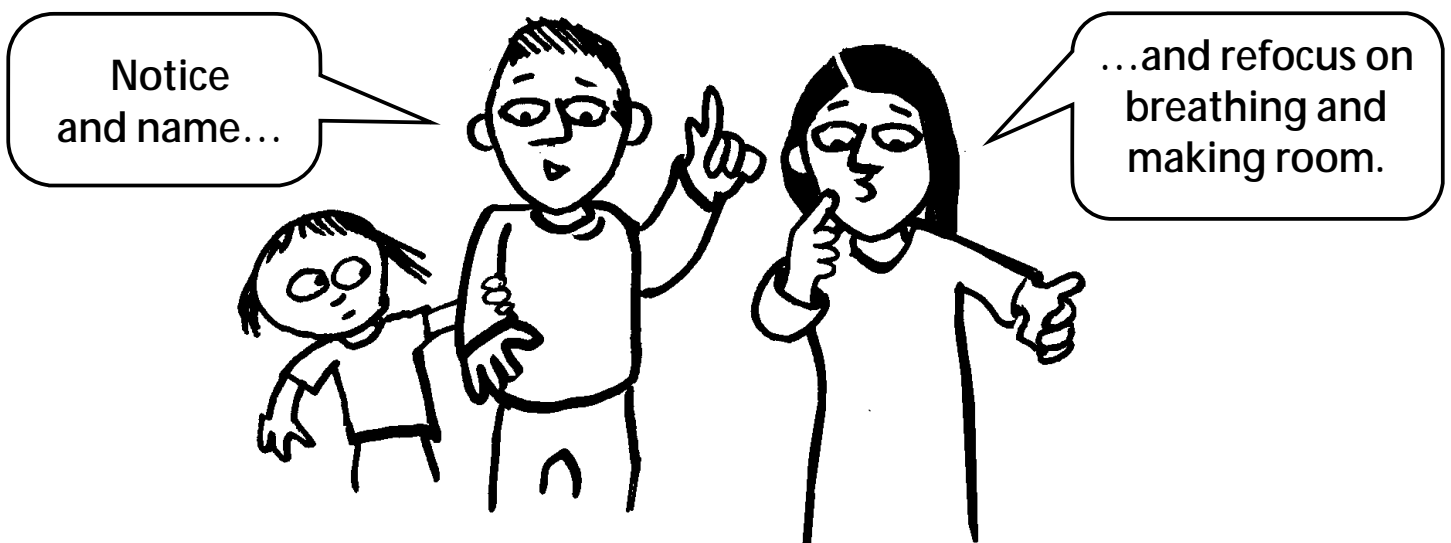


...and notice with curiosity what happens.

Your pain might get bigger or smaller; it might stay or it might go.
Your aim is simply to make room for it; to allow it to be there;
to stop fighting it and give it space.



And whenever you get HOOKED and pulled out of the exercise ...





So now we are nearing the end of the book. We have time for one last exercise.

An exercise in being kind to yourself and making room for your pain.

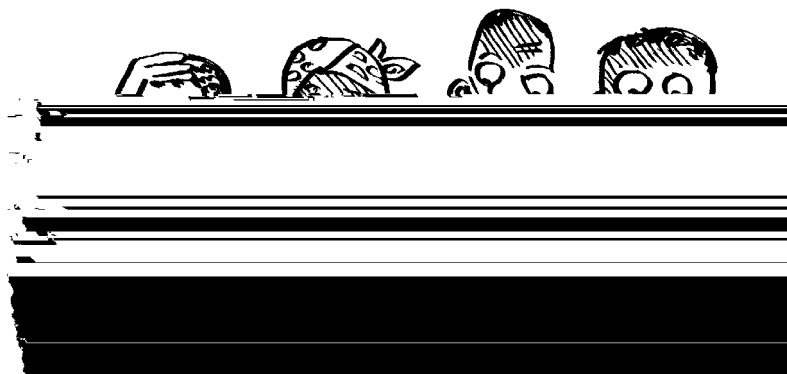


This is a good exercise to practise in bed or when you are alone.

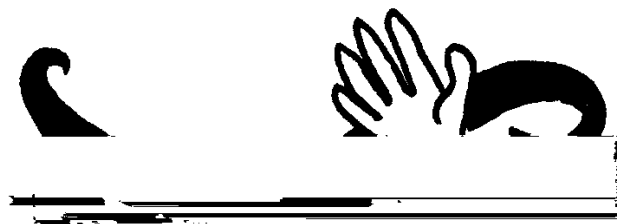
Take one of your hands and imagine filling it with kindness...



Now place this hand gently somewhere on your body: over your heart, your belly, your forehead or anywhere you feel pain.



Feel the warmth flowing from your hand into your body, and see if you can be kind to yourself through this hand.



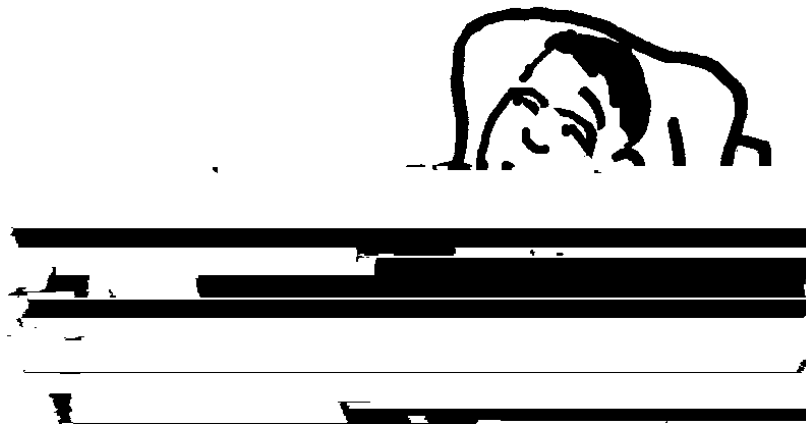
You can use two hands, if you prefer.



Hold yourself kindly...

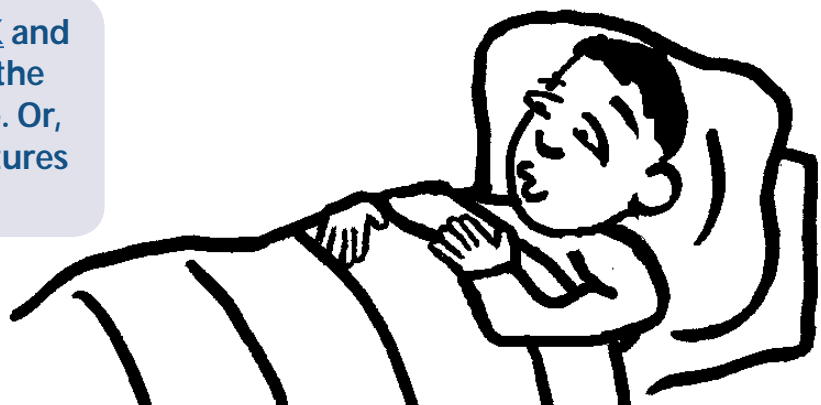


If you are in bed and cannot sleep, it can be helpful to add this to your breathing and MAKING ROOM exercises.



Place a hand over the painful feeling. See if you can be kind to yourself by imagining you are breathing through your hand to this painful feeling.

You can go to this [LINK](#) and listen to, or download the exercise. Or, you can simply follow the pictures and instructions in this book.



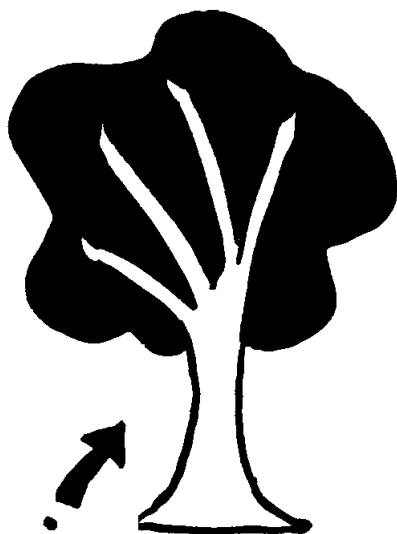
And of course every time you do anything from this book...

...it is an act of kindness to ourselves and to others!

Remember, too: it is like building muscles. The more you practise, the better.



And every tiny step matters. A tiny seed grows into a mighty tree.



And the journey of 1000 miles begins with one step.



Enjoy your ongoing journey!
Try to practise and consider re-reading



Tool 1: GROUNDING

GROUND YOURSELF during emotional storms by NOTICING your thoughts and feelings, SLOWING DOWN and CONNECTING with your body by slowly pushing your feet into the floor, stretching and breathing, and then REFOCUSING and ENGAGING with the world around you.

What can you see, hear, touch, taste and smell? Pay attention with curiosity to what is in front of you. Notice where you are, who is with you and what you are doing.

P a c k e t :

Grounding is especially useful during stressful situations or emotional storms. You can also practise grounding when you simply have one or two minutes available, like when you're waiting for something, or before or after an activity you do every day, like washing, eating, cooking or sleeping. If you practise during these times, you may find that boring activities become more enjoyable, and it will be easier to use grounding later in more difficult situations.

You can download or listen to [audio](#) of different lengths at this [LINK](#).



Tool 2: UNHOOKING

UNHOOK YOURSELF with these three steps:

- 1) NOTICE that a difficult thought or feeling has hooked you. Realize that you are distracted by a difficult thought or feeling, and notice it with curiosity.
- 2) Then silently NAME the difficult thought or feeling; for example:
"Here is a difficult feeling"
"Here is tightness in my chest"
"Here is a feeling of anger"
"Here is a difficult thought about the past"
"I notice here is a difficult thought"
"I notice here are fears about the future"
- 3) Then, REFOCUS on what you are doing. Pay full attention to whoever is with you and whatever you are doing.



You can download or listen to the exercise at this [LINK](#).

Tool 3: ACTING ON YOUR VALUES

Choose the values that are most important to you. For example:

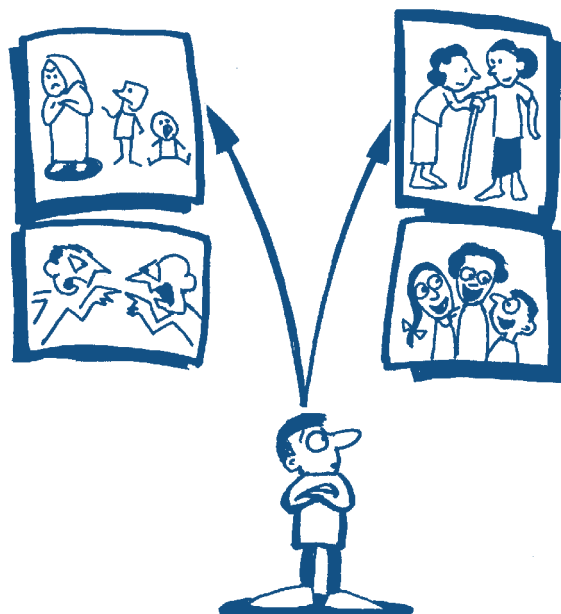
- being kind and caring
- being helpful
- being brave
- being hardworking.

You get to decide which values are most important to you!

Then pick one small way that you can act according to these values in the next week. What will you do? What will you say? Even tiny actions matter!

Remember that there are three approaches to any difficult situation:

1. LEAVE
2. CHANGE WHAT CAN BE CHANGED, ACCEPT THE PAIN THAT CANNOT BE CHANGED, AND LIVE BY YOUR VALUES
3. GIVE UP AND MOVE AWAY FROM YOUR VALUES.



Tool 4: BEING KIND

BE KIND. Notice pain in yourself and others and respond with kindness. Unhook from unkind thoughts by **NOTICING** and **NAMING** them. Then, try speaking to yourself kindly. If you are kind to yourself you will have more energy to help others and more motivation to be kind to others, so everyone benefits.

You can also take one of your hands and imagine filling it with kindness. Place this hand gently somewhere on your body where you feel pain. Feel the warmth flowing from your hand into your body. See if you can be kind to yourself through this hand.



You can download or listen to the [video](#) and the *B* exercises at this

[LINK.](#)

