

# ACT on Social Anxiety

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## MINDFULNESS AND ACCEPTANCE-BASED GROUP THERAPY FOR SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER: A Treatment Manual

Second Edition\*

Plus Additional Self-Compassion Materials

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\*The first edition (2009) is available at [www.actonsocialanxiety.com](http://www.actonsocialanxiety.com) and at [www.contextualscience.org](http://www.contextualscience.org).

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## Introduction

### Background

Mindfulness and Acceptance-Based Group Therapy (MAGT) for Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) is based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT: Hayes et al 1999), with additional mindfulness components drawn from Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT: Segal et al 2002), which is based in part on Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR: Kabat-Zinn 1990).

Pilot work found that MAGT was feasible and acceptable to SAD patients and provided initial support for the effectiveness of the approach (Kocovski, Fleming & Rector, 2009). To further evaluate its effectiveness, we compared MAGT to cognitive behavioral group therapy (CBGT: Heimberg & Becker) and a wait list control group in a randomized controlled trial. MAGT and CGBT were both found to be significantly more effective than the control group, but not significantly different from one another (Kocovski, Fleming, Hawley, Huta & Antony, 2013). The first edition of our treatment manual was used in that trial (Fleming and Kocovski, 2009) and is available at [www.actonsocialanxiety.com](http://www.actonsocialanxiety.com), and at [www.contextualscience.org](http://www.contextualscience.org).

Given these promising findings for MAGT and additional research support for mindfulness and acceptance-based approaches for SAD (see the Evidence section of [www.actonsocialanxiety.com](http://www.actonsocialanxiety.com) for details) we wrote *The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness* (Fleming and Kocovski, 2013) in order to make the approach available to a broader audience. The workbook can be used on its own or as an adjunct to individual or group therapy, as outlined in the second edition of the treatment manual.

### **Mindfulness and Acceptance-Based Group Therapy for Social Anxiety Disorder: A Treatment Manual, Second Edition Plus Additional Self-Compassion Materials**

The second edition plus of the manual covers the same ACT concepts as the first edition. It differs from the first edition as follows:

- It is written to be used in conjunction with *The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness*.
- It presents the mindfulness and acceptance approach in a more user-friendly way, which can be summarized as teaching group participants how to shift from “Safety Mode” to “Vital-Action Mode” (described in detail in the manual).
- The number of sessions has been shortened from 12 to 10; however, the manual can be modified to accommodate group programs with fewer or more than 10 sessions.
- Additional Self-Compassion materials are included in Part III

**Important Note:** It is assumed that the therapist using this manual is familiar with the assessment and treatment of social anxiety. Second, it is assumed that the therapist also has basic training in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. If you are interested in further training, we recommend the official website of the Association for Contextual Behavioral Science (ABCS; [www.contextualscience.org](http://www.contextualscience.org)) for information about training opportunities. Access to some parts of the website requires membership. Membership to ABCS is values-based; in other words, you pay what you think it is worth and what you can afford.

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# **Part I: Therapist Manual**

## TREATMENT OVERVIEW

The group meets for 2 hours, once a week for 10 weeks. There are typically 8-12 members per group and two therapists. Each session is roughly divided into four parts:

**Mindfulness Exercise:** 15 minutes followed by 5 to 10 minutes of discussion (see summary below)

**Review of Homework:** 15 to 30 minutes

**Session Theme:** Introduction of ACT concepts using metaphors and experiential exercises (sessions 1-5) and ACT-consistent exposure, called Taking VITAL Action (sessions 6-10) (55-85 minutes)

**Homework Assignment:** for the upcoming week (5 –10 minutes)

### **Summary of Mindfulness Exercises, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition**

Session 1: Mindful Eating

Session 2: Observing Mountain

Session 3: Body Scan

Session 4: Mindfulness of breath, sound and thoughts

Session 5: Mindful Stretching

Session 6: Mindful Seeing, Acceptance of Feelings and Thoughts, Guest House poem

Session 7: Imagining VITAL Action

Session 8: Cultivating Self-Compassion-Compassionate Image

Session 9: Loving-kindness

Session 10: Imagining VITAL Action

### **Summary of Mindfulness Exercises, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, plus additional self-compassion materials**

**Note:** The materials for this version are in Part III, p. 200

Session 1: Mindful Eating, Compassionate breathing

Session 2: Observing Mountain

Session 3: Body Scan

Session 4: Mindfulness of breath, sound and thoughts

Session 5: Mindful Stretching

Session 6: Mindful Seeing, Compassionate image, Guest House poem

Session 7: Imagining VITAL Action

Session 8: Taking a Self-Compassion Break-Preparation

Session 9: Taking a Self-Compassion Break-Working with a social situation

Session 10: Loving-kindness

**Note:** The following materials are meant to be used as guidelines. Sample transcripts of mindfulness and ACT exercises are meant to be tailored for individual groups.

# **SESSION 1**

Safety Mode

## **Session 1**

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### **SUMMARY**

This is the only session that does not begin with a mindfulness exercise or include homework review.

#### **OPENING REMARKS:**

- Welcoming remarks and Housekeeping items are tailored for a specific group and therapist(s)
- Session structure - Sessions will generally have 4 parts: 1. mindfulness exercise, 2. homework review, 3. New concept/group exercises, and 4. setting of homework

#### **INTRODUCTIONS:**

- Instruct group members to pair up and introduce themselves to each other (“*Say something about what brings you here and what you hope to get out of the group*”) for several minutes (you can ring the bell after a couple of minutes and ask people to switch if one member of the pair/trio has not yet spoken)
  - Each group member then introduces his/her partner to the rest of the group.
- Note:** If there is an uneven number of participants, assign one group of 3 and be sure to identify which group members will introduce each other (e.g. Mary, you’ll introduce Tom, Tom will introduce Joe, and Joe will introduce Mary)

#### **SESSION THEME: Introduction to “Safety Mode”:**

- see below for details
- therapist prep-MAWSAS, Chapter 2

#### **MINDFULNESS EXERCISE: Mindful Eating**

- See Exercise 4.1 Mindful Eating
- therapist prep- MAWSAS, pgs 51-55

#### **HOMEWORK:**

- See “Session 1: Homework” for details
-

## SESSION THEME: INTRODUCTION TO SAFETY MODE



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***It is helpful to use a whiteboard when introducing Safety Mode.***

### **Sample Script:**

Now we're going to walk you through an approach to understanding how social anxiety keeps you from getting the most out of your life. The crux of the problem is something we call "safety mode," a way of being in social situations that can put up barriers to what is really important to you in your life. We're going to introduce you to safety mode by using a specific example. So everyone imagine now that you are at a party where there is someone you would really like to meet. It could be a co-worker, a neighbour, someone you're attracted to or someone you really respect. Does everyone have someone in mind? Now imagine that you notice that person standing alone by the food table, looking lost, and you decide to go over and make small talk with them. If you wouldn't be anxious in this situation think of a recent situation where you felt anxious and use that as we proceed.

**Goal in Safety Mode:** Safety mode is about staying out of harm's way, about protecting yourself from social danger. Social danger is what you are afraid might happen in a social situation. So what might be dangerous about this party? What are you afraid might happen? What are your worst fears? (*group members share fears such as embarrass self, appear anxious, be judged, etc.*)

**Four components of safety mode:** Now, in order to keep yourself safe from those outcomes, there are four main things that you probably do: use safety behaviours, focus on social danger, resist anxious feelings, and buy into anxious thoughts. Let's look at each of those in turn, starting with safety behaviours.

**1. Use safety behaviours:** These are the things you do to protect yourself from social danger, including outright avoidance or staying away from social situations. Let's have a show of hands from those of you who would avoid going to the party? In addition to outright

avoidance, there are many other types of safety behaviours. These are behaviours that come into play once you are in a social situation. They are geared to minimize your chances of being scrutinized and judged, by hiding your anxiety symptoms, keeping you as inconspicuous as possible, and attempting to control the impression you are making. What are some of the safety behaviours you might use at this party? (*group members share safety behaviours such as: hold a glass tightly to hide shaky hands, talk to “safe” people, help out in the kitchen or engage in other helping activities to avoid conversations, keep attention off self by asking lots of questions of others, say as little as possible, carefully plan topics ahead of time, have a few drinks to calm nerves, etc.*) What are some of the downsides of engaging in safety behaviours? (*e.g. don’t fully experience social situations, miss out on fully participating in life.*)

**2. Focus on Social Danger:** This involves paying attention to the things you are most concerned about. **Self/internal focus:** For some people those are the more visible physical symptoms of anxiety, such as blushing, sweating or trembling. For other people it’s what they’re doing (e.g. moving awkwardly, spilling a drink) or what they’re saying (e.g. something boring). It can be any aspect of yourself that you think will influence how you are coming across to others. **External focus:** You might also look out for signs that people are scrutinizing you (e.g. staring at you) or disapproving of you (e.g. frowning at you, turning away or appearing to be disinterested).

What are the things that you would be paying attention to at this party? (*group members share*) What might be some pitfalls of paying attention in this way? (*elicit responses such as: focus on physical symptoms tends to make them worse; may be less likely to notice positive things like smiles or nods of approval; may not really hear what others are saying and lose track of conversations, etc.*)

**3. Resist Anxious Feelings:** Anxious feelings consist of the basic emotion of fear and the physical sensations that go along with it, such as palpitations and muscle tension (& those we just talked about that you focus on). Most people who are socially anxious are not OK with feeling that way. They not only focus on anxious feelings, but also resist, struggle with, and try to control fear. That’s often where safety behaviours come into play. What about you at this party? Are you okay with feeling anxious, or are you resisting it? (*group members share*)

**4. Buy into Anxious Thoughts:** As you imagine yourself at the party what are the thoughts going through your mind? (*As group members share thoughts identify types of thoughts for a few of them. Examples are: fortune telling - “You’re going to mess up”, mindreading - “they think I’m weird because I’m not saying anything”, etc.*)

As you think these thoughts at the party, how are you relating to them? Are you getting caught up in your thoughts, buying into them, and doing what they tell you to do? We call that being fused with your thoughts.

**Team Interaction:** We want to point out something that you may have already noticed - that focusing on danger, resisting anxious feelings, and buying into anxious thoughts all work together like a team to feed your safety behaviors. (*Use prior responses from a group member to demonstrate this, similar to the example in MAWSAS, p. 28: “Emily’s attention zooms in on her shaky voice the moment she utters a word during conversations [paying attention to social*

*[danger]; she realizes it's "just nerves" but doesn't find this acceptable [resisting anxious feelings]; her mind jumps in (You sound nervous; they think you're weird), and she buys into what it's telling her [fusing with anxious thoughts]; she tries to steady her voice and hides it by speaking softly and slowly [using safety behaviors]; at times, she gets so wrapped up in struggling with her shaky voice that she loses track of conversations and feels even more embarrassed [costs of keeping safe].")*

Now that we've walked you through safety mode, we're going to move on and mention the alternative, vital-action mode.

### **Vital-Action Mode**

In contrast to safety mode, the goal in vital-action mode is to live a life that really matters to you. In the remaining sessions of the group, we will teach you the skills necessary for shifting from safety mode to vital-action mode. We will help you get in touch with your values and goals, stay tuned to the present moment, bring acceptance and compassion to difficult feelings, and gain distance from your worries, along with other strategies. We're going to start that process right now with our first mindfulness exercise.

First, the definition we'll be using:

Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way:  
on purpose,  
in the present moment,  
and nonjudgmentally.

From *Wherever You Go There You Are* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1994, Hyperion, New York, page 4.

### **MINDFULNESS EXERCISE: Mindful Eating**



## Exercise 4.1 Mindful Eating

Start by placing a raisin in the palm of one hand.

Next, see if you can set your intention to bring a nonjudging attitude to your moment-to-moment awareness of the raisin. Whenever you lose sight of that intention during the exercise, see if you can recommit to paying mindful attention to the raisin.

Now, focus on seeing the raisin as if you've never seen one before, using your "beginner's mind"—noticing the shape, size, and color of the raisin—turning it around in your fingers, noticing the folds and where the surface reflects light, bringing an attitude of curiosity to seeing all aspects of the raisin. Whenever you notice thoughts about the raisin, such as *It's so wrinkly* or *I wish I had a bigger one*, or you notice yourself thinking about anything other than the raisin, gently redirect your attention to seeing the raisin, allowing your experience to be, exactly as it is, in this moment.

Next, focus on feeling the texture of the raisin between your fingers, noticing any softness, hardness, coarseness, smoothness, stickiness, or any other aspect of texture, simply being with your experience of feeling this raisin.

Now, holding the raisin below your nose, pay attention to smelling it, noticing the qualities of its aroma. Is it sweet, sour, musty? Is the aroma intense or faint, or is there no scent at all? If you notice your mind judging the smell, such as with thoughts like *The sweetness is lovely* or *This is too sour*, simply note the mind judging and return your focus to the pure sensation of smell.

Now, taking the raisin to one ear and rolling it between your fingers, notice any sound the raisin makes. Notice any thoughts about doing this: *This is crazy, raisins don't make sounds. Wow, I can hear the raisin.* Redirect your attention to simply hearing the raisin.

Now place the raisin in your mouth, perhaps noticing your mouth watering as you do so. Focus on the feel of the raisin in your mouth, exploring it with your tongue, noticing its shape, texture, and any initial taste. Bring your beginner's mind to the feel of the raisin in your mouth.

Now biting into the raisin, notice any flavors that are released, letting go of judgments, simply being with the taste of this raisin. As you slowly chew the raisin, pay attention to its changing consistency and the flow of saliva in your mouth.

When you first notice the urge to swallow the raisin, stay with the urge for a few moments, noticing the location and intensity of the urge, allowing it to be there as it is.

Now intentionally swallow the raisin, noticing any sensations as it passes down your throat and into your stomach.

You can repeat the exercise with another raisin or try contrasting the experience of mindful eating with how you would normally eat one or more raisins.

## **Discussion of Mindful Eating Exercise:**

In discussing participants' experiences of the exercise be sure to address how mindfulness might be helpful for shifting out of safety mode in social situations. It may be helpful for the therapist to read the following excerpt from MAWSAS before session.

**Excerpt (pgs 54-55)** "As we check in with your experience of that exercise, let's examine each of the three parts of the definition of mindfulness: paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.

### **Paying Attention on Purpose**

Mindful attention is deliberate. At the beginning of the exercise, you were invited to set your intention: to mindfully eat a raisin. What was your experience of that intention? Did you lose sight of it at any time during the exercise? When we mindfully eat raisins in the first session of our groups, some participants find it embarrassing to slowly eat a raisin in front of other people. They report that their intention to be mindful is hijacked, because their attention is drawn to signs of danger (such as experiencing shaky hands or thinking that the instructor is glancing at them), followed by urges to protect themselves from that danger (for example, *Get it over with, Do it right*). Other group members report that intentions to be mindful simply evaporate into "mindless" awareness, with their attention flitting about from here to there (for example, from reviewing the day to planning for tomorrow to noticing sounds and bodily sensations, and so on).

The tendency to lose sight of the intention to be mindful is very common. However, with practice, your ability to stay intentionally focused will get stronger and stronger. In the remaining chapters, you will have opportunities to practice bringing intentional focus to bodily sensations, feelings, thoughts, and, lastly, your feared social situations. In those situations, you will practice staying focused, on purpose, on what really matters. No matter how often your attention is drawn to potential social danger in those situations, you will always have the choice to redirect your focus to your valued goals.

### **Paying Attention in the Present Moment**

Mindful attention is firmly rooted in the present: in the unfolding of your direct experience from moment to moment. (Your direct experience is that which is registered by your five senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. Thinking about something, like a raisin, is *not* the same as directly experiencing it.)

For how much of the exercise were you able to "stay present" with your raisin? How often did your mind wander to thoughts about the raisin (*It's sweet, This is weird, Hope I don't choke*), to thoughts about other things (*What should I have for dinner tonight?*), and to awareness of unintended targets (for example, bodily sensations or sounds in the room)? What was your experience of the raisin when you *were* able to "stay present" with it? Our clients often comment that the exercise gives them the opportunity to really "know" raisins: how they look, feel, smell, sound, and taste. In the same vein, staying present to your direct experience of social situations can give you opportunities to really "know" them and to base your opinions (and actions) on that knowledge, not on what your mind tells you about the situation. For example, once Emily had gotten some practice under her belt at staying present during conversations (instead of listening to what her mind was saying about her shaky voice), she found that she rarely lost track of what others were saying, and she enjoyed conversations much more, as a result.

As we proceed with additional mindfulness exercises, you will have many opportunities to practice remaining fully present to your experience. Fortunately, this will be very much facilitated by the third and final part of the mindfulness definition, paying attention nonjudgmentally.

### Paying Attention Nonjudgmentally, with Acceptance

With mindful attention, we bring a nonjudging, open attitude to our experience. We also refer to this way of relating to feelings and thoughts as *acceptance*, defined as opening to and allowing your experience to be exactly as it is, without trying to avoid it, escape it, or change it.

**Be sure to include:** When we pay attention nonjudgmentally, we don't 'stop' judging, we 'step back' from it. As described by Jon Kabat-Zinn:

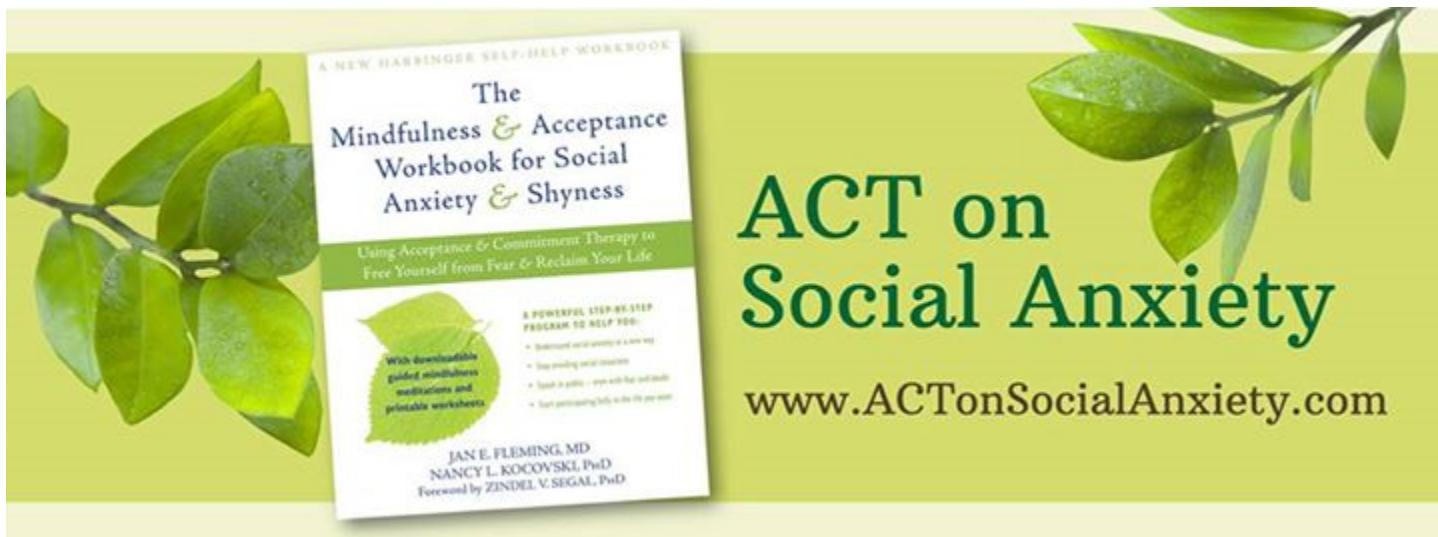
"Mindfulness is cultivated by assuming the stance of an impartial witness to your own experience. To do this requires that you become aware of the constant stream of judging and reacting to inner and outer experiences that we are all normally caught up in, and learn to step back from it.... When you find the mind judging, you don't have to stop it from doing that. All that is required is to be aware of it happening. No need to judge the judging and make matters even more complicated for yourself." Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living*, p.34

How did you do with remaining open to your experience of eating a raisin? Was it difficult to let go of judgments and resistance, and simply let your experience be, in the moment? If you were able to do that (for even a few seconds), what was that like? Was it perhaps liberating to gain some distance and freedom from your judging mind?"

### HOMEWORK:

See **Session 1: Homework** after the next page.

**NOTE:** A summary of mindfulness practices and exercises to be completed for homework is included at the end of each session of **Part I: Therapist Manual**. The homework materials for all 10 sessions are also combined at the end of this manual in **Part II: Participant Handouts**. This is for ease of copying if you would like to provide all handouts to clients at (or before) Session 1. The cover page for the participant handouts is included next, followed by Session 1: Homework.



## MINDFULNESS AND ACCEPTANCE-BASED GROUP THERAPY FOR SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER: A Treatment Manual, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition

### PART II: Participant Handouts

These handouts supplement the workbook we are using in the group: **The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness**, or **MAWSAS** for short. The short form is used throughout this package.

**Register your book:** To access the audio recordings of mindfulness exercises and worksheets you will need to register the book at: [www.newharbinger.com](http://www.newharbinger.com). Click on “Register” in the top right corner and follow the instructions.

**Accessories:** Once you have created an account and registered the book, go to the MAWSAS book page and click on “Accessories” which include a pdf of worksheets and audio recordings of 7 mindfulness exercises in mp3 format.

**Audio Recordings:** download the audio recordings which will be assigned for home practice.

**Worksheets:** All necessary worksheets will be provided from session to session. However, you may wish to download additional copies from [www.newharbinger.com](http://www.newharbinger.com).

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Additional information about the book is available at [www.actonsocialanxiety.com](http://www.actonsocialanxiety.com).

Please join us on facebook at [www.facebook/ACTonSocialAnxiety](https://www.facebook.com/ACTonSocialAnxiety).

## **Session 1: Homework**

\*MAWSAS: Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### **1. MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:**

- Mindfully eat one meal, part of a meal, or one snack per day
- Record your observations on the attached **Mindfulness Log** and **bring it with you to the next group session**
  - Relevant reading material is on pgs 51-55 of Chapter 4 of MAWSAS\*: Introducing Mindfulness
  - Optional: listen to the audio recording, 4.1: Mindful Eating

### **2. Read Chapter 1 of MAWSAS\*: Defining Social Anxiety and Shyness, and**

- check off the situations that trigger social anxiety for you (pgs 14-17)
- **Exercise 1.1:** Choose your “Top Three Feared Social Situations” (p.18), record them on the attached worksheet and **bring it with you to the next group session**

### **3. Read Chapter 2 of MAWSAS\*: Safety Mode: The Costs of Pursuing “Safety”, and**

Complete the following two exercises using the attached worksheets and **bring them with you to the next group session**:

- **Exercise 2.1:** The Costs of Outright Avoidance (p. 22)
- **Exercise 2.2:** What are you giving up for safety? (p. 26)

## A Definition of Mindfulness

Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way:

on purpose,

in the present moment,

and nonjudgmentally.

From ***Wherever You Go There You Are*** by Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1994, Hyperion, New York, page 4.

## Mindfulness Log

Day	Mindfulness Activity	Observations
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

## Exercise 1.1 Top Three Feared Social Situations

Describe the three social situations that are most problematic for you in your life:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## Exercise 2.1 The Costs of Outright Avoidance

Situations Avoided	Costs of Avoidance

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## Exercise 2.2 What Are You Giving Up for Safety?

List one or more of your safety behaviors (if any) for each of your top three feared social situations, along with any costs of using the behaviors.

Situation 1: \_\_\_\_\_

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Situation 2: \_\_\_\_\_

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Situation 3: \_\_\_\_\_

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# **SESSION 2**

Acceptance/Willingness

## Session 2

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### SUMMARY

#### MINDFULNESS EXERCISE: The Observing Mountain

- see Exercise 4.2: The Observing Mountain
- therapist prep- MAWSAS, pgs. 57-59
- group members pair up to discuss their experiences of the exercise followed by sharing with the group
- discussion of the observer perspective with mention of other observer images such as lake and train track

#### HOMEWORK REVIEW:

- homework was: mindful eating, Top 3 feared social situations, The Costs of Outright Avoidance, and What are you giving up for Safety?
- group members share responses to above
- therapist sums up what the costs of avoiding and using safety behaviours have been for this particular group, then
- Reads FEAR poem by Shel Silverstein as an example of how attempting to control anxiety can backfire

#### Fear

Barnabus Browning  
Was scared of drowning  
So he never would swim  
    Or get into a boat  
    Or take a bath  
    Or cross a moat.  
He just sat day and night  
With his door locked tight  
And the windows nailed down,  
    Shaking with fear  
That a wave might appear,  
    And cried so many tears  
That they filled up the room  
    And he drowned.

From *The Light in the Attic*, 1981

#### SESSION THEME: Acceptance/Willingness

- see below for details
- therapist prep-MAWSAS, pgs 55-57, 63

#### HOMEWORK:

- See “Session 2: Homework” for details

## **Exercise 4.2 The Observing Mountain**

(This version is slightly revised from the version in MAWSAS)

So getting into a comfortable position and allowing your eyes to close gently. And taking a few moments to connect with your breathing, noticing each full in-breath and each full out-breath. And as you focus on the breath, you may become aware of thoughts— perhaps about things that happened today or during the week, or thoughts about tonight's session or your plans for after the session—whatever thoughts show up, simply acknowledge them and gently return your focus back to the breath.

Now, bring to mind the image of a mountain, perhaps a mountain you have visited or seen in photographs, or one of your own imagination. Bring into focus as many details of this mountain as possible. Imagine its size and shape. Perhaps it has a snow-covered peak with trees and meadows on its lower slopes. Notice that your mountain, like all mountains, has a solid, unmoving base.

However the mountain appears, just sitting and breathing with the image of this mountain, observing it and noting its qualities. And when you feel ready, see if you can bring the mountain into your own body, so that your body and the mountain become one. Perhaps your head is the mountain's peak, your shoulders and arms are the sides of the mountain, and your bottom and legs are its solid base. With each breath you become a little more the mountain—solid, still, and centered.

And, as you connect with the solid core of your mountain, can you also observe its surface, noticing the multitude of changes that take place on it, from day to day, and season to season? As day turns to night, perhaps noticing how the temperature drops, and the light gradually fades. In spring, perhaps you can feel a gentle rain, or notice dense fog obscuring the view from your mountain. In summer, meadows may be filled with wildflowers, mountain goats graze in the warmth of the sun, or forest fires may ravage the surface. In winter, you may watch as snow falls softly on stately evergreens, or avalanches destroy everything in their paths. You may also notice people on your mountain voicing their differing opinions of it—it is the best or worst mountain they have seen, or it is too easy or too difficult to climb. And, as you observe all of these changes on the surface of your mountain, can you also realize that its solid base remains unchanged?

Perhaps at times, in your own day-to-day life, you can connect with your inner mountain, embodying its strength and stability, observing your thoughts and feelings as you would the ever-changing surface of a mountain. And realize, as you notice thoughts and feelings come and go, that your essential self—your core—remains unchanged.

And so, in the remaining moments, continuing to sit with your observing mountain, until the sound of the bell.

## **SESSION THEME: Acceptance/Willingness**

Acceptance is explored through experiential exercises and metaphors, using the following definition of acceptance:

*“Acceptance is opening up to and allowing your experience to be exactly as it is, without trying to avoid it, escape it, or change it.”*

### **Niagara Falls metaphor:**

- One reason to practice acceptance of internal experiences is that they are difficult to control, as demonstrated by the **Niagara Falls metaphor**: Imagine that you're in a helicopter flying over Niagara Falls. You're in a seat that has been fitted with very special anxiety sensors. If it picks up even a hint of fear, you will be ejected from the seat into the falls below, to an almost certain death. Under those circumstances, would you remain safely in your seat? Most people who have visited or seen these massively powerful falls say that they wouldn't last more than a second in the helicopter seat, even with their lives at stake. In a similar vein, have you noticed that just when it seems most important to you to control your anxiety in your feared social situations is when it's most difficult?



- **Finger Traps exercise:** (see Eifert and Forsyth 2005, pgs 146-147, for further details)

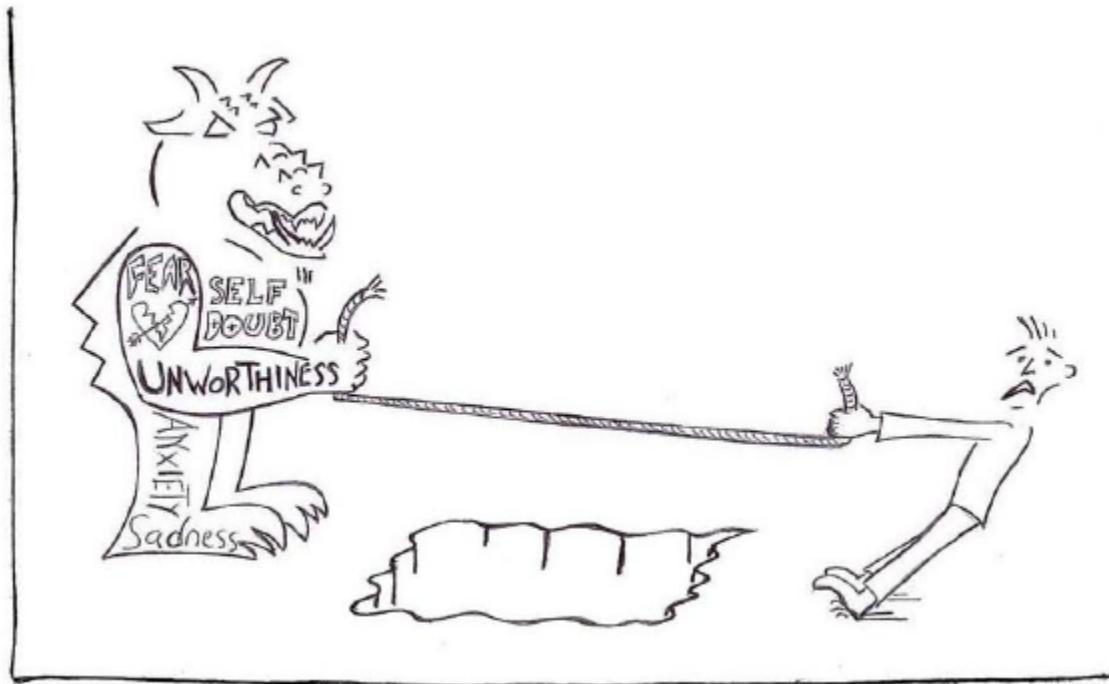


Finger traps are distributed and are said to represent social anxiety. Pulling out of the traps represents struggling with anxiety and trying to get out of it (rid of it). Leaning into the traps represents allowing the anxiety to be present as it is.

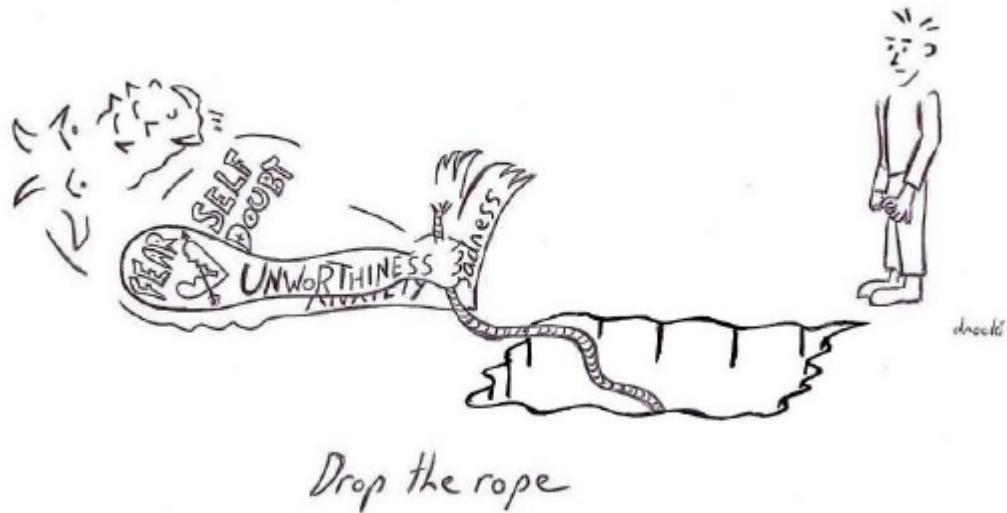
- **Tug of war with anxiety monster exercise** (see illustrations on next page, and Eifert and Forsyth 2005, pgs 149-151, for details)

Pair up group members and do the exercise using rolled up yoga mats, belts, or another rope-like object. One member of the pair plays the anxiety monster and the other person plays someone struggling with anxiety. If there are 2 therapists and an odd number of group members, one therapist can pair up with a group member and play the role of an anxiety monster while the other therapist directs the exercise. Briefly, when struggling with the anxiety monster group members are asked to notice how it ties up their hands and feet. Group is asked what an alternative might be. Someone inevitably drops the rope. Monsters try to get partners to pick up the rope again. Hands and feet are free to pursue other things. The monster hasn't disappeared and one may choose to pick up the rope again and again yet always have the option to drop it. This exercise demonstrates that willingness to experience anxiety can be like "dropping the rope" in the struggle with anxiety. (Related MAWSAS metaphor is Tug-of-war with Thor, p. 56)

Struggling to get rid of anxiety and other emotions can be like playing tug of war with a monster.



Sometimes the best thing to do is let go of the rope.



From Ciarrochi et al (2007)

- **Welcoming Uncle Leo** metaphor (MAWSAS, p. 56)

Imagine having spent a year planning your dream wedding, carefully attending to every detail, including the guest list. You chose not to invite Uncle Leo, because he can be surly, has poor hygiene, and never dresses properly. You didn't want to risk having him spoil your day. Finally, the big day arrives and everything is going according to plan. You are on the dance floor for your first dance, when you see Uncle Leo standing by the bar. But you don't *want* him there! Well, you could leave the dance floor, escort him to a cab, and spend the rest of the evening scanning the room, ready to escort him out again if he dares to return. But then, of course, you wouldn't be able to enjoy your own wedding. Or, you could welcome Uncle Leo, make room for him at a table, and get back to tearing up the dance floor. You still don't want him there, but you are willing to allow him to stay so that you can fully participate in one of the most important days of your life. Similarly, just as you don't want your anxious thoughts and feelings, you can still be willing to allow their existence so that you can be a full participant on your social-anxiety playing field.

- **Finish with a lead in to the theme of values and goals for next week, Session 3**

*Sample Script: Close your eyes if you're comfortable with that and imagine that when you wake up tomorrow, your social anxiety is gone. Take a few moments now to think about how your life would change. What would you do differently in your life? For now, consider how your life would change in terms of your relationships, work or school, and "play"; would you have more friends, a better job, go dancing every weekend? Just go with your gut. Ask Group Participants to share their responses, if willing. That brief exercise was meant to be a sneak peek at what really matters in your life, the subject of next week's session.*

**HOMEWORK:**

- See "Session 2: Homework" for details

## **Session 2: Homework**

\*MAWSAS: The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### **1. Mindfulness Practice:**

**Observing mountain, daily** (Mp3 recording, 4.2 is available to download from the New Harbinger website); written instructions for The Observing Mountain are on pgs 58-59 in MAWSAS\*.

Try out other observer images such as the lake image and train-track images. (pg 59).

Continue to record mindfulness practice in your **Mindfulness Log** and **bring it with you to the next group session**

### **2. Read MAWSAS, Chapter 4,** for a review of some of the materials covered in Session 2.

Definition of Acceptance is on p. 55: “*Acceptance is opening up to and allowing your experience to be exactly as it is, without trying to avoid it, escape it, or change it*”, and Exploring Acceptance is on pgs 56 -57.

A copy of the **Fear** poem that was read in class is included, as well as an illustration of the **Tug of War with your Anxiety Monster** exercise we did in class.

### **3. Read MAWSAS, Chapter 3: Knowing What Matters: Uncovering your Values and Goals**

Complete **Exercise 3.1: Attending your eightieth birthday party**, and get started on **Exercise 3.2: Values and Goals Worksheet** (It does not need to be completed by the next session. You can get started now and continue to work on it over the next few weeks.) and **bring them with you to the next group session**

## Mindfulness Log

Day	Mindfulness Activity	Observations
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

## FEAR

Barnabus Browning

Was scared of drowning

So he never would swim

Or get into a boat

Or take a bath

Or cross a moat.

He just sat day and night

With his door locked tight

And the windows nailed down,

Shaking with fear

That a wave might appear,

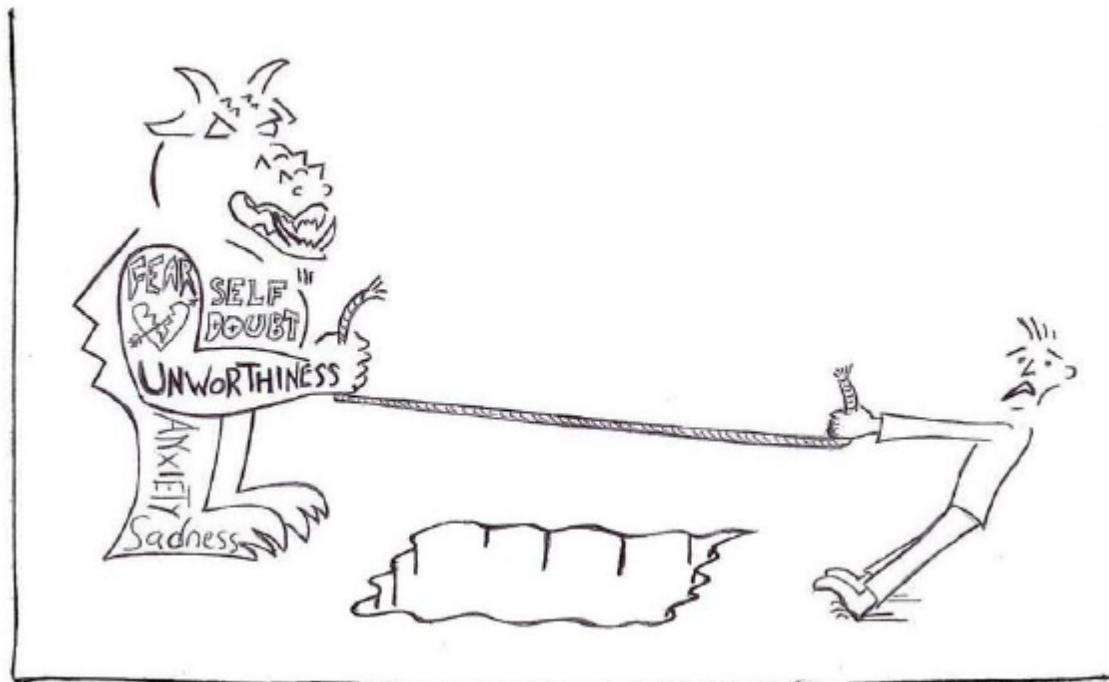
And cried so many tears

That they filled up the room

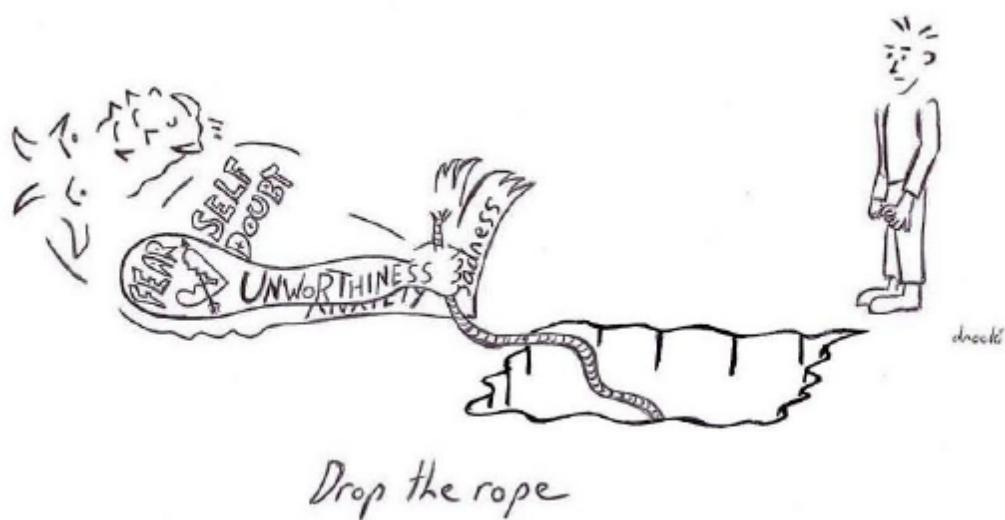
And he drowned.

By Shel Silverstein, from his book *The Light in the Attic*, 1981, Harper Collins Publishers.

Struggling to get rid of anxiety and other emotions can be like playing tug of war with a monster.



Sometimes the best thing to do is let go of the rope.



## **Exercise 3.I** Attending Your Eightieth Birthday Party

Imagine that you are attending your eightieth birthday party. You have managed to live your life in a way that really matters to you. How would you want your life characterized? What would you want your friends and family to say about you in a speech?

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## Exercise 3.2 Values and Goals Worksheet

Identify one or more values (qualities of actions), and one or more goals (outcomes of actions) for each life area that is important to you *and* involves at least one of your feared social situations.

### Intimate Relationships

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Friendships and Other Social Relationships

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Family Relationships

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Career/Employment

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Education/Learning

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Leisure/Recreation

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Health/Physical Well-Being

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Community Participation

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Spirituality

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Other Life Areas

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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# **SESSION 3**

Values and Goals

## **Session 3**

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### **SUMMARY**

#### **MINDFULNESS EXERCISE: Body Scan**

- see Exercise 5.1: Body Scan
- therapist prep: read MAWSAS: pgs. 63-67
- review experiences of group members (do not discuss first in pairs)
- mention “abs” (see following **Notes for Discussion of Body Scan**)

#### **HOMEWORK REVIEW:**

- review The Observing Mountain (and other observer images) practice
- defer homework review from Chapter 3 (Exercises 3.1 & 3.2) and incorporate into the Session Theme

#### **SESSION THEME: Values and Goals**

- see below for details

#### **HOMEWORK:**

-see “**Session 3: Homework**” for further details

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## Exercise 5.I Body Scan

The intention of this practice is to bring mindful awareness to sensations in the body as you focus your attention systematically on each part of the body in turn. It is to be aware of your experience as it is unfolding, however it is. Not to change the way you are feeling or to become more relaxed or calmer.

First, making yourself comfortable lying on your back, in a place where you will be warm and undisturbed. Lying on a mat, a rug, the floor, or a bed. Lying with palms open to the ceiling, feet falling apart from each other, and eyes gently closed. As best you can, keeping still during the exercise, but if you need to move or adjust your position, doing so mindfully, with complete awareness.

So to begin, just becoming aware of breathing. Taking the attention to the abdomen, noting it rise with the in-breath and fall with the out-breath. Not trying to manipulate the breath in any way, just experiencing it as it is, as it moves in and out of the body. Full attention in each moment to breathing.

And on the next out-breath, moving your awareness down your body to the toes of both the left foot and the right foot, and noticing whatever sensations are present in the toes. Perhaps noticing warmth, coolness, tingling, moisture, itching, whatever is arising from the toes, whether there are sensations or no sensations. Being aware of the big toes and the little toes and the toes in between.

And on the next out-breath, letting go of your toes in your mind's eye and moving your attention to the rest of the feet. To the tops of both feet. The soles of both feet, and the ankles. Just staying open to whatever sensations you find there. And if there are no sensations, that is just fine.

And on the next out-breath, letting go of the awareness of the feet, and shifting the focus of attention to the lower legs. Becoming aware of the calves, perhaps noting where they touch the floor or the mat. Becoming aware of the shins, the skin over the legs, and just being attentive to this part of your body.

And on the next out-breath, allowing the lower legs to dissolve in your mind's eye as you move gently with your attention to the knees. Becoming aware of the part under the knee, and on top of the knee, perhaps being aware of what a complex joint the knee is, with tendons and ligaments and the kneecap. And just being here with your knees, letting them predominate in your field of awareness, in the moment. And now gently releasing the knees and moving your attention to the thighs. Noticing whatever sensations arise in the left thigh and the right thigh. And if your mind has wandered, just gently and kindly bringing your attention back to the thighs.

And on the next out-breath, letting go of awareness of the thighs as you bring your attention to the pelvic region. To the buttocks, the tailbone, the pelvic bone, the genitals. Staying open to whatever sensations you find, just being attentive to this part of your body.

And on the next out-breath, letting go of the awareness of the pelvic region and moving your attention to the abdomen. Bringing a gentle curiosity and openness to whatever you find in this moment. Perhaps noticing a gentle rise of the abdomen with the in-breath and the fall of the abdomen with the out-breath.

And on the next out-breath, letting go of the abdomen in your mind's eye and moving your attention to the chest area, the area that contains your heart and lungs. Perhaps noticing the beating of your heart or the expansion of the rib cage as you breathe in. Staying open to whatever sensations you find in the chest.

And on the next out-breath, letting go of the chest in your mind's eye as you bring your attention to the lower back. A part of the body that often carries a lot of tension. Just noticing whatever sensations arise, whether there be tension or no tension and not trying to make it be any different, just accepting the sensations that are there. Letting go of the tendency we all have to want things to be different.

And on the next out-breath, letting go of the awareness of the lower back and bringing your awareness to the upper back, the back ribs, and the shoulder blades. Another area where the body holds tension. And just being with the upper back, not going anywhere or doing anything but developing an openness to all that is arising from this part of the body. And as thoughts arise, just being present for thoughts and then returning to paying attention to the upper back.

And on the next out-breath, letting go of the upper back in your mind's eye as you move gently with your attention to the hands. Becoming aware of the fingers, the palms, the backs of the hands, and the wrists. Becoming aware of any sensations arising in the hands. Perhaps warmth, or coolness, tingling or moisture. Just bringing a compassionate awareness to whatever arises in the hands.

And on the next out-breath, letting go of the hands in the mind's eye and moving your attention to the arms. To the lower arms, the elbows, and the upper arms. Bringing a gentle curiosity and openness to whatever you find in this moment. And now gently releasing the arms and shifting the focus of attention to the neck. Noticing whatever sensations arise in the neck. And if your mind has wandered, gently and kindly bringing your attention back to the neck.

And on the next out-breath, letting go of awareness of the neck, as you bring your awareness to the face and the rest of the head. Becoming aware of the jaw, the mouth, the nose, the cheeks, the ears, the eyes, the forehead, the scalp, and the back and top of the head. Noticing whatever sensations arise in the face and the head. Just noticing without judgment. There is no right way to feel when you are doing this. The way you feel is the way you feel.

And on the next out-breath, letting go of awareness of the face and the head. And now, taking a few deep breaths, breathing in through the nose, and allowing the breath to move through the body to the tips of your toes, and then allowing the breath to move up from your toes, through your body, as you exhale through the nose. And doing this a few times, breathing in all the way through the body to the toes and back out through the nose.

And now letting go of the awareness of breathing and getting a sense of the body as whole and complete. Resting in this state of openness to things as they are.

## The Mindfulness & Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety & Shyness

As we practice the body scan, we develop the capacity to just observe our sensations and work at letting them be as they are, without reacting. We come to see from our own experience that we don't have to struggle with our thoughts, physical sensations, and feelings or force them to be different. And now, perhaps, making the intention of taking this attitude of acceptance and openness with you through the rest of your day.

### Notes for Discussion of Body Scan:

During review of the Body Scan be sure to weave in this point, in your own words:

*The Body Scan is the first “prong” of a three-pronged approach we will teach in the group to help you gradually build up your willingness to experience physical sensations of anxiety, or in other words to “strengthen your abs”: your acceptance of bodily sensations. The Body Scan and two additional exercises are about paying mindful attention to your body: first, to your body in stillness; second, to your body in movement; and finally, to your body as you intentionally bring on anxious bodily sensations. The aim of this approach is to gradually cultivate your capacity to open up to, and let go of, your struggle with physical sensations of anxiety. At each step of the way, as your willingness switch grows stronger and stronger, you will find that you have more time and energy for pursuing your valued goals.*

## SESSION THEME: Values and Goals

-therapist prep, MAWSAS, Chapter 3, Knowing What Matters: Uncovering Your Values and Goals

- **Exercise 3.1:** Ask group members to share part or all of what they wrote for the “Attending your 80<sup>th</sup> birthday” exercise



- **Review definitions:**

Compass metaphor



Values as **Life Directions**, reflected in the ongoing quality of actions (examples)

Goals as **Life Destinations**, reflected in the concrete outcomes of actions (examples)

- **Exercise 3.2, Values and Goals Worksheet:** Ask group members to share some of the **values and goals** they identified for one or more life areas that are both important to them *and* involve one or more feared social situations.

- **Introduce Choosing-Goals Worksheet: Social Anxiety Group version**

-therapist prep, MAWSAS (**from Chapter 7, pgs 104-107**):

- the purpose of the worksheet is to identify goals that group members will work on in the latter sessions, in session and for homework; list a few examples such as those from Camille and Jack, pgs 105-106

- ask for a volunteer to go through a Choosing-goals worksheet on the whiteboard:

1. ask group member to identify a goal and write it down
2. Identify the goal as short-term (can be accomplished within 12 months, e.g. spend more time with friends), or long-term (may take a year or longer to accomplish, e.g. get married, find a new job)
3. Identify the Life Area the goal falls under
4. Optional: identify value(s) that underlie the goal
5. Repeat for next goal

-time permitting, group members can start on their worksheets in session

-suggest they include one long-term and two or three short-term goals on the worksheet

## **HOMEWORK:**

- see “**Session 3: Homework**” for further details

## **Choosing-Goals Worksheet: Social Anxiety Group version**

Please identify 3 or 4 goals to work on in the latter sessions of the group. It is important to *print or write legibly in dark ink.*

Life Area*	Goals (Indicate short-term or long-term) [Optional: Indicate Value(s) underlying each goal]
Examples: Social Relationships	Get to know neighbours and co-workers better (short term) [Values: connect with others, be friendly, share about myself]
Career	Find a new job (long term) [Value: through my work, contribute to protecting the environment]

\***Life Areas:** Intimate Relationships, Friendships and Other Social Relationships, Family Relationships, Career/Employment, Education/Learning, Leisure/Recreation, Health/Physical Well-Being, Community Participation, Spirituality, Other Life Areas

## **Session 3: Homework**

\*MAWSAS: The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### **1. Mindfulness Practice:**

**Body Scan, daily** (Mp3 recording, 5.1 is available to download from the New Harbinger website); Written instructions for the body scan are on pgs 64-67 in MAWSAS\*.

Continue to record mindfulness practices in your **Mindfulness Log**.

### **2. Values and Goals:**

#### **Choosing-Goals Worksheet: Social Anxiety Group version**

Using the attached worksheet, identify several goals you can work toward in the latter sessions of our group. We aim to collect your completed worksheets by **Session 6** to guide us in planning exercises for the remaining group sessions.

#### **Additional Resources on Values - Optional:**

**Values card sort exercise** online at:

<http://www.intervisionmedia.com/projects/ACT/valuesCardSort.swf>

**Read two blog posts (attached)** from our website ([www.actonsocialanxiety.com](http://www.actonsocialanxiety.com)) that are relevant to Values and Goals: “A New Development on Acts of Kindness”, and “More on Acts of Kindness”

### **3. MAWSAS Reading: Chapter 6: Defusing from Your Anxious Thoughts, pgs 79-85 (and 1<sup>st</sup> 2 paragraphs of p. 86)**

Using the attached worksheet for **Exercise 6.1 Your Anxious Thoughts: Social Anxiety Group version**, list some of the thoughts that typically show up in your top three feared social situations. Fill in the “Types of Anxious Thinking” column after reading the relevant section (pgs 83-85).

## Mindfulness Log

Day	Mindfulness Activity	Observations
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

## Choosing-Goals Worksheet: Social Anxiety Group version

Please identify 3 or 4 goals to work on in the latter sessions of the group. It is important to ***print or write legibly in dark ink.***

Life Area*	Goals (Indicate short-term or long-term) [Optional: Indicate Value(s) underlying each goal]
Examples: Social Relationships	Get to know neighbours and co-workers better (short term) [Values: connect with others, be friendly, share about myself]
Career	Find a new job (long term) [Value: through my work, contribute to protecting the environment]

\***Life Areas:** Intimate Relationships, Friendships and Other Social Relationships, Family Relationships, Career/Employment, Education/Learning, Leisure/Recreation, Health/Physical Well-Being, Community Participation, Spirituality, Other Life Areas

**A New Development on Acts of Kindness: Posted May 29, 2013 to  
<http://actonsocialanxiety.com/blog/>**

Exciting new developments in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), mindfulness, and social anxiety are occurring at a rapid pace. This is great news for those of us who struggle with social anxiety, and those of us trying to make a difference through our work as researchers, therapists, and teachers. The not-so-great news is how difficult it is to keep up with all of the wonderful developments!

With that difficulty in mind, our intention for this blog is for it to play a role (albeit small) in keeping you informed about interesting research findings, studies in progress, new books, and other relevant developments.

To start off, we are sharing some interesting research findings about “acts of kindness” that recently caught our attention. Researchers at the University of British Columbia investigated whether doing kind acts would lead to better mood and more satisfying relationships in socially anxious students. A third of the students were asked to do kinds acts (about 6 times per week for 4 weeks), another third were asked to do behavioral experiments (of the types used in cognitive behavior therapy for social anxiety), and the remaining third were asked to simply record daily events.

At the beginning and end of the study, the students rated their mood and how satisfied they were with their relationships (with acquaintances, coworkers, friends, and close friends), among other things. Two main findings from the study were that positive mood and relationship satisfaction both increased significantly in the acts of kindness group but not in the other two groups. The kind acts included holding the door for someone, picking someone up from work, buying a friend lunch, visiting a sick relative, and thanking the bus driver, to name a few. Just over a third of the kind acts were directed to strangers, about a third to friends, and another third to family members, acquaintances, romantic partners, and others. (Read the full abstract of the study here <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22642341>).

Now, in our experience, most socially anxious individuals identify kindness toward others as one of their values; however, fears of looking foolish or saying/doing the wrong thing can get in the way of acting on this value (and other relationship values). Perhaps the findings from this study might provide some extra motivation for you to incorporate more acts of kindness into your daily routine, if that fits with your values and goals. By doing so, you would of course be engaged in values-based actions (a main goal in ACT) *and* those actions might lead to more satisfying relationships. As for the possibility of improving your mood by acting with kindness, that would be another bonus!

For those of you who are working through our book (or planning to), we recommend that you consider including a few specific acts of kindness on your goal-stepping worksheets in chapters seven and eight (again, if it fits with your valued goals).

Our blog is also intended as a place for dialogue and discussion, so please share your comments about this post, and future posts too. We welcome suggestions for topics you’d like us to blog about in the future.

## More on Acts of Kindness

In our inaugural blog post we described a study which found that doing kind acts can lead to better mood and more satisfying relationships for socially anxious people. Now we have come across a small study showing that meditation can lead to acts of kindness<sup>1</sup>.

Researchers at Northeastern University, Massachusetts General Hospital, and Harvard University set out to investigate whether people who completed one of two eight-week meditation courses (mindfulness-based or compassion-based) would be more likely to show compassion toward other people compared to participants assigned to a wait-list control group.

They used a very interesting, real-life situation in their study: giving up a seat for someone in pain. When each participant arrived at the laboratory waiting area, he or she sat in the only unoccupied seat. Female confederates (paid by the researchers to play the role of other participants) occupied two other seats. One minute later, another female confederate appeared, with crutches and a walking boot, showing obvious signs of pain. The researchers were looking to see whether the real participant offered his or her seat to the woman in pain.

The results are quite compelling. Meditators were five times more likely than non meditators to give up their seats! Furthermore, those who completed the mindfulness-based meditation course were just as likely as those from the compassion-based course to give up their seats, even though the latter course targeted compassion more directly. Also noteworthy is that these findings occurred within a set-up conducive to the classic “bystander effect” – a phenomenon wherein an individual is less likely to offer assistance in the presence of other people. Meditators appeared to be less susceptible to this effect than non meditators; despite witnessing two confederates ignore the woman in pain, 50% of meditators gave up their seats compared to 16% in the control group. The researchers speculated that meditation may increase compassionate behavior by increasing one’s ability to notice others in pain and/or by leading to changes in perspective taking.

What can we take away from the research presented in our first two blog posts? Well, we saw that meditation can lead to acts of kindness, and acts of kindness can lead to more satisfying relationships in the socially anxious. We also know from earlier research that mindfulness meditation can lead to more satisfying relationships<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps one of the ways it does that is by facilitating kindness.

In our previous blog post we encouraged you to include more acts of kindness in your daily routine. In light of this recent study, perhaps that will be easier to do the more you meditate! If you are working through our book, that would mean setting aside more time to practice the mindfulness exercises (available to download at <http://www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-and->

[acceptance-workbook-social-anxiety-and-shyness](#), under Accessories). You may even want to find a meditation group in your area and surround yourself with meditators!

References:

1. Condon, P., Desbordes, G., Miller, W., DeSteno, D. (In press). Meditation increases compassionate responses to suffering. *Psychological Science*.
2. Bihari, J.L.N. and Mullan, E.G. (published online Sept. 1, 2012). Relating mindfully: A qualitative exploration of changes in relationships through mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. *Mindfulness*, DOI 10.1007/s12671-012-0146-x.

Please share any comments you have about this blog post. We look forward to hearing from you.

## **Exercise 6.1 Your Anxious Thoughts: Social Anxiety Group version**

List some of the thoughts that typically show up in each of your top three feared social situations along with the types of anxious thinking displayed by each thought

Situation	Thoughts	Types of Anxious Thinking
<b>Example:</b> Small talk at a party	I won't have anything to say He thinks I'm boring I shouldn't appear anxious	Fortune telling; worry Mind reading "shoulding"
1		
2		
3		

# **SESSION 4**

Developing a different relationship to thoughts:  
Defusion

## Session 4

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### SUMMARY

#### MINDFULNESS EXERCISE: Mindfulness of the breath, sound and thoughts

- this exercise is not in MAWSAS (see script for the exercise below)
- group members pair up to discuss their experiences of the exercise followed by sharing with the group

#### HOMEWORK REVIEW:

- review Body Scan practice
- brief check-in for Choosing-Goals worksheet? Any difficulties?
- (Optional: did anyone try the online values sorting exercise, and/or read the blog posts on acts of kindness)
- ask group members to share responses to Exercise 6.1, Your anxious thoughts: Social Anxiety Group version (Types of thinking include **basic types**, such as worry, anxious memories, evaluating/judging, and **more elaborate types**, such as: Fortune Telling, Mind Reading, “Shoulding”, Postmortem, The Spotlight Effect and Generating Stories.)
- ask group members how they typically relate to these types of thoughts and how that in turn influences their behaviour in social situations; do anxious thoughts have a tendency to “boss them around”?



**Fusion: Your anxious thoughts send you down the path of avoidance.**

(Illustration is adapted from Ciarrochi & Mercer, 2005)

#### SESSION THEME: Developing a different relationship to thoughts: Defusion

- see below for details

#### HOMEWORK SUMMARY:

- see Session 4: Homework for further details

## **Mindfulness of Breath, Sound and Thoughts**

Settling into a comfortable sitting position....

Bringing your awareness to the breath, to the inbreath and the outbreath – no need to control breathing in any way – simply letting the breath breathe itself. As best you can simply allowing your experience to be your experience without trying to change it.

And as your awareness settles on the breath, bringing attention to the lower abdomen, noticing physical sensations there as the breath moves in and out of the body.

Perhaps sensations of slight stretching as the abdominal wall rises with each inbreath, and of gentle deflation as it falls with each outbreath. As best you can, following with your awareness the changing physical sensations in the lower abdomen as the breath enters the body on the inbreath and leaves the body on the outbreath. And perhaps noticing pauses between one inbreath and the following outbreath, and between one outbreath and the next inbreath.

Sooner or later, the mind will wander away from focus on the breath to thoughts, planning, daydreaming, whatever. This is ok. It is simply what minds do. It is not a mistake or failure. When you notice your awareness is no longer on the breath, gently acknowledge where it has gone, and gently escort your awareness back to the lower abdomen.

Now shifting awareness to the back of the throat, noticing any sensations as the breath passes through the windpipe, on its way to the lungs, and paying attention to any sensations at the back of the throat as the breath moves back up the windpipe on its way out of the body.

Now shifting your awareness to the nostrils. Paying attention to the breath as it enters the body through the nostrils and as it leaves the body through the nostrils. Just noticing any sensations, perhaps feelings of warmth or coolness or itching, or no sensations at all.

And when the mind wanders, as best you can, gently acknowledging where it has gone, bringing the attention back to the breath.

Now letting go of attention to the breath, and bringing your awareness to hearing, to noticing sounds as they arise, wherever they arise.

As best you can, being aware of sounds as pure sensations, noticing patterns of pitch, tone, volume and duration, letting go of the urge to label what you are hearing.

No need to go searching for sounds or listening for particular sounds, simply opening to sounds as they arise – sounds that are close, sounds that are far away, inside the room, outside the room, outside the building, noticing spaces between sounds or perhaps no sound at all.

And when you notice you are thinking about sounds or the mind has drifted elsewhere, gently acknowledging where the mind has gone, and reconnecting, as best you can, to pure hearing.

And now, gently shifting the awareness to thinking – to paying attention to thoughts as events in the mind. As best you can, bringing your awareness to thoughts as they arise in the mind, passing through the space of the mind, and eventually disappearing. There is no need to censor or encourage thinking in any direction, simply allowing thoughts to arise naturally, not holding on to thoughts, pushing them away, or analyzing their contents, simply observing thoughts as events in the field of awareness.

It may help to imagine that you are sitting in a movie theatre in front of a large blank screen. As thoughts, memories and mental images appear in your mind, seeing them projected onto the screen, watching each thought for as long as it remains on the screen.

Thoughts may move slowly or quickly across the screen, some dominating the screen more than others. At times, the screen may go blank; at other times it may be completely filled with thoughts. Whatever is on the screen, remaining curious about the process of thinking itself, noticing your ability to be an impartial observer.

At times you may lose touch with your awareness of thinking, fusing with your thoughts, getting caught up in one of the stories unfolding on the screen. When that happens, returning to the feeling of the breath, not as a way to get away from thoughts or make the mind blank, rather as a way to anchor yourself in the present moment, as you escort your mind back to its seat, returning to watching your thoughts coming and going.

And now continuing with awareness of thinking until the sound of the bell.

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## SESSION THEME: Developing a Different Relationship to Thoughts: Defusion



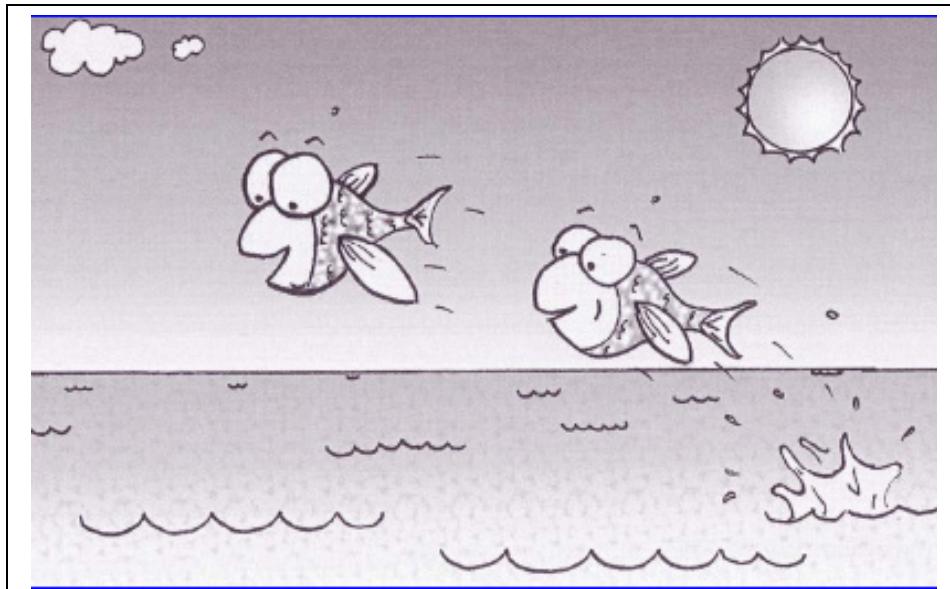
**Defusion: You can choose the path toward your values and take your anxious thoughts along for the ride** (Illustration adapted from Ciarrochi & Mercer, 2005)

- therapist prep, MAWSAS, Chapter 6, Defusing from Your Anxious Thoughts
- Hand out copies of, and discuss, the following two illustrations (see next page):

The mind is always generating thoughts - that is its job - and most of the time we're not even aware of it. Sometimes we can get "lost in thought" and you've probably all had the experience of suddenly realizing that you've been immersed in thought and not really aware of anything else around you.

This first illustration is a metaphorical way to look at this. So you can imagine what happened here. These two fish were swimming in the water, as they always do, day in and day out, and one fish said to the other "*Hey did you know that we're actually surrounded by some stuff called water?*" And the other fish said "*What are you talking about. What's water?*" And so his buddy gets him to leap out of the water to actually see it, to gain an awareness of water as something separate from being a fish. And today we're going to take you through some strategies that will, in a sense, help you to "leap out of" the river of your thoughts and see them as separate from yourself, as automatic products of your mind.

In the second illustration of a guy looking at computer screens, the guy on the left is fused with his thoughts "*There's something wrong with you*" and he looks pretty distressed as a result. The alternative is not to change the thoughts to something positive, like "*you're great*" but to observe them for what they are, like the guy on the right who is sitting back, just observing his thoughts and not getting all caught up in them.



**“See... that’s the stuff I was talking about”**



**Fused vs. Defused ways of relating to “There’s something wrong with you...”**

(Illustrations adapted from Ciarrochi & Mercer, 2005)

- **Experiential Exercise: Anxiety Mind Volleyball**

Three group members stand in the middle of the room. Two of them face each other, one playing the role of “Anxiety Thoughts” (AT) and the other playing the role of “Safety Thoughts” (ST). The third person sits between them on a chair and plays the role of the “Fused Mind” (FM). The remaining group members (& therapists) stand to the side and play the role of “Defused Minds” (DMs).

Anxiety and safety thoughts representative of social anxiety (see below) are printed on 2 sheets of paper- one with 8 anxiety thoughts (given to the person playing the role of AT) and one with 8 corresponding safety thoughts (given to the person playing the role of ST). AT begins by reading the 1<sup>st</sup> thought on the sheet (“I don’t have anything to say”). ST responds by reading the corresponding safety thought (“Don’t say anything”). The same sequence is repeated with the next 7 sets of phrases on the sheets.

During the exercise, the group member playing the role of FM is instructed to imagine the thoughts are passing back and forth overhead like a ball in a game of Volleyball (a real ball can be used but in our experience it takes away somewhat from the main task of the exercise). FM is instructed to “be completely fused” with the thoughts swirling above, to really buy into them. Those playing the roles of DMs are instructed to mindfully observe the thoughts, and not buy into them. They are encouraged to walk about (and other activities) to demonstrate that looking *at* their thoughts (instead of *from* them) frees them up to pursue other actions (including valued goals).

At the end of each round (of 8 thought pairs) group members rotate positions as follows: AT moves to the FM position, FM moves to ST position, ST moves to a DM position and one DM moves to the AT position. Rounds continue to be played until each group member has played each of the 4 roles (AT, ST, FM, DM) at least once.

The following pairs of thoughts are examples and can be tailored to be relevant for individual group members. Handouts are included at the end of this section.

<b>ANXIETY THOUGHTS</b>	<b>SAFETY THOUGHTS</b>
I don’t have anything to say	Don’t say anything
I’m blushing	Hide your face
My opinion is stupid	Keep it to yourself
I’m not good at small talk	Stay in the kitchen
My voice sounds shaky	Don’t say anything
How can I get off the phone?	Make up an excuse
Silences are so awkward	Don’t pause, keep talking
Everyone’s looking at me	Get out of there!

When reviewing this exercise afterwards, be sure to ask group members about any differences in their experiences of playing the fused mind versus the defused mind.

- **Defusion/Distancing strategies**

Try out several defusion strategies with the group, from the category “Ditching the meaning of your thoughts” (p. 87-88):

### **Repetition of word (p. 87)**

"We are going to repeat the word "Boring" as fast as we can out loud for 30 seconds as a group. Just keep saying the word "Boring" over and over as fast as you can while still pronouncing the full word each time. How did this feel? What was the experience like? What happened to the meaning of the word? (*It is common for the word to lose meaning, to sound strange/odd, for the beginning and end to blur, to pay more attention to the muscles of the mouth as it being said compared to usual, etc. If there is an emotional link to this word, then it is possible that the emotional function has gone down.*)"

### **Singing your thoughts (p. 88)**

Using a short phrase volunteered by a group member, sing it to the tune of Happy Birthday (or another well-known song).

### **Slowing down your thoughts**

Using a short phrase volunteered by a group member, repeat it as a group v-e-r-y s-l-o-w-l-y.

- Review the remaining defusion strategies from pgs 86-89 (Summary of Defusion Strategies is on p. 93) plus others that are not included in MAWSAS.

**I am having the thought that:** For example, *I am having the thought that I'm making a fool of myself.*

**Name what the mind is doing:** Name the type of anxious thinking (fortune-telling, mind reading, "shoulding," postmortem, spotlight effect, storytelling, and more basic types, such as worrying and judging).

**Give real names to your thoughts:** For example, *Mind-Reading Randy.*

**Thank the mind:** For example, *Thanks for the memory.*

**Defuse with Dr. Phil:** *How's that thought working for you?*

**Awareness of thinking:** Listen to the audio download, or sit silently with your thoughts.

**Observe your thoughts:** Use the waterfall metaphor, leaves on a stream, or clouds in the sky. (These are in addition to observer perspective images already covered: mountain, lake, train track)

**Not in the book are:**

**Get off your buts:** For the following sentence, "I'd like to go to the party **but** I'm afraid I'll be anxious", try replacing "but" with "and" - "I'd like to go to the party **and** I'm afraid I'll be anxious".

**Replace "I" with "you" or "your name":** (see following article below from thestar.com)

(By: [Nancy J. White](#) Living Reporter, Published on Mon Feb 03 2014 at [thestar.com](#)) If you talk about yourself out loud by name, people think you're a little loony. But if you talk about yourself in your head by name, you've got a psychological edge that could help you perform better and be less anxious.

In times of social stress, the small language shift from “I” to “you” or to your name as you think about the situation can enhance your ability to regulate thoughts and feelings, according to a study in the February issue of the [Journal of Personality and Social Psychology](#).

To think about yourself as if you were another person provides psychological space, which helps people exert self-control, says lead author Ethan Kross, associate professor of psychology at the University of Michigan.

It’s sort of a way to tap into your inner coach. “Think of a friend who comes to you for advice with a problem that she’s super anxious about,” explains Kross. “You’re not in the situation so it’s relatively easy for you to see the bigger picture, to not get hung up on the details. That’s what we’re doing here, using language that almost automatically gets you to think about yourself as if you were another.”

Kross and other researchers set up socially stressful situations, instructing some participants to prepare psychologically using “I” and others to use “you” or their names. In one experiment, participants had to make a favourable first impression. In another, they had to give a public speech about why they were ideally suited to their dream job. They had only five minutes to think about the speech and were not allowed to take notes. “That’s a powerful induction of anxiety,” says Kross.

Their performances in both situations were rated by judges unaware of how the participants had been divided. In both experiments, those who used “you” or their names in self-talk performed significantly better and displayed less stress than those in the first-person group.

“I think that’s a consequential finding,” says Kross. “People who give a better speech are more likely to land the job they’re interviewing for.”

They also brooded less afterwards about their performance. “We often stew in misery,” says Kross. “That’s not good for psychological or physical health.” Other experiments looked at how the forms of self-talk affected the way people thought about events that provoked social anxiety. Those who talked to themselves with “you” or a name tended to see future stressors more as a challenge and less as a threat.

Researchers analyzing the data found that highly-anxious participants – those with levels high enough to be rated as “social phobic” – benefitted similarly to those with low anxiety by using non-first-person introspection. So should people start using this self-talk technique? “There’s the caveat, of course, that lots more research is needed. But there’s no reason to believe it’s harmful,” says Kross. “But it should be done internally not externally. To talk to yourself out loud in the third person violates all sorts of social norms.”

Time permitting, ask group members to create their own defusion strategies.

## **HOMEWORK:**

-see Session 4: Homework

## ANXIETY THOUGHTS

1. I don't have anything to say
2. I'm blushing
3. My opinion is stupid
4. I'm not good at small talk
5. My voice sounds shaky
6. How can I get off the phone?
7. Silences are so awkward
8. Everyone's looking at me

## **SAFETY THOUGHTS**

1. Don't say anything
2. Hide your face
3. Keep it to yourself
4. Stay in the kitchen
5. Don't say anything
6. Make up an excuse
7. Don't pause, keep talking
8. Get out of there!

## Session 4: Homework

\*MAWSAS: The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### 1. Mindfulness Practice:

**Awareness of thinking, daily** (Mp3 recording, 6.2 is available to download from the New Harbinger website); written instructions for Awareness of thinking are on pgs 89-90 in MAWSAS\*.

**Mindful Hearing, daily:** Try out mindful hearing in a number of different locations throughout your day. Set aside a few minutes to simply “hear” what there is to be heard in the location you have chosen. Bring your attention to sounds as they arise, wherever they arise: sounds that are close, sounds that are far away, and the silences between sounds. As best you can, be aware of sounds as simply pure sensation—noticing patterns of pitch, tone, volume, and duration—letting go of the urge to label what you are hearing (such as a voice, bird, guitar, footsteps, and so on). There is no need to go searching for sounds or to listen for particular sounds. Whenever you find that you are thinking about sounds, reconnect as best you can with pure hearing.

Continue to record mindfulness practices in your **Mindfulness Log**.

### 2. Defusing from anxious thoughts:

Try out the defusion strategies listed on the attached handout, **Summary of Defusion Strategies**, and described in more detail in pgs 86-92 of MAWSAS. Record your observations on the attached worksheet, **Defusing from your Anxious Thoughts**.

**Note:** Try defusing from everyday thoughts (for example, *I am having the thought that I want to eat a muffin for breakfast*) as well as social-anxiety thoughts. You can try some of the strategies right when you notice the thought (for example, naming what the mind is doing or thanking the mind); for others, you may want to wait until you have some time to yourself (for example, ditching the meaning of thoughts). People vary tremendously concerning which strategies they like and find useful so make note of the strategies you find most helpful. You may also want to take a stab at creating your own defusion strategy (p.91). It can be fun!

**Optional:** Try out the “Leaves on a stream” defusion exercise online at:  
[www.thinkmindfully.com/try-it](http://www.thinkmindfully.com/try-it).

### 3. Choosing-Goals Worksheet:

If you have not already done so, complete the **Choosing-Goals Worksheet: Social Anxiety Group version** from Session 3, identifying several goals you can work toward in the latter sessions of our group. We would like to have all completed worksheets by Session 6 to use in planning exercises for the remaining group sessions.

## Mindfulness Log

Day	Mindfulness Activity	Observations
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

## Summary of Defusion Strategies

**I am having the thought that:** For example, *I am having the thought that I'm making a fool of myself.*

**Name what the mind is doing:** Name the type of anxious thinking (fortune-telling, mind reading, “shoulding,” postmortem, spotlight effect, storytelling, and more basic types, such as worrying and judging).

**Give real names to your thoughts:** For example, *Mind-Reading Randy.*

**Ditch the meanings of your thoughts:** Use repetition or other voices, sing them, see them, etc.

**Thank the mind:** For example, *Thanks for the memory.*

**Defuse with Dr. Phil:** *How's that thought working for you?*

**Observe your thoughts:** Use the waterfall metaphor, leaves on a stream, clouds in the sky, or the observer perspective images from session 2: mountain, lake & train track.

**Get off your buts:** For example, replace *I'd like to go to the party but I'm afraid I'll be anxious* with *I'd like to go to the party and I'm afraid I'll be anxious.*

**Replace “I” with “you” or “your name”:** For example, replace *I am worried I'll have nothing to say* with *You are worried you'll have nothing to say*, or *Susan is worried she'll have nothing to say.* (See attached article from thestar.com)

**Awareness of thinking:** Listen to the audio download (6.2), or sit silently with your thoughts.

**Create your own defusion strategy:** \_\_\_\_\_

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By: [Nancy J. White](#) Living Reporter, Published on Mon Feb 03 2014 at [thestar.com](#)

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It's sort of a way to tap into your inner coach. "Think of a friend who comes to you for advice with a problem that she's super anxious about," explains Kross. "You're not in the situation so it's relatively easy for you to see the bigger picture, to not get hung up on the details. That's what we're doing here, using language that almost automatically gets you to think about yourself as if you were another."

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## Worksheet: Defusing from Your Anxious Thoughts

Thought	Defusion strategy	What did you notice?
Example: <i>I'm boring.</i>	Example: <i>I am having the thought that I'm boring.</i>	Example: <i>I had the thought and still contributed to a conversation.</i>

# **SESSION 5**

Willingness Switch and  
Being With Your Anxiety

## **Session 5**

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### **SUMMARY**

#### **MINDFULNESS EXERCISE: Mindful Stretching**

- see Exercise 5.2, Mindful Stretching, below
- therapist prep: read MAWSAS pgs. 63-64 and 68-71
- This exercise is the 2<sup>nd</sup> “prong” of our 3-pronged approach to “Strengthening your abs” (acceptance of bodily sensations)
- Review exercise: can do in pairs first or as a group

#### **HOMEWORK REVIEW:**

- review Awareness of thinking practice (Mp3 recording 6.2), and mindful hearing
- review defusion homework (anyone create their own defusion strategy?)
- (Optional: did anyone try the online “leaves on a stream” exercise?)

#### **SESSION THEME: Willingness Switch and Being with Your Anxiety**

- see below for details

#### **HOMEWORK SUMMARY:**

-see **Session 5: Homework** for details

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## Exercise 5.2 Mindful Stretching

The intention of this exercise is to bring mindful awareness, as best you can, to physical sensations throughout the body as we proceed through a series of gentle stretches. With each stretch it is important to notice the limits of your body and, as best you can, try to let go of any tendency to push beyond your limits or to compete with yourself. If a particular stretch is too challenging for your body at any time, simply maintain the standing position or repeat an earlier stretch.

So to begin, standing in bare feet or socks on the floor, a mat, or a rug, with the feet about hip-width apart, knees unlocked and feet parallel to each other.

And becoming aware of the flow of the breath, paying complete attention to each full in-breath and each full out-breath, not controlling the breath in any way.

And then taking a few moments to feel the body as a whole, from head to toe, perhaps noticing the sensations in the feet as they make contact with the floor or mat or rug.

Now, on an in-breath, slowly and mindfully raising the arms out to the sides, parallel to the floor, now breathing out, and on the next in-breath, continuing to raise the arms until they meet above the head, feeling any tension in the muscles as they work to lift the arms and maintain them in the stretch. And as you hold the stretch, noticing any sensations, perhaps warmth or tingling, bringing a gentle curiosity to whatever you find. And when the mind wanders, as it surely will, just noting that and redirecting your attention to the body stretching in this position.

And then on an out-breath, very slowly bringing the arms down and letting them hang at the sides of the body. Then repeating that stretch, raising the arms out to the side, then meeting above the head, holding, then returning very slowly to the sides.

And allowing the eyes to close gently and noticing how it feels to have just done that stretch. And after a few breaths, opening the eyes again.

Now stretching just the right arm above the head, and letting the heel of the left foot lift off the floor, as the right arm reaches toward the ceiling. With full awareness of any sensations in the body. And then letting the right arm drop back to the side and the left heel touch the ground, and raising the left arm above the head, reaching up and stretching the fingers toward the ceiling, with the right heel raised off the floor, noticing whatever sensations arise with this stretch, perhaps becoming aware of any difference in sensations from when you did it with the right arm. Then letting the left arm drop back to the side and the right heel touch the ground, returning to standing with both feet flat on the ground, arms resting at the sides.

And then repeating the stretch, first the right arm lifting and stretching, left foot raised, holding, then lowering the right arm and left heel, then left arm raised and reaching up, right heel lifted, holding, then returning to standing with both feet flat on the ground, arms resting at the sides.

Now raising both arms above the head, knees slightly bent, and bending at the waist, all the way over until the head hangs down, fingers pointing toward the floor, allowing them to rest

wherever it's comfortable, not pushing the body in any way. And just noticing what sensations arise when the body is bending in this way. Then slowly uncurling the body, one vertebra at a time, with the head coming up last to a standing position. And now repeating that, arms above the head, knees slightly bent, bending at the waist, head hanging down, fingers pointing toward the floor, then slowly uncurling to a standing position.

Now moving the right ear toward the right shoulder as far as it will comfortably go, then taking it back up, and moving the left ear toward the left shoulder and then up. And repeating that.

Then bending the head forward, chin toward the chest and rolling the head to the left, to the back, to the right, and back to the front again. Then rolling it in the other direction, first toward the chest then to the right, to the back, left, back to the front, and up again. Then rolling the head in both directions again.

Now raising the arms to the side, parallel to the floor, and lifting the right leg out to the side, and holding it wherever it feels comfortable, just standing, perhaps noticing the focus required to stay balanced. And also noticing any thoughts, particularly about not doing this right, and letting go of thoughts as you keep the attention on this position. Now lowering the right leg and allowing the arms to fall to the side and standing for a moment with eyes closed. Now raising the arms to the side again, parallel to the floor, and lifting the left leg out to the side, and holding it wherever it feels comfortable, not pushing your limits. Perhaps noticing any wobbling or shaking, which are normal when balancing on one leg. And then lowering the left leg and allowing the arms to fall to the side and standing for a moment with eyes closed. And now repeating that stretch, first with the right leg and then the left.

Now, with the left foot turned out at a 45-degree angle, moving the right leg forward, and bending the right knee into a lunge, left leg stretched out straight behind, and reaching the arms above the head, holding this stretch, paying mindful attention to any sensations in the body, not needing them to be any different than they are, in this moment. Then pushing back up with the right foot and leg to a standing position. Then, with the right foot turned out at a 45-degree angle, stepping forward with the left leg into a lunge, bending the left knee, right leg stretched out straight behind, and raising the arms above the head, and holding in this position. Then pushing back up with the left foot and leg to a standing position. Now repeating this lunge on both sides. And then resting in a standing position, eyes gently closed, taking the attention to the breath, each full in-breath and each full out-breath. Full awareness of breathing. And perhaps noticing any differences in how the body feels now compared to the start of the exercise. Remembering that there is no right way or wrong way to feel. Just bringing an attitude of curiosity and compassion to whatever you find in this moment.

## SESSION THEME: Willingness Switch and Being with Your Anxiety

- **Breath holding - Part 1 (Hayes & Smith, 2005, p.43)**

Group members are instructed to hold their breath for as long as they can, time it on their smart phones or watches, and write down how long they held it (or just remember the amount of time). Mention that a second part to the exercise will come later in session (and will be discussed then).

- **Willingness Switch (MAWSAS p. 57)**

**Sample Script:** In an earlier session we looked at how acceptance (willingness) is not the same as “wanting”. So with the Uncle Leo metaphor we saw that you could be willing to have him at your wedding without wanting him there.

Today we’re going to look at another aspect of willingness, that it is “all or nothing” sort of like a light switch that has only two positions, off and on. When your willingness switch is off, you are caught up in a struggle with your experience, whether that consists of just a little struggle or a whole lot of struggle. However, when your willingness switch is flipped on, you are completely open to your experience, allowing it to be exactly as it is. So this is different from a dimmer switch on a light that you can turn from low to high and everything in between. The problem with looking at willingness as a dimmer switch is that only the highest setting is free of resistance to anxiety. At lower settings you may be “resigned to” your anxiety experience, “tolerating” it, “grinning and bearing” it, or “white-knuckling” it (or whichever expressions fit for you), but only at the highest setting are you allowing your anxious thoughts and feelings to come and go as they will.

So in upcoming exercises, we will be inviting you to “flip on your willingness switch” as you practice bringing an attitude of acceptance and allowing to your anxious feelings and thoughts. If that sounds daunting, don’t worry; you get to choose certain details: exactly what you will do with your willingness switch on, for how long, and under which circumstances. We’ll proceed in a way that is sort of similar to learning how to jump off of something.

The willingness switch can be further described with the following “jumping metaphor”.

- **Jumping Metaphor**

**Sample Script:** You will be learning how to gradually strengthen your willingness switches in the same way you might learn how to jump off of something. You could start the learning process by practicing jumping off of a sheet of paper (therapist jumps off a piece of paper and demonstrates that jumping requires putting your body into space and letting gravity carry you down.). You could then move to a very thick book. That involves the same action (therapist jumps off a book). The same with a chair (therapist jumps off a chair). The action would basically be the same even jumping from a roof or from an airplane). And each time you jump it is an “all or nothing” action. Either you jump or you don’t. Of course you could decide to step off the paper/book/chair, etc. but that isn’t the same as jumping. You would be learning how to step but not to jump.

In the remaining group sessions (including this one), we will invite you to do exercises with your willingness switches “on”, not “stepping down from” your experience or tolerating/grinning and bearing your anxiety, but completely opening to your experience, and allowing it to be exactly as it is. AND, we will start with a piece of paper (so to speak) and gradually build to a book, chair, roof, airplane, whatever, depending on what your specific goals are. The journey will be different for everyone. Let’s start the journey right now by revisiting the breath holding exercise.

- **Breath holding - Part 2 (Hayes & Smith, 2005, p. 49-51)**

Group members are asked to hold their breath with their willingness switches “on” and time it as before. The following suggestions on “being willingly out of breath” can be read first.

Repeat a few of the instructions during the exercise as well.

As you hold your breath:

Notice exactly where the urge to breathe begins and ends in your body.

Feel the urge to breathe and at the same time continue to hold your breath.

Be willing to feel the urge.

Notice any thoughts that come up and gently thank your mind for them.

Pay close attention for thoughts that want to trick you into breathing before you actually make the decision to breathe (*to be said only prior to the exercise, not during*)

Notice any emotions and physical sensations that go along with the urge to breathe.

Be willing to experience them exactly as they are.

If your willingness switch goes “off” you are free to stop the exercise (i.e. to breathe!)

**Note:** Feedback about this exercise varies but typically at least one group member reports holding his/her breath longer with the willingness switch on. Those who don’t usually report they were too self-conscious about the exercise to follow the suggestions (good example of focusing on danger in safety mode).

- **Being with Your Anxiety Exercises: Prong 3 of Strengthening your abs (acceptance of bodily sensations)**

- therapist prep: read MAWSAS pgs. 71-76

Do several “being with your anxiety exercises” with the entire group. Options include breathing through a straw, running on the spot, head lifting, and hyperventilating. Follow each exercise with discussion of group members’ experiences.

**Sample Script:** The third and final “prong” of the approach for strengthening your “abs” is about paying mindful attention to your body as you purposely bring on bodily sensations of anxiety. We do this to practice “being with” these sensations with an attitude of willingness.

For each “being with your anxiety” exercise we will start by flipping our willingness switches to the “on” position. During each exercise, we will pay mindful attention, staying fully present to our direct experience of bodily sensations, opening up to and making room for all aspects of our experience (even if our minds tell us that we can’t have them), letting go of thoughts about our experience and urges to change it and control it. Two suggestions for maintaining that stance of willingness are:

*Be a friendly scientist.* Pay attention to your experience as if you were a friendly scientist encountering a new phenomenon: observing it with curiosity and trying to learn as much about it as you can, such as where the sensations start and end, their quality, intensity, and duration. Explore any urges to control, escape, or avoid your experience; what do they feel like?

*Make use of metaphors.* If your willingness switch flips off during an exercise and you start to resist your experience, try “dropping the rope” in your struggle with uncomfortable feelings, or try welcoming your sensations in the same way that you would “welcome Uncle Leo to the wedding” - can you not want them and still be willing to have them? However, if your willingness switch flips off, that’s fine; **it’s okay to stop the exercise at any time.**

- **Head Lift:** While seated on a chair move the head to the knees and back up again repeatedly for 30 seconds. This may bring on lightheadedness and warmth in the face. After 30

seconds, continue to sit willingly with the sensations (preferably with eyes closed) for another 30 seconds (*therapist reminds group members to stay fully present to direct experience of bodily sensations, opening up to and making room for all aspects of the experience, letting go of thoughts about the experience and urges to change it and control it*)

- **Straw Breathing:** While seated, breathe through a straw or coffee stir stick with nose plugged for 1 or 2 minutes. This may cause sensations of breathlessness and of smothering. After stopping the exercise continue to mindfully observe one's experience (preferably with eyes closed) for another 30 seconds (*as above, therapist reminds group members to remain open to and compassionate toward their experience*).
- **Running on the spot for 1 minute.** This may cause increased heart rate and feelings of warmth. After stopping the exercise continue to stand (preferably with eyes closed) and mindfully observe the experience for another 30 seconds (*as above, therapist reminds group members to remain open to and compassionate toward their experience*).
- **Hyperventilation:** While standing, breathe deeply through the mouth, full inhalations and exhalations, one breath every two seconds, for 1 minute or longer. This can result in many different sensations including breathlessness and dizziness. After stopping the exercise continue to stand (preferably with eyes closed) and mindfully observe one's experience for another 30 seconds (*as above, therapist reminds group members to remain open to and compassionate toward their experience*).

## HOMEWORK

-see “Session 5: Homework”

## **Session 5: Homework**

\*MAWSAS: The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### **1. Mindfulness Practice:**

**Mindful stretching, daily** (Mp3 recording, 5.2 is available to download from the New Harbinger website); written instructions for Mindful Stretching are on pgs 68-70 in MAWSAS\*. Continue to record mindfulness practices in your **Mindfulness Log**.

### **2. Being with Your Anxiety:**

Try out one or two “Being with your Anxiety” exercises each day, referring to the attached guidelines: **Exercise 5.3 Being with Your Anxiety**, and **Bringing on Bodily Sensations of Anxiety**. Record your experiences on the attached **Being with Your Anxiety Recording Form**. The relevant section for review in MAWSAS is on pgs 71-76.

### **3. Choosing-Goals Worksheet:**

If you have not already done so, complete the **Choosing-Goals Worksheet: Social Anxiety Group version** from Session 3, identifying several goals you can work toward in the latter sessions of our group. We will collect your completed worksheets next week (Session 6) and use them to guide us in planning exercises for the remaining group sessions.

## Mindfulness Log

Day	Mindfulness Activity	Observations
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

## Exercise 5.3 Being with Your Anxiety

There are five basic steps to follow each time you go through this “Being with Your Anxiety” exercise. (Note: each time you try out a specific action, it is considered a separate “session” of the exercise.)

**1. Choose relevant bodily sensations and suggested actions.** Each time you go through this exercise, we recommend choosing bodily sensations that you tend to struggle with on your social-anxiety playing field. Once you have chosen a sensation to work with, you may need to experiment with the suggested actions from the previous table to see which one (if any) brings it on and how long you need to do the action to bring on the sensation. Often, increasing the duration of the suggested actions will increase the intensity of sensations. Note that some suggested actions may bring on more than one sensation (for example, deep breathing can bring on shortness of breath, palpitations, and dizziness).

**2. Set your intention.** Start by setting your intention to “flip on your willingness switch,” to stay fully present to your direct experience of bodily sensations during the exercise.

**3. Pay mindful attention during the exercise.** As you do the exercise, pay mindful attention: opening up and making room for all aspects of your experience, and letting go of thoughts about it and urges to change it and control it. Two suggestions for maintaining that stance of willingness are:

*Be a friendly scientist.* Pay attention to your experience as if you were a friendly scientist encountering a new phenomenon: observing it with curiosity and trying to learn as much about it as you can, such as where the sensations start and end, their quality, intensity, and duration. Explore any urges to control, escape, or avoid your experience; what do they feel like?

*Make use of metaphors.* If your willingness switch flips off during an exercise and you start to resist your experience, try “dropping the rope” in your struggle with uncomfortable feelings, or try welcoming your sensations in the same way that you would “welcome Uncle Leo to the wedding.” However, if your willingness switch flips off, that’s fine; it’s okay to stop the exercise. As mentioned in the previous chapter, you get to decide how long to keep your willingness switch flipped on. With repeated practice, your switch will gradually strengthen, and you will be able to keep it on for longer and longer periods.

**4. End the exercise.** As mentioned before, you can stop an exercise at any time if your willingness switch flips off. Otherwise, keep paying mindful attention to your experience until the

intensity of your bodily sensations has returned to baseline (the level where it was before you started the exercise).

**5. Record the exercise.** When you finish an exercise, record your observations on the following “Abs Recording Form,” including comments about what you might do differently the next time (for example, do it for less time, or more; try a different action to bring on sensations).

Now, take five to ten minutes to try out the “Being with Your Anxiety” exercise with one of the suggested actions on your own, noting your observations on the following recording form. (As mentioned earlier in the chapter, you can also use the recording form for the “Body Scan” and “Mindful Stretching” exercises. Whenever you do the “Being with Your Anxiety” exercise, be sure to note the sensations you targeted and how you brought them on. We recommend that you download the form at [www.newharbiner.com/20801](http://www.newharbiner.com/20801) and keep it handy.)

## **Bringing on Bodily Sensations of Anxiety**

The following table includes suggested actions for bringing on eleven specific bodily sensations of anxiety for the “Being with Your Anxiety” exercises

<b>Bodily Sensations of Anxiety</b>	<b>Suggested Actions</b>
Sweating or flushing	Put on heavy clothing, cover up in blankets, or both, and then turn up the temperature in your home (if possible, or use a space heater); or sit in a sauna at the gym until you start to sweat or notice flushing.
Blushing	This can be a tough one to bring on. One possibility is to imagine a situation that you suspect will bring on blushing (such as noticing that you had food in your teeth throughout a conversation and so on). Also, if one of your concerns about blushing is appearing red in the face, you can try bringing that on with the previous suggestions for sweating (your face may turn red when it’s warm).
Trembling	Grip a glass or other object tightly, until your hand starts to tremble; hold a push-up until your arms start to tremble; balance on one leg until it starts to tremble.
Dry mouth	Put absorbent material in your mouth to soak up any saliva; the rolls that your dentist uses would work well.
Palpitations	Run in place until you notice your heart racing; step up and down repeatedly on stairs or an exercise step.
Muscle tension	Hold a push-up position or tense all your muscles until you notice tension (often after about one minute).
Blurry vision	Stare at a light for about one minute and then read a paragraph.
Trouble swallowing	Swallow quickly for about four times; apply pressure to your throat for about one minute.
Shortness of breath (breathlessness)	Stand up and breathe deeply through your mouth for about one minute; hold your breath for about thirty seconds; breathe through a small straw with your nose plugged for one to two minutes.
Dizziness or vertigo	Shake your head back and forth for about thirty seconds; lay your head on your knees and sit back up repeatedly for about thirty seconds (head lifts); spin in a chair for about one minute, or just stand and spin around (then stand still without holding on to anything).
Feelings of unreality	Stare at a spot for about two minutes, stare at your hand for about three minutes, or stare at yourself in the mirror for about two minutes.
Other sensations not previously listed	Record your own suggestions for bringing on the sensations:

## Being with Your Anxiety Recording Form

Date	Sensation targeted	Exercise	Observations
	<b>Example:</b> dizziness	<b>Example:</b> Spin in a chair for 30 seconds	<b>Example:</b> Dizziness wasn't very intense; try 45 seconds next time

# **SESSION 6**

Taking VITAL Action

## **Session 6**

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### **SUMMARY**

#### **MINDFULNESS EXERCISE: Mindful Seeing, Acceptance of Feelings and Thoughts, Guest House poem**

- Mindful seeing, MAWSAS pgs. 61-62; see below
- Acceptance of Feelings and Thoughts exercise is not in MAWSAS (see script for the exercise below)
- group members pair up to discuss their experiences of the exercises followed by sharing with the group

#### **HOMEWORK REVIEW:**

- review Mindful Stretching practice (Mp3 recording 5.2)
- review “Being with your anxiety” exercises

#### **SESSION THEME: Introduction to “Taking VITAL Action” Exercises**

- see below for details

#### **HOMEWORK SUMMARY:**

-see Session 6: Homework for details

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## Mindful Seeing

*Group members move to a spot at a window and look outside. (If no windows available, choose an alternate location).*

We are going to pay attention to sights as best we can, to pure sensations of seeing,  
Letting go of categories that we normally use to make sense of what we are looking at,  
Instead of labelling what we see as a car or a tree or a building,  
Just seeing patterns of colour and shape and movement.

When you notice thinking *about* what is being seen, gently bringing the attention back to pure sensations of seeing.

Perhaps try focusing on a very small feature in your field of vision, and then spread your awareness out to the whole field of vision.

And when you notice that your mind has wandered away from seeing, again gently bringing your attention back to seeing, without giving yourself a hard time,  
And doing this for a couple minutes.

*Group members move back to their seats for the next exercise.*

## Acceptance of Feelings and Thoughts

First taking a few moments to get in touch with the movement of your breath and the sensations in the body, perhaps bringing awareness to the sensations of touch or pressure, where your body makes contact with the chair or floor.

Now, slowly bringing your attention to the gentle rising and falling of the breath in your chest and belly. Like ocean waves coming in and out, the breath is always there. Noticing its rhythm in the body. Focusing on each inhale ... and exhale. Notice the changing patterns of sensations in your belly as you breathe in, and as you breathe out. Taking a few moments to feel the physical sensations as you breathe in and as you breathe out.

There is no need to try to control breathing in any way—simply letting the breath breathe itself. As best you can, also bringing this attitude of generous allowing and gentle acceptance to the rest of your experience. There is nothing to be fixed, no particular state to be achieved. As best you can, simply allowing your experience to be your experience, without needing it to be other than what it is.

You may become aware of bodily sensations, or emotions, or tension. If so, just noticing these experiences, acknowledging their presence, and seeing if you can make space for them. Not trying to hold on to them or make them go away. See if you can open your heart and make some room for any discomfort, for tension, for anxiety, just sitting with your experience. Is there enough space in you to welcome in all of your experience?

Perhaps watching sensations and emotions change from moment to moment, sometimes growing stronger, sometimes staying the same, and sometimes growing weaker—it does not matter. Simply breathing calmly in *to* and out *from* any sensations of discomfort.

Sooner or later, the mind will wander to thoughts, images, planning, or just drifting along. This is what minds do much of the time. Perhaps try naming your thoughts as you notice them. If you notice you are worrying, silently saying to yourself, “Worry … there is worry” just observing worry and not getting caught up in it. If you find yourself judging, just notice that and call it “Judging … there is judging” and observe that with a quality of kindness and compassion. You can do the same with other thoughts, naming them as *planning, reminiscing, longing*, or whatever you experience.

As best you can, bringing a quality of kindness and compassion to your awareness, perhaps seeing the repeated wanderings of your mind as opportunities to bring patience and gentle curiosity to your experience.

Thoughts and feelings come and go in the mind and body. You are not what those thoughts and feelings say, no matter how persistent or intense they may be.

Now letting go of attention to feelings and thoughts and listening to a poem, The Guest House\*.

This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,

still, treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond

*End with Bell.*

\*By Rumi, quoted in **Mindfulness- Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression: A New Approach to Preventing Relapse**, by Zindel Segal, Mark Williams & John Teasdale, The Guilford Press, New York, 2002., p.222.

## **SESSION THEME: Introduction to “Taking VITAL Action” Exercises**

- therapist prep: read MAWSAS pgs. 95-100, 112-119, 123-125

### **Taking VITAL Action Exercises**

These are similar to exposure exercises in CBT but are carried out with an acceptance, instead of extinction, rationale. Alternative terms are “mindful exposure” and “willingness exercises”.

**Sample Script:** Today we embark on the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of our journey together in this group. In the 1<sup>st</sup> five sessions of the group we covered the basic skills of the ACT approach to social anxiety, skills to assist you in shifting from “safety mode” to “vital-action mode”. We covered values and goals, mindfulness, the observer perspective, and defusion strategies. And we explored the willingness switch and a three-pronged approach to strengthening your “abs”: acceptance of bodily sensations.

Today we are putting those skills together into an approach for taking “vital action” in social situations. We’ll be practicing vital action in session and for homework with “taking VITAL Action” exercises. The word “VITAL” (in capital letters) will serve as an acronym as we proceed, a handy way for you to remember to use your new skills. “V” will prompt you to base your actions on your *values and goals*; “I” is to remind you to remain *in the present moment*; “T” is for *taking notice* of your feelings, thoughts, and urges (from your observer perspective); and “AL” is for *allowing* your experience to be exactly as it is. Let’s take a closer look at VITAL.

- Review the acronym “VITAL” using whiteboard

<b>V</b>	Identify your <i>values and goals</i> . (Hint: Values guide your actions and are never “finished”; goals are things you can check off and say you’re done with.)
<b>I</b>	Remain <i>in the present moment</i> , first anchoring your attention to the breath and then shifting your focus to, and staying fully present with, what really matters in the situation; revisit your anchor as needed when your focus drifts from the present moment.
<b>T</b>	<i>Take notice</i> of your experience from your observer perspective (perhaps embodying your inner mountain or another observer image), noticing feelings, thoughts, and urges to use safety behaviors (including avoidance).
<b>AL</b>	<i>Allow</i> your experience to be exactly as it is, with the assistance of metaphors (flip on your willingness switch, drop the rope, welcome Uncle Leo, and so on) and defusion strategies (labeling, thank your mind, and so on). Try bringing attitudes of curiosity, openness, compassion, and acceptance to your experience.

Now let’s proceed to our first “taking VITAL action” exercise with some social situations that involve being observed by others.

**Note:** Taking VITAL action exercises are always negotiated with the group (for exercises involving the entire group) and with individual group members (for individual exercises) beforehand. People are given the option to sit out of group exercises if they don’t believe their willingness switch can stay on for most of the exercise and/or if it is not an anxiety-provoking situation for them (in the latter circumstance most prefer to do them anyway). For individual exercises, group members can choose certain details: exactly what they will do with the

willingness switch on, for how long, and under which circumstances (for example, *I will do a role play of a job interview with X for two minutes, only if he asks me easy questions*).

### **BEING OBSERVED:**

- **Entering the Room with everyone else seated:**

Ask group members to identify their values and goals related to entering rooms. Identify what they would typically focus on when entering a room where everyone else is seated (e.g. anxious sensations), what types of thoughts and feelings show up as they anticipate doing the activity, and which safety behaviours they might have the urge to use during the activity (e.g. look down, find the closest seat, walk quickly, etc.).

Each group member then takes a turn leaving the room and re-entering, in VITAL-action mode, with everyone else seated. An eyes-closed review of **VITAL** (as a group) is conducted briefly before each person takes their turn. The following script can be used and modified for all “taking VITAL action” exercises to be carried out in this session, and remaining sessions.

#### **Values and Goals**

- Get in touch with what is important to you about (*identify the activity*). What valued goal are you working toward?

#### **Into the Present Moment**

- Coming into the present moment and anchoring attention to the breath, following each inbreath and each outbreath. And as you (*mention the activity*), shifting your focus to what really matters; revisiting your anchor as needed when your focus drifts from the present moment.

#### **Take notice**

- Taking notice of your inner experience from your observer perspective (perhaps embodying your inner mountain or another observer image).
- Noticing physical sensations (e.g., sweating, blushing, rapid heartbeat).
- Noticing emotions (e.g., fear, anger).
- Noticing thoughts (*provide examples relevant to the specific activity*).
- Noticing urges to protect yourself with safety behaviours (*provide examples relevant to the specific activity*).

#### **Allow**

- Allowing your experience to be exactly as it is.
- Bringing a gentle curiosity, openness, and compassion to your internal experiences.
- Leaning into the anxiety, as you leaned into the finger trap.
- Dropping the rope in your struggle with anxiety.
- Using defusion strategies (labeling, thanking your mind, and so on).
- Putting your willingness switch to “On”.

The exercise is followed by discussion of group members’ experiences in doing the exercise.

- **Making eye contact** (With a small group there may be time to do the following exercise. If not, proceed to “Get-to-Know-You Conversations” and save “eye contact” for the next session).

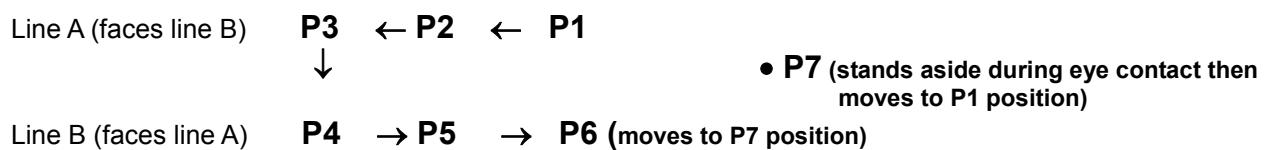


Ask if group members are willing to make eye contact in pairs for 5 seconds (if someone suggests a shorter duration such as 3 seconds, go with that).

Review values and goals related to making eye contact; and ask about thoughts, feelings and urges to use safety behaviours that are likely to show up during the exercise.

Stand in 2 rows facing each other. This exercise works best with an odd number of participants, with one person standing aside during each iteration of the exercise. A therapist can join the exercise if there is an even number of group members in attendance.

Review VITAL with eyes closed, then group members make eye contact with the person they are standing across from for the agreed upon duration; switch partners by moving positions as indicated in following diagram (where P1= participant #1, etc.).



Repeat VITAL with eyes closed then make eye contact with new partner; keep repeating until group members arrive at their original positions.

The exercise is followed by discussion of group members’ experiences in doing the exercise.

- **Other:** Other options for “being observed” exercises (if entering room and eye contact are not suitable for a particular group) include: walking past another person and smiling; being observed doing a number of different activities such as throwing a ball, exercising, pouring drinks, drinking, eating, writing, singing, dancing, etc.

### **GET-TO-KNOW-YOU CONVERSATIONS:**

Get-to-know-you conversations are done in pairs (with one trio if there is an odd number of group members); switch partners after each conversation until each group member has spoken at least once to each other group member (time permitting)

Suggest a 5-minute duration for each conversation. This is negotiable depending on group members’ ability to keep their willingness switches “on” during the conversations.

Before starting, ask people to identify values and goals related to conversations, and safety behaviours (SBs) they might have the urge to use during the conversations.

Before each conversation, do a brief, eyes-closed review of VITAL (discourage use of this time to plan what to say if that was identified by some group members as a SB).

Discuss group members’ experiences after *each* conversation. Be sure to ask if they used any safety behaviours and target those in the next round of conversations (*e.g. “this time around notice the urge to keep your eyes down/ask questions/talk fast/say little, etc. and allow the urge to be present as you do what matters to you in the conversation”*).

- Review “VITAL-Action Worksheet - Alice’s Example” and “Weekly Schedule - Alice’s Example” (see below) as lead in to Homework

### **HOMEWORK**

- see **Session 6: Homework**
- Have group members identify at least one action they will carry out for homework (and write it on the Weekly Schedule)
- collect remaining “Choosing-Goals Worksheets”

# VITAL-Action Worksheet - Alice's Example

**My action/Step:** stand in the longest check-out line at the grocery store

## 1. Preparing for VITAL Action

**V:** What are the values and goals underlying the action?

**Goal:** shop on my way home from work when it's convenient for me (even if stores are busy)

**Value(s):** efficiency

**I:** How will you remain in the present moment during the action?

-connect with my breath and feel the sensation of my feet on the floor

**T:** What internal experiences are you likely to take notice of during the action (using which observer image)? And

**AL:** What strategies can you use to allow your experience to be while taking action?

**Observer image:** I'll watch from my inner mountain.

**Feelings:** Sweating is sure to show up; welcome it

**Thoughts:** People can see me sweating and think I'm weird; thank my mind for that thought

**Urges to use safety behaviours:** Notice the urge to go to the shortest line and allow it to be there without acting on it

**Other preparation:** Do a "being with your anxiety" sweating exercise the night before

## 2. Debriefing VITAL Action

**What happened, including successes and barriers?** I started to sweat and ended up choosing the shortest line

**Actions to address barriers, if applicable:** I'll review "VITAL" in my mind before joining the line-up the next time; I'll choose the 2<sup>nd</sup> longest line instead of the longest

## **Weekly Schedule - Alice's Example**

(For VITAL-action exercises that involve being observed & conversations)

<b>Sunday</b>	<i>-stand in the longest check-out line at the grocery store -ask the cashier how his/her day is going</i>
<b>Monday</b>	<i>-order a bowl of soup at the Eaton Centre after asking the server which one he/she would recommend -sit in the food court and eat the soup for 5 minutes</i>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<i>-take a place near the teacher at yoga class -ask the teacher how he/she got interested in yoga</i>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<i>-ride up and down the elevator at noon hour in my office building, 3 times -make eye contact and smile at three people while doing the above</i>
<b>Thursday</b>	<i>-sit in the front row at class -ask the person next to me his/her opinion of the class</i>
<b>Friday</b>	<i>-choose the most crowded car on the subway and stand near the door, or sit between two people if a seat is available</i>
<b>Saturday</b>	<i>-throw a ball with my son in the playground with other parents present/watching, for 10 minutes -make small talk with a parent for 2 minutes</i>

## **Session 6: Homework**

\*MAWSAS: The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### **1. Mindfulness Practice:**

Each day practice with one or more of the audio downloads from previous sessions: The Observing Mountain, Body Scan, Awareness of Thinking, and Mindful Stretching.

For a few minutes each day practice mindfulness of daily activities such as eating, seeing, and hearing.

Continue to record mindfulness practices in your **Mindfulness Log**.

### **2. VITAL-Action Exercises:**

Read MAWSAS\*, Chapter 7: pgs 99-100 and 114-119.

Using the **Weekly Schedule** (attached) plan for one or two daily VITAL-action exercises that involve being observed by others and brief conversations. For suggestions see pgs 123-125 in MAWSAS\*.

For each exercise complete a **VITAL-Action Worksheet** (one copy is attached; you can make additional copies or download copies at <http://www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-and-acceptance-workbook-social-anxiety-and-shyness>). Fill in Part 1 of the worksheet, **Preparing for VITAL Action**, before doing an exercise. Fill in Part 2, **Debriefing VITAL Action**, after completing an exercise.

A **VITAL Action** handout is attached which might be helpful for you to keep with you as a reminder of the 4 parts of VITAL.

## Mindfulness Log

Day	Mindfulness Activity	Observations
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

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## Weekly Schedule

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

## VITAL-Action Worksheet

My Action/Step: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Preparing for VITAL Action

**V:** What are the values and goals underlying the action?

Value(s):\_\_\_\_\_ Goal(s):\_\_\_\_\_

**I:** How will you remain in the present moment during the action?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**T:** What internal experiences are you likely to take notice of during the action (using which observer image)? and

**AL:** What strategies can you use to allow your experience to be while taking action?

observer image: \_\_\_\_\_

feelings: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

urges to use safety behaviors: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Other preparation:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Debriefing VITAL Action

What happened, including successes and barriers? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Actions to address barriers, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## VITAL Action

As you take action on your social-anxiety playing field, you can use the following skills to guide you in each and every action:

- V* Identify your *values and goals*. (Hint: Values guide your actions and are never “finished”; goals are things you can check off and say you’re done with.)
- I* Remain *in the present moment*, first anchoring your attention to the breath and then shifting your focus to, and staying fully present with, what really matters in the situation; revisit your anchor as needed when your focus drifts from the present moment.
- T* Take notice of your experience from your observer perspective (perhaps embodying your inner mountain or another observer image), noticing feelings, thoughts, and urges to use safety behaviors (including avoidance).
- AL* Allow your experience to be exactly as it is, with the assistance of metaphors (flip on your willingness switch, drop the rope, welcome Uncle Leo, and so on) and defusion strategies (labeling, thank your mind, and so on). Try bringing attitudes of curiosity, openness, compassion, and acceptance to your experience.

# **SESSION 7**

Taking VITAL Action (continued)  
and Goal Stepping

## **Session 7**

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### **SUMMARY**

#### **MINDFULNESS EXERCISE: Imagining VITAL action**

- Imagining VITAL action, Exercise 7.1, see below
- therapist prep: read MAWSAS: pgs. 100-103
- group members pair up to discuss their experiences of the exercise followed by sharing with the group

#### **HOMEWORK REVIEW:**

- Daily practice with one or more of: The Observing Mountain, Body Scan, Awareness of Thinking, and Mindful Stretching
- Mindfulness of daily activities such as eating, hearing, and seeing
- Daily VITAL Action exercises that involve being observed by others and brief conversations

#### **SESSION THEME: Taking VITAL Action (continued) and Goal Stepping**

- see below for details

#### **HOMEWORK SUMMARY:**

- see **Session 7: Homework** for details
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## Exercise 7.1 Imagining VITAL Action

This exercise is meant to provide you with an opportunity to practice taking VITAL action in your imagination.

Start by getting into a comfortable position, in a chair or lying down, and allowing your eyes to close gently.

Now bring to mind a situation where you want to take action. Imagine where you are and who you are with, including as many details of the situation as necessary to bring it to life in your mind's eye.

Next, beginning with the “V” in VITAL, representing your “values and goals,” get in touch with the value or values that will guide those actions. Why do the actions matter to you? Why are they important? Also, what do you want to accomplish with your actions? Where will they take you? What is your goal?

Now, moving to the “I” in VITAL, “in the present moment,” take a few moments to connect with your breathing, coming into the present moment as you pay attention to each complete in-breath, and each complete out-breath, noticing the rising and falling of the breath in your chest and belly. There is no need to control your breathing in any way—simply letting the breath breathe itself, and doing this for several moments, until you are fully present with your breathing. Throughout the remainder of this exercise, whenever your mind wanders from the task at hand, try revisiting the breath as a way of reconnecting with the present moment, and with the exercise.

Now, imagine yourself taking action as you remain focused on your valued goals. And, as you do this, shifting to the final three letters of VITAL, “T,” for taking notice of your experience, and “A-L,” allowing it to be exactly as it is.

First, noticing any feelings that arise, perhaps observing them from your inner mountain, using another image, or simply watching them. Has fear shown up? Has tension arrived?

Has your heart quickened, or is it hard to catch your breath? Whichever feelings appear, simply observing them with acceptance and compassion, not struggling with them.

Next, noticing thoughts arising about the situation, perhaps worries, evaluations, or mind reading—whatever they are, simply watching your thoughts coming and going. There is no need to think of something else, make the thoughts go away, or resolve anything. Can you thank your mind for anxious thoughts, or defuse from them in another way?

Finally, observing any urges to use safety behaviors, such as hiding your feelings or escaping from the situation. Simply acknowledging any urges and letting go of the need to act on them.

And now, can you make room for the entirety of your experience? Is it something you *must* struggle with, or can you invite it in, saying to yourself with willingness, *Let me feel what there is to be felt because it is my experience right now?*

And, as you gently open up to your experience, watching yourself continue to take action in your imagined situation, focused on what really matters. And doing this for a bit longer.

And when you are ready, letting go of the imagined situation with its accompanying feelings, thoughts, and urges, and directing your focus back to your breath.

Then, gradually widening your attention to take in the sounds in the room. And taking a moment to make the intention to bring this sense of gentle allowing and self-acceptance into the present moment. And when you are ready, slowly opening your eyes.

## **SESSION THEME: Taking VITAL Action (continued) and Goal Stepping**

### **Taking VITAL Action (continued)**

- In this session, and the remaining group sessions, Taking VITAL Action exercises are based as much as possible on goals identified in group members' **Choosing-Goals Worksheets** (or other goals they identify)
- The actual exercises carried out can vary considerably from group to group depending on: the specific goals of group members, overlap in goals among group members, number of people present at a specific session, number of therapists available, and availability of additional clinic staff to participate in role plays.
- Some exercises can be done with the entire group, in small groups, in pairs, or even individually (depending on therapist availability; for example, if there are two therapists, one could work individually with a group member while the other therapist works with the remaining group members).
- In Session 7 we often do the eye contact exercise if it wasn't done in the previous session, and continue with situations that involve conversations. Popular exercises include: discussing or debating a topic, initiating and/or ending conversations, expressing conflicting opinions, and sharing personal information.
- After agreeing on the details of a Taking VITAL Action exercise, and before starting the exercise, identify related values, goals, safety behaviours and difficult internal experiences that may show up, followed by eyes-closed instructions on taking VITAL Action:

#### **Eyes-closed instructions on taking VITAL Action**

##### **Values and Goals**

- Get in touch with what is important to you about (*identify the activity*). What valued goal are you working toward?

##### **Into the Present Moment**

- Coming into the present moment and anchoring attention to the breath, following each inbreath and each outbreath. As you (*mention the activity*), shifting your focus to what really matters; revisiting your anchor as needed when your focus drifts from the present moment.

##### **Take notice**

- Taking notice of your inner experience from your observer perspective (perhaps embodying your inner mountain or another observer image).
- Noticing physical sensations (e.g., sweating, blushing, rapid heart beat).
- Noticing emotions (e.g., fear, anger).
- Noticing thoughts (*provide examples relevant to the specific activity*).
- Noticing urges to protect yourself with safety behaviours (*provide examples relevant to the specific activity*).

##### **Allow**

- Allowing your experience to be exactly as it is.
- Bringing a gentle curiosity, openness, and compassion to your internal experiences.
- Leaning into the anxiety, as you leaned into the finger trap.
- Dropping the rope in your struggle with anxiety.
- Using defusion strategies (labeling, thanking your mind, and so on).
- Putting your willingness switch to "On".

- After each exercise, discuss group members' experiences.

## **Suggested Topics for Taking VITAL Action exercises:**

### **Job related:**

- job interview
- speak up at a meeting
- talk to boss: conversation, ask for raise, address a problem, express opinion
- talk to coworkers: coffee break, lunch, greetings, etc.
- give feedback to employee, subordinate

### **School related:**

- speak up in class, ask professor a question, talk with classmates

### **Miscellaneous:**

- ask someone for a date, be on a date, decline a date
  - make a toast, give a eulogy
  - give a presentation or other public speaking
  - play an instrument, sing, dance, “walk down the aisle”
  - return item to a store, send food back at a restaurant
  - ask someone to change their behaviour
  - speak to someone in authority
  - decline a request
  - host/attend a party; eat a meal together
- 

## **Goal Stepping**



- therapist prep: MAWSAS, pgs. 108-111
- review goal stepping, using Camille's Goal-Stepping Worksheets as examples (see below)
- have group members select one goal from their “**Choosing-Goals Worksheets**”, break it into steps and record them on a “**Goal-Stepping Worksheet**” (have them do this on their own, while therapist(s) circulate and assist)
- group members then schedule at least one of those steps into a **Weekly Schedule** for the upcoming week and share the step with the group, if willing

## **HOMEWORK**

- see **Session 7: Homework**
- Ask group members to come prepared next session with ideas for Taking VITAL Action exercises they would like to do in group. Mention that some exercises may require a week's notice to plan for (e.g. if additional staff are to be asked to participate, purchase of food, etc.)

## Camille’s Goal-Stepping Worksheet for a Long-Term Goal

<b>My goal is:</b> <i>to find a new job.</i>
Step 1: <i>Attend workshop on résumé writing held at my local employment center.</i>
Step 2: <i>Update résumé and show it to my parents for feedback.</i>
Step 3: <i>Show résumé to Maggie and Bill for feedback.</i>
Step 4: <i>Send résumé to four potential employers.</i>
Step 5: <i>Call Aunt Sylvia and Cousin Charlie, and share that my goal is to find a new job.</i>
Step 6: <i>Call former colleagues (Jennifer and Dave) to “network.”</i>
Step 7: <i>Call two potential employers about getting an interview.</i>
Step 8: <i>Practice interview in front of the mirror.</i>
Step 9: <i>Practice interview with my parents.</i>
Step 10: <i>Attend interview.</i>

Note that Camille was fairly specific about “where” and “with whom” she would carry out her steps.

## Camille’s Goal-Stepping Worksheet for Short-Term Goal I

<b>My goal is:</b> <i>to talk to one person at least once a day.</i>
Step 1: <i>Make comment to next-door neighbor about the weather.</i>
Step 2: <i>Ask clerk at grocery store how her day is going.</i>
Step 3: <i>Ask receptionist at the gym about spinning classes.</i>
Step 4: <i>Initiate conversation with Maggie at coffee break (five minutes).</i>
Step 5: <i>Chat with coworker in the lunchroom (ten minutes).</i>
Step 6: <i>Call Andrea after work (talk for fifteen minutes).</i>

The next worksheet is for Camille’s goal of working out on the treadmill at the gym. You may recall her fear of sweating (from chapter 3). She had avoided using the treadmill because of her concern that she would work up a sweat and people would judge her as “pathetic.” Here is her strategy for gradually stepping toward a good workout on the treadmill (sweat and all!).

## Camille’s Goal-Stepping Worksheet for Short-Term Goal 2

<p><b>My goal is:</b> <i>to work out on the treadmill at the gym.</i></p>
<p><b>Step 1:</b> <i>Walk at a moderate pace for five minutes on the treadmill.</i></p>
<p><b>Step 2:</b> <i>Walk at a moderate pace for fifteen minutes on the treadmill.</i></p>
<p><b>Step 3:</b> <i>Run at a moderate pace for five minutes on the treadmill.</i></p>
<p><b>Step 4:</b> <i>Run at a moderate pace for fifteen minutes on the treadmill.</i></p>
<p><b>Step 5:</b> <i>Run at a fast pace for five minutes on the treadmill.</i></p>
<p><b>Step 6:</b> <i>Run at a fast pace for fifteen minutes on the treadmill.</i></p>

Note that Camille specified “for how long” she would do each action. Now it’s your turn to break one of your goals into steps (you will have an opportunity later in the book to break down the remainder of your goals). There is room for ten steps on the “Goal-Stepping Worksheet” (available for download at [www.newharbinger.com/20801](http://www.newharbinger.com/20801) as you need); however, depending on the goal, you may need fewer or more than ten steps.

## Goal-Stepping Worksheet

My goal is: _____.
Step 1:
Step 2:
Step 3:
Step 4:
Step 5:
Step 6:
Step 7:
Step 8:
Step 9:
Step 10:

## **Session 7: Homework**

\*MAWSAS: The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### **1. Mindfulness Practice:**

Imagining VITAL Action, daily (Mp3 recording, 7.1 is available to download from the New Harbinger website). Written instructions for Imagining VITAL Action are on pgs 101-102 in MAWSAS\*.

Continue to practice mindfulness of daily activities such as eating, hearing and seeing.

Continue to record mindfulness practices in your **Mindfulness Log**.

### **2. Goal Stepping:**

In class you chose one goal from your **Choosing-Goals Worksheet**, and broke it into steps which you recorded on a **Goal-Stepping Worksheet**. For homework, repeat that process for each of the remaining goals that you plan to work toward in the next few weeks. For more on goal stepping, see pgs 108-111 of MAWSAS.

Once you have completed the **Goal-Stepping Worksheets**, choose several steps that are feasible for you to carry out during the upcoming week and mark them on a **Weekly Schedule**. Aim to carry out at least one action per day.

### **3. Taking VITAL Action:**

For each step/action included on your **Weekly Schedule**, complete a **VITAL-Action Worksheet**: Fill in Part 1 of the worksheet, **Preparing for VITAL Action**, before doing an action. Fill in Part 2, **Debriefing VITAL Action**, after completing an action.

**Please Note:** Copies of the **Goal-Stepping Worksheet**, **Weekly Schedule**, and **VITAL-Action Worksheet** are attached. Additional copies can be downloaded at [www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-and-acceptance-workbook-social-anxiety-and-shyness](http://www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-and-acceptance-workbook-social-anxiety-and-shyness).

**REMINDER:** As discussed in class, please bring ideas for Taking VITAL Action exercises you would like to do in the remaining sessions of the group.

## Goal-Stepping Worksheet

My goal is: \_\_\_\_\_.

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:

Step 6:

Step 7:

Step 8:

Step 9:

Step 10:

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## Weekly Schedule

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

## VITAL-Action Worksheet

My Action/Step: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Preparing for VITAL Action

**V:** What are the values and goals underlying the action?

Value(s):\_\_\_\_\_ Goal(s):\_\_\_\_\_

**I:** How will you remain in the present moment during the action?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**T:** What internal experiences are you likely to take notice of during the action (using which observer image)? and

**AL:** What strategies can you use to allow your experience to be while taking action?

observer image: \_\_\_\_\_

feelings: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

urges to use safety behaviors: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Other preparation:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Debriefing VITAL Action

What happened, including successes and barriers? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Actions to address barriers, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# **SESSION 8**

Taking VITAL Action (continued)

## **Session 8**

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### **SUMMARY**

#### **MINDFULNESS EXERCISE: Cultivating Self-Compassion**

- The Cultivating Self-Compassion exercise is not in MAWSAS (see script for the exercise below)
- group members pair up to discuss their experiences of the exercise followed by sharing with the group

#### **HOMEWORK REVIEW:**

- Imagining VITAL Action, daily
- Mindfulness of daily activities such as eating, hearing, and seeing
- Complete Goal-Stepping Worksheets, Weekly Schedule
- Daily Taking VITAL Action exercises

#### **SESSION THEME: Taking VITAL Action Exercises**

- see below for details

#### **HOMEWORK SUMMARY:**

- see **Session 8: Homework** for details
-

## Cultivating Self-Compassion

**Preamble:** This guided visualization has two parts: The first part is about developing a compassionate image. The second part is about developing feelings of compassion toward yourself. In each part you don't have to have any particular feelings or emotions - just by committing to do the exercise you are setting an intention to incline the mind and heart towards compassion.

Begin by taking a posture that allows you to feel a sense of being firmly rooted and alert. We are cultivating a specific quality of mind that includes focused intention and commitment. Taking a posture of gentle uprightness and dignity will help you cultivate this quality of mind. If it feels comfortable allow the eyes to close or simply choose a spot on the floor to focus the gaze on.

Begin by simply noticing how it feels to breathe in and to breathe out. Perhaps a gentle expansion as you breathe in, and releasing or dissolving as you breathe out. Perhaps a sense of spaciousness as you breathe in, and a sense of grounding or rootedness as you breathe out.

### Compassionate image

The first step in cultivating a compassionate image is to connect to the feeling in your own body and breath. For example, a felt quality of compassion might be spaciousness or expansiveness, that is, the ability to hold what is already happening. You might notice this quality is already present in your breath. Take a few breaths and see if you can connect to that physical feeling of space, the expansion as you inhale and dissolving as you exhale.

Another felt quality of compassion is that of being centered or grounded and rooted. See if you can feel that quality, perhaps in your feet connected to the earth, and your seat connected to the chair. Perhaps you feel the centered balance of the spine as it lengthens up out of the pelvis, perhaps a physical, visceral feeling of being grounded and centered.

Another felt quality of compassion is that of warmth, or perhaps of energy or action. And you can feel this in your own heartbeat. Perhaps you can sense your own heartbeat or your own pulse. Feel free to take your hand to your heart or your wrist where you can feel that action and warmth of your own heart or pulse.

And letting your hands rest back down again, and allowing yourself to experience a felt quality of compassion in your whole body and breath.

Now, bring to mind someone who represents for you a supremely compassionate being. This could be a person you know now or knew in the past. It could be a religious figure or even an animal. This person or being would have the qualities of caring, acceptance, wisdom and strength. You do not need to worry about choosing the perfect person or being for this image, just accept that whoever or whatever comes to mind for now is good enough for this exercise.

As you picture this being notice what it feels like to be in their presence. Now, imagine that you too, in the presence of this compassionate being could embody these qualities of compassion: of strength, wisdom, caring and acceptance. Imagine and feel yourself as a compassionate being with these qualities. Now imagine that you could breathe in and out through the heart area or the

centre of the chest, picturing or sensing a warm glowing light at the centre of the chest as you experience any feelings of caring, acceptance, warmth and strength.

### **Cultivating Self Compassion**

And with this feeling of being anchored by your breath, bring to mind some situation in your life where you were worried, or stressed or unhappy. It could be in the past or the present. It might be a situation where there was conflict, disappointment, or illness. It might be a situation where you did not succeed at something you really wanted or felt put down by someone you know.

Choose a specific memory, and notice how you feel about yourself when you think about such an experience.

How does your heart feel?

Do you feel self pity, and small?

Do any self critical judgments arise in your mind making you feel or believe at some level that you're no good?

That you deserved what you experienced or that there is something wrong with you?

Let your normal habitual responses arise to this scenario, how you might ordinarily talk to yourself and feel about this scenario.

And now contemplating a different way of relating to yourself in the face of difficulty and suffering.

Recognizing that you can respond with compassion, with a sense of non judgmental concern, tenderness, and the urge to do something about it.

Perhaps refreshing your feeling of being in the presence of your compassionate image and embodying the qualities of compassion. Imagine what it would be like to relate to your own suffering with warmth, acceptance, wisdom, caring and strength. Noticing again any sensations you might feel around your heart area or the centre of the chest.

Imagine again that you could inhale and exhale through the centre of the chest. And as you breathe in, imagine warm light coming from your compassionate image. Imagine as you breathe in that this warmth and light can transform the constriction and tension of your suffering.

Imagine as you exhale there is a sense of releasing and letting go.

And silently saying to yourself:

May I be free from suffering

May I be free from pain and sorrow

May I know peace and joy

Breathing in warmth and light. Breathing out, releasing, and letting go

Repeating silently again to yourself:

May I be free from suffering

May I be free from pain and sorrow

May I know peace and joy.

Notice what it is like to offer yourself these wishes. If there is any difficulty, saying silently to that part of yourself that resists

May that which resists compassion in me be free from suffering

May that which resists compassion in me be free from pain and sorrow

May that which resists compassion in me know peace and joy.

Now bringing your awareness back to the simple sensations of breathing in and out, of your posture here in the chair, the sensations of making contact with the ground and the chair. In your mind's eye begin to visualize the room and space around you. Acknowledge your willingness to participate in this practice and to be present for any feelings that arose.

END WITH BELL

## SESSION THEME: Taking VITAL Action (continued)

### Taking VITAL Action Exercises

- Conduct Taking VITAL-Action exercises based on group members' goals [group members may suggest specific exercises they would like to do or therapist(s) can suggest exercises]
- After identifying the details of a specific Taking VITAL-Action exercise, and before starting the exercise, identify relevant values and goals, as well as safety behaviours and difficult internal experiences that may show up during the exercise, followed by eyes-closed instructions on Taking VITAL Action:

#### Eyes-closed instructions on Taking VITAL Action

##### Values and Goals

- Get in touch with what is important to you about (*identify the activity*). What valued goal are you working toward?

##### Into the Present Moment

- Coming into the present moment and anchoring attention to the breath, following each inbreath and each outbreath. As you (*mention the activity*), shifting your focus to what really matters; revisiting your anchor as needed when your focus drifts from the present moment.

##### Take notice

- Taking notice of your inner experience from your observer perspective (perhaps embodying your inner mountain or another observer image).
- Noticing physical sensations (e.g., sweating, blushing, rapid heart beat).
- Noticing emotions (e.g., fear, anger).
- Noticing thoughts (*provide examples relevant to the specific activity*).
- Noticing urges to protect yourself with safety behaviours (*provide examples relevant to the specific activity*).

##### Allow

- Allowing your experience to be exactly as it is.
- Bringing a gentle curiosity, openness, and compassion to your internal experiences.
- Leaning into the anxiety, as you leaned into the finger trap.
- Dropping the rope in your struggle with anxiety.
- Using defusion strategies (labeling, thanking your mind, and so on).
- Putting your willingness switch to “On”.

- After each exercise, discuss group members' experiences

## HOMEWORK

- see Session 8: Homework
- Ask group members to identify Taking VITAL Action exercises for next session that might require therapist prep.

## **Session 8: Homework**

\*MAWSAS: The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### **1. Mindfulness Practice:**

Your choice of audio recorded mindfulness exercises, daily: The Observing Mountain, Body Scan, Mindful Stretching, Awareness of Thoughts, Imagining VITAL Action.

**Optional:** Listen to a 20-minute guided self-compassion exercise on Kristen Neff's website:

<http://www.self-compassion.org/LKM.self-compassion.MP3>

Continue to practice mindfulness of daily activities such as eating, hearing and seeing.

Continue to record mindfulness practices in your **Mindfulness Log**.

### **2. Schedule your Goal Stepping:**

Choose several steps from your **Goal-Stepping Worksheets** (completed for homework after session 7) that would be feasible for you to carry out during the upcoming week and mark them on a **Weekly Schedule**. Aim to carry out at least one action per day.

### **3. Taking VITAL Action:**

For each step/action included on your **Weekly Schedule**, complete a **VITAL-Action Worksheet**: Fill in Part 1 of the worksheet, **Preparing for VITAL Action**, before doing an action. Fill in Part 2, **Debriefing VITAL Action**, after completing an action.

**Please Note:** Copies of the **Goal-Stepping Worksheet**, **Weekly Schedule**, and **VITAL-Action Worksheet** are attached. Additional copies can be downloaded at [www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-and-acceptance-workbook-social-anxiety-and-shyness](http://www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-and-acceptance-workbook-social-anxiety-and-shyness).

**REMINDER:** As discussed in class, please bring ideas for Taking VITAL Action exercises you would like to do in the remaining sessions of the group.

## Mindfulness Log

Day	Mindfulness Activity	Observations
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

## Goal-Stepping Worksheet

My goal is: \_\_\_\_\_.

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:

Step 6:

Step 7:

Step 8:

Step 9:

Step 10:

---

## Weekly Schedule

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

## VITAL-Action Worksheet

My Action/Step: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Preparing for VITAL Action

**V:** What are the values and goals underlying the action?

Value(s):\_\_\_\_\_ Goal(s):\_\_\_\_\_

**I:** How will you remain in the present moment during the action?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**T:** What internal experiences are you likely to take notice of during the action (using which observer image)? and

**AL:** What strategies can you use to allow your experience to be while taking action?

observer image: \_\_\_\_\_

feelings: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

urges to use safety behaviors: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Other preparation:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Debriefing VITAL Action

What happened, including successes and barriers? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Actions to address barriers, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# **SESSION 9**

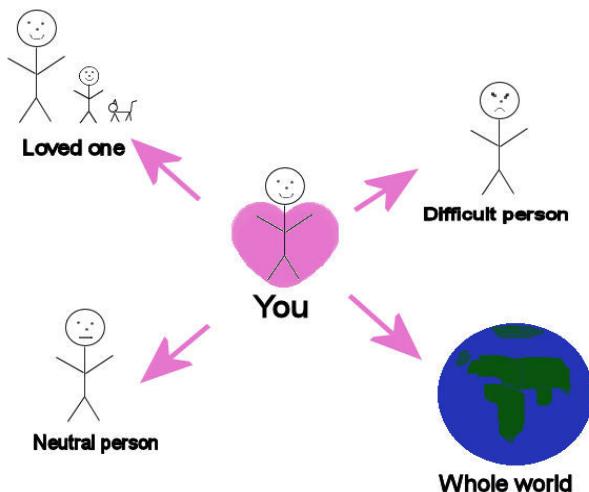
Taking VITAL Action (continued)

## Session 9

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### SUMMARY

#### MINDFULNESS EXERCISE: Loving-Kindness: Extending compassion to self and others



- See Exercise 8.1: Loving-Kindness, below
- therapist prep: read MAWSAS, pgs. 132-133
- group members pair up to discuss their experiences of the exercise followed by sharing with the group

#### HOMEWORK REVIEW:

- Choice of audio recorded mindfulness exercises, daily: The Observing Mountain, Body Scan, Mindful Stretching, Awareness of Thoughts, Imagining VITAL Action. **Optional:** Self-compassion exercise on Kristen Neff's website
- Mindfulness of daily activities such as eating, hearing and seeing.
- Daily Taking VITAL Action exercises

#### SESSION THEME: Taking VITAL Action (continued)

- see below for details

#### HOMEWORK SUMMARY:

- see **Session 9: Homework** for details

## **Loving-Kindness Exercise**

(This version is slightly revised from the version in MAWSAS)

Start by getting into a comfortable position and allowing your eyes to close gently.

And becoming aware of the body and mind and whatever is being carried within—perhaps feelings or thoughts from the day's events or whatever has been going on within you recently.

Simply allowing and acknowledging whatever is within and letting it be without evaluation, judgement or any form of analysis.

Gradually, shift the focus of awareness to the breath, breathing normally and naturally. As you breathe in, be aware of breathing in, and as you breathe out, be aware of breathing out. Just being aware of breathing.

Now bringing awareness into your chest and heart area, feeling any sensations within. Allowing sensations to go wherever they need to go.

Now gently bring awareness to your beating heart and reflect upon how fragile and precious life is. The heart is the gateway into deeper compassion and love for yourself and for all beings.

All of us live with certain realities that cannot be escaped. From the moment we were born we began the irreversible process of aging and subsequent illness, separation and death. These are powerful reflections to meditate upon, for they open the heart to what is important.

Now feeling into your own precious life with compassion and kindness, recognizing and accepting the imperfectly perfect being that you are.

And silently repeating to yourself the following three phrases, letting them sink into your being: *May I be safe. May I be free from suffering. May I be at peace.*

Next, bringing to mind someone you care about, a friend, family member, or other loved one, perhaps even a beloved pet. With a vivid picture in mind, repeating to yourself:

*May he/she be safe. May he/she be free from suffering. May he/she be at peace.*

Now bringing to mind someone who is going through a difficult time; is perhaps ill or struggling with another problem. Expanding the field of loving-kindness to this person by repeating to yourself:

*May he/she be safe. May he/she be free from suffering. May he/she be at peace.*

Next, bringing to mind a neutral person, perhaps an acquaintance, someone you may know from work, or who lives in your neighbourhood, someone you don't know very well and don't have strong feelings about. Thinking to yourself:

*May he/she be safe. May he/she be free from suffering. May he/she be at peace.*

Next, thinking of someone who you don't like, perhaps someone who has wronged you in some way, or a politician or other well known person who you dislike for other reasons. Trying not to

get caught up in the reasons for disliking the person you brought to mind, extending compassion to this person as well:

*May he/she be safe. May he/she be free from suffering. May he/she be at peace.*

Now, bringing to mind everyone you have extended loving-kindness to in this exercise: yourself, the person you care about, the person who is struggling, the neutral person, and the person you don't like.

*May they be safe. May they be free from suffering. May they be at peace.*

Now, opening up to include everyone in your life and saying to yourself:

*May they be safe. May they be free from suffering. May they be at peace.*

And now, opening up even more to include all living beings. Repeating to yourself:

*May they be safe. May they be free from suffering. May they be at peace.*

And now coming back to the breath, and sensing and feeling into the whole body as you breathe in and out. Feeling the body as a single, complete organism, connected and whole.

And acknowledging that by practicing this meditation, it is contributing to your health and well-being. May you know that this is an act of loving-kindness.

BELL

## **SESSION THEME: Taking VITAL Action (continued)**

### **Taking VITAL Action Exercises**

- As in session 8, conduct Taking VITAL Action exercises based on group members' goals [group members may suggest specific exercises they would like to do or therapist(s) can suggest exercises]
- After identifying the details of a specific Taking VITAL Action exercise, and before starting the exercise, identify relevant values and goals, as well as safety behaviours and difficult internal experiences that may show up during the exercise, followed by eyes-closed instructions on taking VITAL Action:

#### **Eyes-closed instructions on Taking VITAL Action**

##### **Values and Goals**

- Get in touch with what is important to you about (*identify the activity*). What valued goal are you working toward?

##### **Into the Present Moment**

- Coming into the present moment and anchoring attention to the breath, following each inbreath and each outbreath. As you (*mention the activity*), shifting your focus to what really matters; revisiting your anchor as needed when your focus drifts from the present moment.

##### **Take notice**

- Taking notice of your inner experience from your observer perspective (perhaps embodying your inner mountain or another observer image).
- Noticing physical sensations (e.g., sweating, blushing, rapid heart beat).
- Noticing emotions (e.g., fear, anger).
- Noticing thoughts (*provide examples relevant to the specific activity*).
- Noticing urges to protect yourself with safety behaviours (*provide examples relevant to the specific activity*).

##### **Allow**

- Allowing your experience to be exactly as it is.
- Bringing a gentle curiosity, openness, and compassion to your internal experiences.
- Leaning into the anxiety, as you leaned into the finger trap.
- Dropping the rope in your struggle with anxiety.
- Using defusion strategies (labeling, thanking your mind, and so on).
- Putting your willingness switch to “On”.

- After each exercise, discuss group members' experiences

## **HOMEWORK**

- see **Session 9: Homework**

## **Session 9: Homework**

\*MAWSAS: The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### **1. Mindfulness Practice:**

**Loving-kindness, daily** (Mp3 recording, 8.1 is available to download from the New Harbinger website); Written instructions for the loving-kindness practice are on pgs 132-133 in MAWSAS\*. Alternatively, you could alternate the loving-kindness practice with the self-compassion exercise found at: <http://www.self-compassion.org/LKM.self-compassion.MP3>.

Continue to practice mindfulness of daily activities such as eating, hearing and seeing.

Continue to record mindfulness practices in your **Mindfulness Log**.

### **2. Schedule your Goal Stepping:**

Choose several steps from your **Goal-Stepping Worksheets** (completed for homework after session 7) that would be feasible for you to carry out during the upcoming week and mark them on a **Weekly Schedule**. Aim to carry out at least one action per day.

### **3. Taking VITAL Action:**

For each step/action included on your **Weekly Schedule**, complete a **VITAL-Action Worksheet**: Fill in Part 1 of the worksheet, **Preparing for VITAL Action**, before doing an action. Fill in Part 2, **Debriefing VITAL Action**, after completing an action.

**Please Note:** Copies of the **Goal-Stepping Worksheet, Weekly Schedule, and VITAL-Action Worksheet** are attached. Additional copies can be downloaded at [www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-and-acceptance-workbook-social-anxiety-and-shyness](http://www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-and-acceptance-workbook-social-anxiety-and-shyness).

## Mindfulness Log

Day	Mindfulness Activity	Observations
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

## Goal-Stepping Worksheet

My goal is: \_\_\_\_\_.

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:

Step 6:

Step 7:

Step 8:

Step 9:

Step 10:

---

## Weekly Schedule

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

## VITAL-Action Worksheet

My Action/Step: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Preparing for VITAL Action

**V:** What are the values and goals underlying the action?

Value(s):\_\_\_\_\_ Goal(s):\_\_\_\_\_

**I:** How will you remain in the present moment during the action?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**T:** What internal experiences are you likely to take notice of during the action (using which observer image)? and

**AL:** What strategies can you use to allow your experience to be while taking action?

observer image: \_\_\_\_\_

feelings: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

urges to use safety behaviors: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Other preparation:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Debriefing VITAL Action

What happened, including successes and barriers? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Actions to address barriers, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# **SESSION 10**

Wrapping Up and Stepping Forward

## **Session 10**

---

### **SUMMARY**

#### **MINDFULNESS EXERCISE: Imagining VITAL action**

- Imagining VITAL action, Exercise 7.1, see below
- therapist prep: read MAWSAS: pgs. 100-103
- group members pair up to discuss their experiences of the exercise followed by sharing with the group

#### **HOMEWORK REVIEW:**

- loving-kindness, daily, possibly alternating with Neff's self-compassion exercise
- mindfulness of daily activities such as eating, hearing and seeing
- daily Taking VITAL Action exercises; when reviewing this part, include a review of each group member's progress since the start of the group, and set future goals

#### **SESSION THEME: Wrapping Up and Stepping Forward**

- see below for details

#### **HOMEWORK SUMMARY:**

- In lieu of homework, see **Session 10: Resources**
-

---

## Exercise 7.1 Imagining VITAL Action

This exercise is meant to provide you with an opportunity to practice taking VITAL action in your imagination.

Start by getting into a comfortable position, in a chair or lying down, and allowing your eyes to close gently.

Now bring to mind a situation where you want to take action. Imagine where you are and who you are with, including as many details of the situation as necessary to bring it to life in your mind's eye.

Next, beginning with the "V" in VITAL, representing your "values and goals," get in touch with the value or values that will guide those actions. Why do the actions matter to you? Why are they important? Also, what do you want to accomplish with your actions? Where will they take you? What is your goal?

Now, moving to the "I" in VITAL, "in the present moment," take a few moments to connect with your breathing, coming into the present moment as you pay attention to each complete in-breath, and each complete out-breath, noticing the rising and falling of the breath in your chest and belly. There is no need to control your breathing in any way—simply letting the breath breathe itself, and doing this for several moments, until you are fully present with your breathing. Throughout the remainder of this exercise, whenever your mind wanders from the task at hand, try revisiting the breath as a way of reconnecting with the present moment, and with the exercise.

Now, imagine yourself taking action as you remain focused on your valued goals. And, as you do this, shifting to the final three letters of VITAL, "T," for taking notice of your experience, and "A-L," allowing it to be exactly as it is.

First, noticing any feelings that arise, perhaps observing them from your inner mountain, using another image, or simply watching them. Has fear shown up? Has tension arrived?

Has your heart quickened, or is it hard to catch your breath? Whichever feelings appear, simply observing them with acceptance and compassion, not struggling with them.

Next, noticing thoughts arising about the situation, perhaps worries, evaluations, or mind reading—whatever they are, simply watching your thoughts coming and going. There is no need to think of something else, make the thoughts go away, or resolve anything. Can you thank your mind for anxious thoughts, or defuse from them in another way?

Finally, observing any urges to use safety behaviors, such as hiding your feelings or escaping from the situation. Simply acknowledging any urges and letting go of the need to act on them.

And now, can you make room for the entirety of your experience? Is it something you *must* struggle with, or can you invite it in, saying to yourself with willingness, *Let me feel what there is to be felt because it is my experience right now?*

And, as you gently open up to your experience, watching yourself continue to take action in your imagined situation, focused on what really matters. And doing this for a bit longer.

And when you are ready, letting go of the imagined situation with its accompanying feelings, thoughts, and urges, and directing your focus back to your breath.

Then, gradually widening your attention to take in the sounds in the room. And taking a moment to make the intention to bring this sense of gentle allowing and self-acceptance into the present moment. And when you are ready, slowly opening your eyes.

## SESSION THEME: Wrapping Up and Stepping Forward

### Wrapping Up: Taking VITAL Action Exercises

- Conduct any outstanding Taking VITAL Action exercises that were pre-scheduled (e.g. presentations)
- Before starting each Taking VITAL Action exercise, identify relevant values and goals, as well as safety behaviours and difficult internal experiences that may show up during the exercise, followed by eyes-closed instructions on taking VITAL Action:

#### Eyes-closed instructions on Taking VITAL Action

##### Values and Goals

- Get in touch with what is important to you about (*identify the activity*). What valued goal are you working toward?

##### Into the Present Moment

- Coming into the present moment and anchoring attention to the breath, following each inbreath and each outbreath. As you (*mention the activity*), shifting your focus to what really matters; revisiting your anchor as needed when your focus drifts from the present moment.

##### Take notice

- Taking notice of your inner experience from your observer perspective (perhaps embodying your inner mountain or another observer image).
- Noticing physical sensations (e.g., sweating, blushing, rapid heart beat).
- Noticing emotions (e.g., fear, anger).
- Noticing thoughts (*provide examples relevant to the specific activity*).
- Noticing urges to protect yourself with safety behaviours (*provide examples relevant to the specific activity*).

##### Allow

- Allowing your experience to be exactly as it is.
- Bringing a gentle curiosity, openness, and compassion to your internal experiences.
- Leaning into the anxiety, as you leaned into the finger trap.
- Dropping the rope in your struggle with anxiety.
- Using defusion strategies (labeling, thanking your mind, and so on).
- Putting your willingness switch to “On”.

- After each exercise, discuss group members' experiences

### Stepping Forward & Feedback

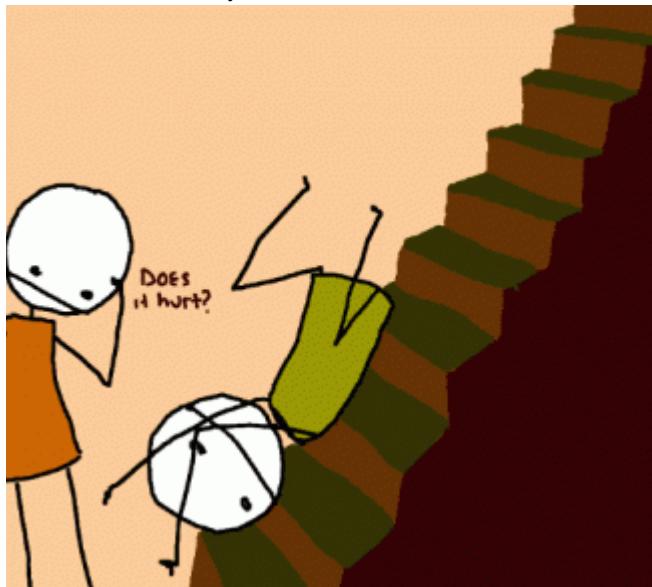
- Stepping into the Future (hand out copies of the following illustrations and discuss with group)
- Get feedback about the group: What was helpful? Not helpful? Suggestions for improvements
- Review Handout of Resources (see below)

## Stepping into the Future

**As you step toward your goals, at times you will be briskly moving upward/forward:**

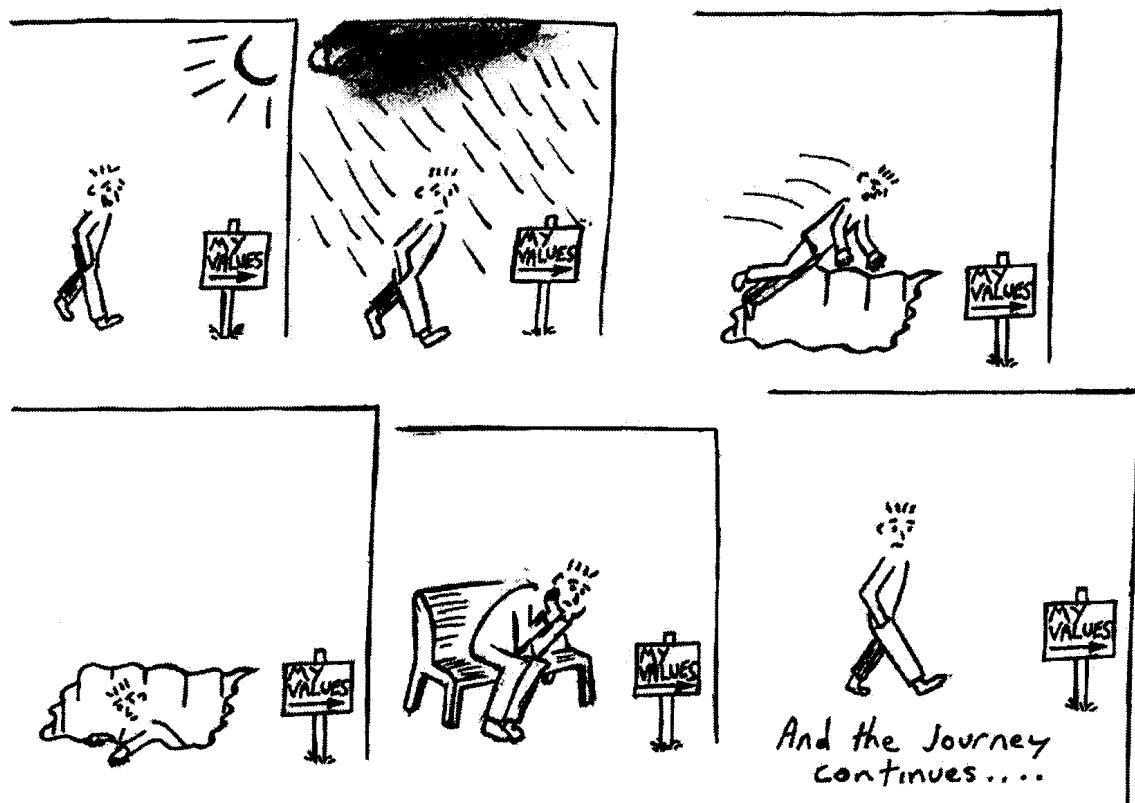


**At other times, there will be setbacks:**

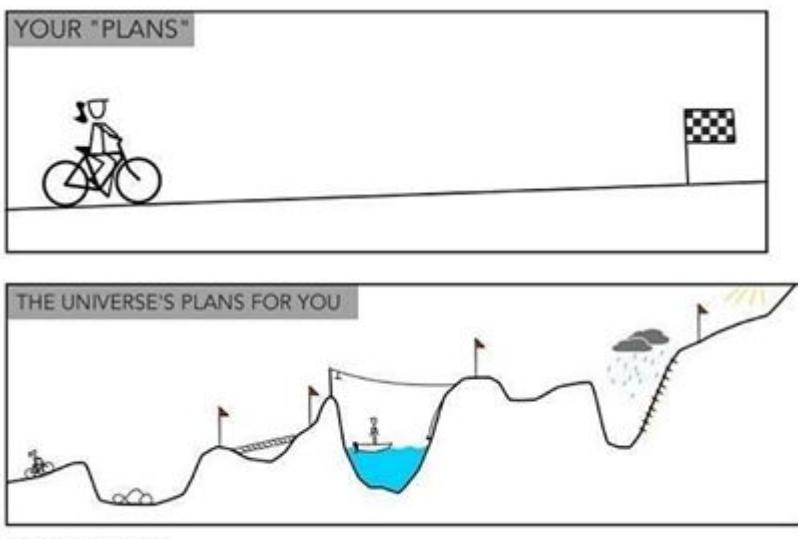


Whenever you do find yourself offtrack, use the experience as an opportunity to review your goals and get back in touch with your values, without giving yourself a hard time about it. Try to be kind, compassionate, and understanding with yourself.

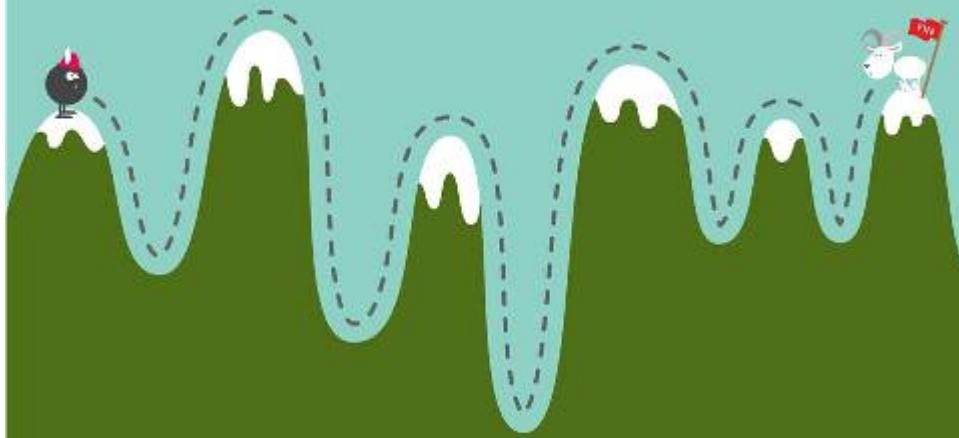
**Figure 10:** Valued action often involves many detours and barriers. They require one to keep on recommitting to the value



(from Ciarrochi et al, 2007)



Perseverance is not a long race;  
it is many short races one after the other.



Walter Eliot

## **SESSION 10: RESOURCES**

**If you haven't already, join us on Facebook:**

[www.facebook/ACTonSocialAnxiety](http://www.facebook/ACTonSocialAnxiety)

**ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY:**

Get Out of Your Mind and into Your Life: The New Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, by Steven Hayes, New Harbinger Publications, Inc., Oakland, CA, 2005.

The Happiness Trap by Russ Harris, Trumpeter Books, Boston, 2008.

The official website for Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is: [www.contextualscience.org](http://www.contextualscience.org).

A public discussion group is available at:

[http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/ACT\\_for\\_the\\_Public/](http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/ACT_for_the_Public/).

**MINDFULNESS:**

There are 16 brief mindfulness practices (video) available at <http://elishagoldstein.com/videos/>.

A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook

by Bob Stahl and Elisha Goldstein, New Harbinger Publications, 2010.

Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness, by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Dell Publishing, New York, 1990.

Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life, by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Hyperion, New York, 1994.

**COMPASSION:**

A number of resources, including guided self-compassion and loving-kindness exercises are available on Dr. Kristin Neff's website at: <http://www.self-compassion.org/>.

The Compassionate-Mind Guide to Building Social Confidence: Using Compassion-Focused Therapy to Overcome Shyness and Social Anxiety, by Lynne Henderson, New Harbinger Publications, Oakland, CA, 2010.

Self Compassion: Stop Beating Yourself Up and Leave Insecurity Behind, by Kristen Neff, HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, 2011.

**DEPRESSION:**

The Mindful Way Workbook: An 8-Week Program to Free Yourself from Depression and Emotional Distress by John D. Teasdale PhD, J. Mark G. Williams, Zindel V. Segal PhD and Jon Kabat-Zinn, The Guilford Press, 2014.

The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Depression: Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to Move Through Depression and Create a Life Worth Living, by Kirk Strosahl and Patricia Robinson, New Harbinger Publications, 2008.

## **COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL APPROACH:**

The Shyness and Social Anxiety Workbook (third edition), by Martin M. Antony & Richard P. Swinson, New Harbinger Publications, Inc., Oakland, CA, 2017.

Free webinar offered by the Anxiety Disorders Association of America (ADAA):

<https://www.adaa.org/living-with-anxiety/ask-and-learn/webinars#Overcoming%20Social%20Anxiety>

## **COMMUNITY RESOURCES:**

(insert resources relevant to your geographical area)

Public Speaking: Check out [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)

## **MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION (MBSR) AND MINDFULNESS-BASED COGNITIVE THERAPY (MBCT) PROGRAMS:**

You can do a Google search for a program in your geographical area or, for MBSR programs, check out: <http://w3.umassmed.edu/MBSR/public/searchmember.aspx>

**For an 8-week online MBSR program:**

<http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/stress-reduction/mbsr-8-week-online-live/>

**A free online MBSR program** is offered by Dave Potter, a certified Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) instructor: <https://palousemindfulness.com>

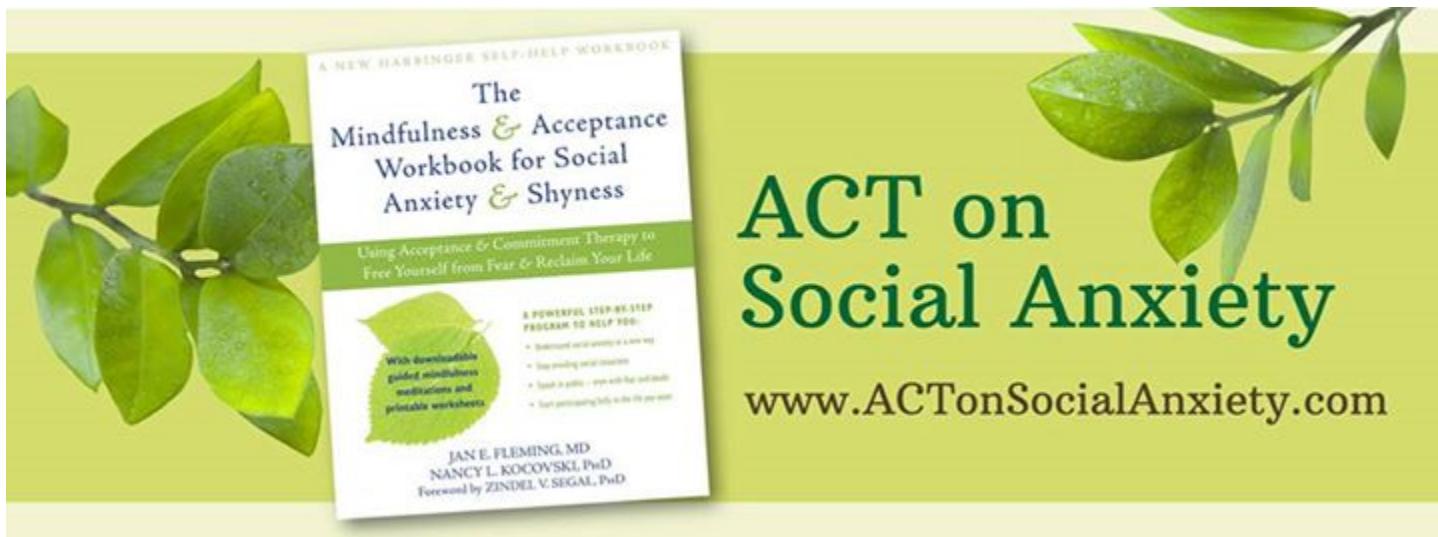
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## MINDFULNESS AND ACCEPTANCE-BASED GROUP THERAPY FOR SOCIAL ANXIETY DISORDER: A Treatment Manual, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition

### PART II: Participant Handouts

These handouts supplement the workbook we are using in the group: **The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness**, or **MAWSAS** for short. The short form is used throughout this package.

**Register your book:** To access the audio recordings of mindfulness exercises and worksheets you will need to register the book at: [www.newharbinger.com](http://www.newharbinger.com). Click on “Register” in the top right corner and follow the instructions.

**Accessories:** Once you have created an account and registered the book, go to the MAWSAS book page and click on “Accessories” which include a pdf of worksheets and audio recordings of 7 mindfulness exercises in mp3 format.

**Audio Recordings:** download the audio recordings which will be assigned for home practice.

**Worksheets:** All necessary worksheets will be provided from session to session. However, you may wish to download additional copies from [www.newharbinger.com](http://www.newharbinger.com).

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Additional information about the book is available at [www.actonsocialanxiety.com](http://www.actonsocialanxiety.com).

Please join us on facebook at [www.facebook/ACTonSocialAnxiety](https://www.facebook.com/ACTonSocialAnxiety).

## **Session 1: Homework**

\*MAWSAS: Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### **1. MINDFULNESS PRACTICE:**

- Mindfully eat one meal, part of a meal, or one snack per day
- Record your observations on the attached **Mindfulness Log** and **bring it with you to the next group session**
  - Relevant reading material is on pgs 51-55 of Chapter 4 of MAWSAS\*: Introducing Mindfulness
  - Optional: listen to the audio recording, 4.1: Mindful Eating

### **2. Read Chapter 1 of MAWSAS\*: Defining Social Anxiety and Shyness, and**

- check off the situations that trigger social anxiety for you (pgs 14-17)
- **Exercise 1.1:** Choose your “Top Three Feared Social Situations” (p.18), record them on the attached worksheet and **bring it with you to the next group session**

### **3. Read Chapter 2 of MAWSAS\*: Safety Mode: The Costs of Pursuing “Safety”, and**

Complete the following two exercises using the attached worksheets and **bring them with you to the next group session**:

- **Exercise 2.1:** The Costs of Outright Avoidance (p. 22)
- **Exercise 2.2:** What are you giving up for safety? (p. 26)

## A Definition of Mindfulness

Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way:

on purpose,

in the present moment,

and nonjudgmentally.

From ***Wherever You Go There You Are*** by Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1994, Hyperion, New York, page 4.

## Mindfulness Log

Day	Mindfulness Activity	Observations
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

## Exercise 1.1 Top Three Feared Social Situations

Describe the three social situations that are most problematic for you in your life:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## Exercise 2.1 The Costs of Outright Avoidance

Situations Avoided	Costs of Avoidance

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## Exercise 2.2 What Are You Giving Up for Safety?

List one or more of your safety behaviors (if any) for each of your top three feared social situations, along with any costs of using the behaviors.

Situation 1: \_\_\_\_\_

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Situation 2: \_\_\_\_\_

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Situation 3: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Session 2: Homework**

\*MAWSAS: The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### **1. Mindfulness Practice:**

**Observing mountain, daily** (Mp3 recording, 4.2 is available to download from the New Harbinger website); written instructions for The Observing Mountain are on pgs 58-59 in MAWSAS\*.

Try out other observer images such as the lake image and train-track images. (pg 59).

Continue to record mindfulness practice in your **Mindfulness Log** and **bring it with you to the next group session**

### **2. Read MAWSAS, Chapter 4,** for a review of some of the materials covered in Session 2.

Definition of Acceptance is on p. 55: “*Acceptance is opening up to and allowing your experience to be exactly as it is, without trying to avoid it, escape it, or change it*”, and Exploring Acceptance is on pgs 56 -57.

A copy of the **Fear** poem that was read in class is included, as well as an illustration of the **Tug of War with your Anxiety Monster** exercise we did in class.

### **3. Read MAWSAS, Chapter 3: Knowing What Matters: Uncovering your Values and Goals**

Complete **Exercise 3.1: Attending your eightieth birthday party**, and get started on **Exercise 3.2: Values and Goals Worksheet** (It does not need to be completed by the next session. You can get started now and continue to work on it over the next few weeks.) and **bring them with you to the next group session**

## Mindfulness Log

Day	Mindfulness Activity	Observations
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

## FEAR

Barnabus Browning

Was scared of drowning

So he never would swim

Or get into a boat

Or take a bath

Or cross a moat.

He just sat day and night

With his door locked tight

And the windows nailed down,

Shaking with fear

That a wave might appear,

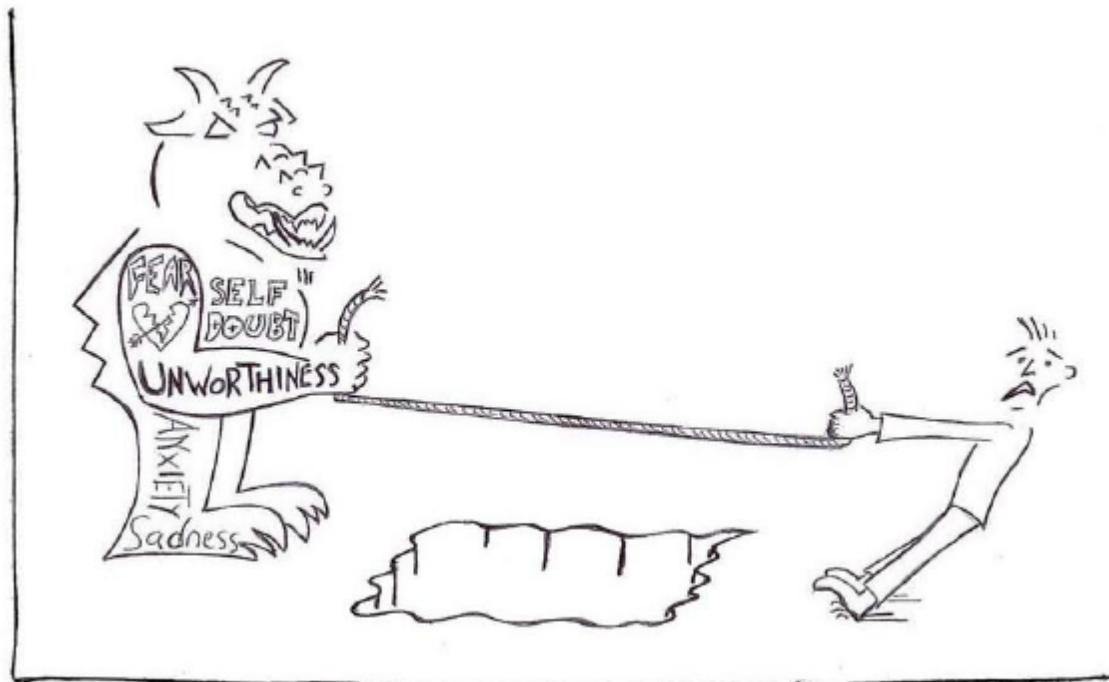
And cried so many tears

That they filled up the room

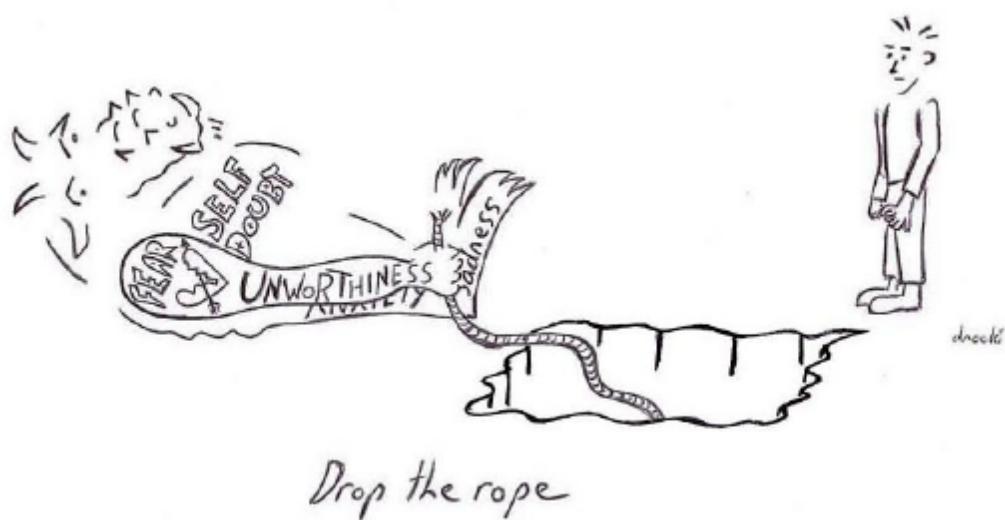
And he drowned.

By Shel Silverstein, from his book *The Light in the Attic*, 1981, Harper Collins Publishers.

Struggling to get rid of anxiety and other emotions can be like playing tug of war with a monster.



Sometimes the best thing to do is let go of the rope.



## **Exercise 3.I Attending Your Eightieth Birthday Party**

Imagine that you are attending your eightieth birthday party. You have managed to live your life in a way that really matters to you. How would you want your life characterized? What would you want your friends and family to say about you in a speech?

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## Exercise 3.2 Values and Goals Worksheet

Identify one or more values (qualities of actions), and one or more goals (outcomes of actions) for each life area that is important to you *and* involves at least one of your feared social situations.

### Intimate Relationships

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Friendships and Other Social Relationships

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Family Relationships

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Career/Employment

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Education/Learning

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Leisure/Recreation

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Health/Physical Well-Being

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Community Participation

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Spirituality

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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---

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Other Life Areas

Values: \_\_\_\_\_

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Goals: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Session 3: Homework**

\*MAWSAS: The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### **1. Mindfulness Practice:**

**Body Scan, daily** (Mp3 recording, 5.1 is available to download from the New Harbinger website); Written instructions for the body scan are on pgs 64-67 in MAWSAS\*.

Continue to record mindfulness practices in your **Mindfulness Log**.

### **2. Values and Goals:**

#### **Choosing-Goals Worksheet: Social Anxiety Group version**

Using the attached worksheet, identify several goals you can work toward in the latter sessions of our group. We aim to collect your completed worksheets by **Session 6** to guide us in planning exercises for the remaining group sessions.

#### **Additional Resources on Values - Optional:**

**Values card sort exercise** online at:

<http://www.intervisionmedia.com/projects/ACT/valuesCardSort.swf>

**Read two blog posts (attached)** from our website ([www.actonsocialanxiety.com](http://www.actonsocialanxiety.com)) that are relevant to Values and Goals: “A New Development on Acts of Kindness”, and “More on Acts of Kindness”

### **3. MAWSAS Reading: Chapter 6: Defusing from Your Anxious Thoughts, pgs 79-85 (and 1<sup>st</sup> 2 paragraphs of p. 86)**

Using the attached worksheet for **Exercise 6.1 Your Anxious Thoughts: Social Anxiety Group version**, list some of the thoughts that typically show up in your top three feared social situations. Fill in the “Types of Anxious Thinking” column after reading the relevant section (pgs 83-85).

## Mindfulness Log

Day	Mindfulness Activity	Observations
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

## Choosing-Goals Worksheet: Social Anxiety Group version

Please identify 3 or 4 goals to work on in the latter sessions of the group. It is important to ***print or write legibly in dark ink.***

Life Area*	Goals (Indicate short-term or long-term) [Optional: Indicate Value(s) underlying each goal]
Examples: Social Relationships	Get to know neighbours and co-workers better (short term) [Values: connect with others, be friendly, share about myself]
Career	Find a new job (long term) [Value: through my work, contribute to protecting the environment]

\***Life Areas:** Intimate Relationships, Friendships and Other Social Relationships, Family Relationships, Career/Employment, Education/Learning, Leisure/Recreation, Health/Physical Well-Being, Community Participation, Spirituality, Other Life Areas

**A New Development on Acts of Kindness: Posted May 29, 2013 to  
<http://actonsocialanxiety.com/blog/>**

Exciting new developments in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), mindfulness, and social anxiety are occurring at a rapid pace. This is great news for those of us who struggle with social anxiety, and those of us trying to make a difference through our work as researchers, therapists, and teachers. The not-so-great news is how difficult it is to keep up with all of the wonderful developments!

With that difficulty in mind, our intention for this blog is for it to play a role (albeit small) in keeping you informed about interesting research findings, studies in progress, new books, and other relevant developments.

To start off, we are sharing some interesting research findings about “acts of kindness” that recently caught our attention. Researchers at the University of British Columbia investigated whether doing kind acts would lead to better mood and more satisfying relationships in socially anxious students. A third of the students were asked to do kinds acts (about 6 times per week for 4 weeks), another third were asked to do behavioral experiments (of the types used in cognitive behavior therapy for social anxiety), and the remaining third were asked to simply record daily events.

At the beginning and end of the study, the students rated their mood and how satisfied they were with their relationships (with acquaintances, coworkers, friends, and close friends), among other things. Two main findings from the study were that positive mood and relationship satisfaction both increased significantly in the acts of kindness group but not in the other two groups. The kind acts included holding the door for someone, picking someone up from work, buying a friend lunch, visiting a sick relative, and thanking the bus driver, to name a few. Just over a third of the kind acts were directed to strangers, about a third to friends, and another third to family members, acquaintances, romantic partners, and others. (Read the full abstract of the study here <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22642341>).

Now, in our experience, most socially anxious individuals identify kindness toward others as one of their values; however, fears of looking foolish or saying/doing the wrong thing can get in the way of acting on this value (and other relationship values). Perhaps the findings from this study might provide some extra motivation for you to incorporate more acts of kindness into your daily routine, if that fits with your values and goals. By doing so, you would of course be engaged in values-based actions (a main goal in ACT) *and* those actions might lead to more satisfying relationships. As for the possibility of improving your mood by acting with kindness, that would be another bonus!

For those of you who are working through our book (or planning to), we recommend that you consider including a few specific acts of kindness on your goal-stepping worksheets in chapters seven and eight (again, if it fits with your valued goals).

Our blog is also intended as a place for dialogue and discussion, so please share your comments about this post, and future posts too. We welcome suggestions for topics you’d like us to blog about in the future.

## More on Acts of Kindness

In our inaugural blog post we described a study which found that doing kind acts can lead to better mood and more satisfying relationships for socially anxious people. Now we have come across a small study showing that meditation can lead to acts of kindness<sup>1</sup>.

Researchers at Northeastern University, Massachusetts General Hospital, and Harvard University set out to investigate whether people who completed one of two eight-week meditation courses (mindfulness-based or compassion-based) would be more likely to show compassion toward other people compared to participants assigned to a wait-list control group.

They used a very interesting, real-life situation in their study: giving up a seat for someone in pain. When each participant arrived at the laboratory waiting area, he or she sat in the only unoccupied seat. Female confederates (paid by the researchers to play the role of other participants) occupied two other seats. One minute later, another female confederate appeared, with crutches and a walking boot, showing obvious signs of pain. The researchers were looking to see whether the real participant offered his or her seat to the woman in pain.

The results are quite compelling. Meditators were five times more likely than non meditators to give up their seats! Furthermore, those who completed the mindfulness-based meditation course were just as likely as those from the compassion-based course to give up their seats, even though the latter course targeted compassion more directly. Also noteworthy is that these findings occurred within a set-up conducive to the classic “bystander effect” – a phenomenon wherein an individual is less likely to offer assistance in the presence of other people. Meditators appeared to be less susceptible to this effect than non meditators; despite witnessing two confederates ignore the woman in pain, 50% of meditators gave up their seats compared to 16% in the control group. The researchers speculated that meditation may increase compassionate behavior by increasing one’s ability to notice others in pain and/or by leading to changes in perspective taking.

What can we take away from the research presented in our first two blog posts? Well, we saw that meditation can lead to acts of kindness, and acts of kindness can lead to more satisfying relationships in the socially anxious. We also know from earlier research that mindfulness meditation can lead to more satisfying relationships<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps one of the ways it does that is by facilitating kindness.

In our previous blog post we encouraged you to include more acts of kindness in your daily routine. In light of this recent study, perhaps that will be easier to do the more you meditate! If you are working through our book, that would mean setting aside more time to practice the mindfulness exercises (available to download at <http://www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-and->

[acceptance-workbook-social-anxiety-and-shyness](#), under Accessories). You may even want to find a meditation group in your area and surround yourself with meditators!

References:

1. Condon, P., Desbordes, G., Miller, W., DeSteno, D. (In press). Meditation increases compassionate responses to suffering. *Psychological Science*.
2. Bihari, J.L.N. and Mullan, E.G. (published online Sept. 1, 2012). Relating mindfully: A qualitative exploration of changes in relationships through mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. *Mindfulness*, DOI 10.1007/s12671-012-0146-x.

Please share any comments you have about this blog post. We look forward to hearing from you.

## **Exercise 6.1 Your Anxious Thoughts: Social Anxiety Group version**

List some of the thoughts that typically show up in each of your top three feared social situations along with the types of anxious thinking displayed by each thought

Situation	Thoughts	Types of Anxious Thinking
<b>Example:</b> Small talk at a party	I won't have anything to say He thinks I'm boring I shouldn't appear anxious	Fortune telling; worry Mind reading "shoulding"
1		
2		
3		

## Session 4: Homework

\*MAWSAS: The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### 1. Mindfulness Practice:

**Awareness of thinking, daily** (Mp3 recording, 6.2 is available to download from the New Harbinger website); written instructions for Awareness of thinking are on pgs 89-90 in MAWSAS\*.

**Mindful Hearing, daily:** Try out mindful hearing in a number of different locations throughout your day. Set aside a few minutes to simply “hear” what there is to be heard in the location you have chosen. Bring your attention to sounds as they arise, wherever they arise: sounds that are close, sounds that are far away, and the silences between sounds. As best you can, be aware of sounds as simply pure sensation—noticing patterns of pitch, tone, volume, and duration—letting go of the urge to label what you are hearing (such as a voice, bird, guitar, footsteps, and so on). There is no need to go searching for sounds or to listen for particular sounds. Whenever you find that you are thinking about sounds, reconnect as best you can with pure hearing.

Continue to record mindfulness practices in your **Mindfulness Log**.

### 2. Defusing from anxious thoughts:

Try out the defusion strategies listed on the attached handout, **Summary of Defusion Strategies**, and described in more detail in pgs 86-92 of MAWSAS. Record your observations on the attached worksheet, **Defusing from your Anxious Thoughts**.

**Note:** Try defusing from everyday thoughts (for example, *I am having the thought that I want to eat a muffin for breakfast*) as well as social-anxiety thoughts. You can try some of the strategies right when you notice the thought (for example, naming what the mind is doing or thanking the mind); for others, you may want to wait until you have some time to yourself (for example, ditching the meaning of thoughts). People vary tremendously concerning which strategies they like and find useful so make note of the strategies you find most helpful. You may also want to take a stab at creating your own defusion strategy (p.91). It can be fun!

**Optional:** Try out the “Leaves on a stream” defusion exercise online at:  
[www.thinkmindfully.com/try-it](http://www.thinkmindfully.com/try-it).

### 3. Choosing-Goals Worksheet:

If you have not already done so, complete the **Choosing-Goals Worksheet: Social Anxiety Group version** from Session 3, identifying several goals you can work toward in the latter sessions of our group. We would like to have all completed worksheets by Session 6 to use in planning exercises for the remaining group sessions.

## Mindfulness Log

Day	Mindfulness Activity	Observations
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

## Summary of Defusion Strategies

**I am having the thought that:** For example, *I am having the thought that I'm making a fool of myself.*

**Name what the mind is doing:** Name the type of anxious thinking (fortune-telling, mind reading, “shoulding,” postmortem, spotlight effect, storytelling, and more basic types, such as worrying and judging).

**Give real names to your thoughts:** For example, *Mind-Reading Randy.*

**Ditch the meanings of your thoughts:** Use repetition or other voices, sing them, see them, etc.

**Thank the mind:** For example, *Thanks for the memory.*

**Defuse with Dr. Phil:** *How's that thought working for you?*

**Observe your thoughts:** Use the waterfall metaphor, leaves on a stream, clouds in the sky, or the observer perspective images from session 2: mountain, lake & train track.

**Get off your buts:** For example, replace *I'd like to go to the party but I'm afraid I'll be anxious* with *I'd like to go to the party and I'm afraid I'll be anxious.*

**Replace “I” with “you” or “your name”:** For example, replace *I am worried I'll have nothing to say* with *You are worried you'll have nothing to say*, or *Susan is worried she'll have nothing to say.* (See attached article from thestar.com)

**Awareness of thinking:** Listen to the audio download (6.2), or sit silently with your thoughts.

**Create your own defusion strategy:** \_\_\_\_\_

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By: [Nancy J. White](#) Living Reporter, Published on Mon Feb 03 2014 at [thestar.com](#)

If you talk about yourself out loud by name, people think you're a little loony. But if you talk about yourself in your head by name, you've got a psychological edge that could help you perform better and be less anxious.

In times of social stress, the small language shift from "I" to "you" or to your name as you think about the situation can enhance your ability to regulate thoughts and feelings, according to a study in the February issue of the [Journal of Personality and Social Psychology](#).

To think about yourself as if you were another person provides psychological space, which helps people exert self-control, says lead author Ethan Kross, associate professor of psychology at the University of Michigan.

It's sort of a way to tap into your inner coach. "Think of a friend who comes to you for advice with a problem that she's super anxious about," explains Kross. "You're not in the situation so it's relatively easy for you to see the bigger picture, to not get hung up on the details. That's what we're doing here, using language that almost automatically gets you to think about yourself as if you were another."

Kross and other researchers set up socially stressful situations, instructing some participants to prepare psychologically using "I" and others to use "you" or their names. In one experiment, participants had to make a favourable first impression. In another, they had to give a public speech about why they were ideally suited to their dream job. They had only five minutes to think about the speech and were not allowed to take notes. "That's a powerful induction of anxiety," says Kross.

Their performances in both situations were rated by judges unaware of how the participants had been divided. In both experiments, those who used "you" or their names in self-talk performed significantly better and displayed less stress than those in the first-person group.

"I think that's a consequential finding," says Kross. "People who give a better speech are more likely to land the job they're interviewing for."

They also brooded less afterwards about their performance. "We often stew in misery," says Kross. "That's not good for psychological or physical health." Other experiments looked at how the forms of self-talk affected the way people thought about events that provoked social anxiety. Those who talked to themselves with "you" or a name tended to see future stressors more as a challenge and less as a threat.

Researchers analyzing the data found that highly-anxious participants – those with levels high enough to be rated as "social phobic" – benefitted similarly to those with low anxiety by using non-first-person introspection. So should people start using this self-talk technique? "There's the caveat, of course, that lots more research is needed. But there's no reason to believe it's harmful," says Kross. "But it should be done internally not externally. To talk to yourself out loud in the third person violates all sorts of social norms."

## Worksheet: Defusing from Your Anxious Thoughts

Thought	Defusion strategy	What did you notice?
Example: <i>I'm boring.</i>	Example: <i>I am having the thought that I'm boring.</i>	Example: <i>I had the thought and still contributed to a conversation.</i>

## **Session 5: Homework**

\*MAWSAS: The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### **1. Mindfulness Practice:**

**Mindful stretching, daily** (Mp3 recording, 5.2 is available to download from the New Harbinger website); written instructions for Mindful Stretching are on pgs 68-70 in MAWSAS\*. Continue to record mindfulness practices in your **Mindfulness Log**.

### **2. Being with Your Anxiety:**

Try out one or two “Being with your Anxiety” exercises each day, referring to the attached guidelines: **Exercise 5.3 Being with Your Anxiety**, and **Bringing on Bodily Sensations of Anxiety**. Record your experiences on the attached **Being with Your Anxiety Recording Form**. The relevant section for review in MAWSAS is on pgs 71-76.

### **3. Choosing-Goals Worksheet:**

If you have not already done so, complete the **Choosing-Goals Worksheet: Social Anxiety Group version** from Session 3, identifying several goals you can work toward in the latter sessions of our group. We will collect your completed worksheets next week (Session 6) and use them to guide us in planning exercises for the remaining group sessions.

## Mindfulness Log

Day	Mindfulness Activity	Observations
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

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## Exercise 5.3 Being with Your Anxiety

There are five basic steps to follow each time you go through this “Being with Your Anxiety” exercise. (Note: each time you try out a specific action, it is considered a separate “session” of the exercise.)

**1. Choose relevant bodily sensations and suggested actions.** Each time you go through this exercise, we recommend choosing bodily sensations that you tend to struggle with on your social-anxiety playing field. Once you have chosen a sensation to work with, you may need to experiment with the suggested actions from the previous table to see which one (if any) brings it on and how long you need to do the action to bring on the sensation. Often, increasing the duration of the suggested actions will increase the intensity of sensations. Note that some suggested actions may bring on more than one sensation (for example, deep breathing can bring on shortness of breath, palpitations, and dizziness).

**2. Set your intention.** Start by setting your intention to “flip on your willingness switch,” to stay fully present to your direct experience of bodily sensations during the exercise.

**3. Pay mindful attention during the exercise.** As you do the exercise, pay mindful attention: opening up and making room for all aspects of your experience, and letting go of thoughts about it and urges to change it and control it. Two suggestions for maintaining that stance of willingness are:

*Be a friendly scientist.* Pay attention to your experience as if you were a friendly scientist encountering a new phenomenon: observing it with curiosity and trying to learn as much about it as you can, such as where the sensations start and end, their quality, intensity, and duration. Explore any urges to control, escape, or avoid your experience; what do they feel like?

*Make use of metaphors.* If your willingness switch flips off during an exercise and you start to resist your experience, try “dropping the rope” in your struggle with uncomfortable feelings, or try welcoming your sensations in the same way that you would “welcome Uncle Leo to the wedding.” However, if your willingness switch flips off, that’s fine; it’s okay to stop the exercise. As mentioned in the previous chapter, you get to decide how long to keep your willingness switch flipped on. With repeated practice, your switch will gradually strengthen, and you will be able to keep it on for longer and longer periods.

**4. End the exercise.** As mentioned before, you can stop an exercise at any time if your willingness switch flips off. Otherwise, keep paying mindful attention to your experience until the

intensity of your bodily sensations has returned to baseline (the level where it was before you started the exercise).

**5. Record the exercise.** When you finish an exercise, record your observations on the following “Abs Recording Form,” including comments about what you might do differently the next time (for example, do it for less time, or more; try a different action to bring on sensations).

Now, take five to ten minutes to try out the “Being with Your Anxiety” exercise with one of the suggested actions on your own, noting your observations on the following recording form. (As mentioned earlier in the chapter, you can also use the recording form for the “Body Scan” and “Mindful Stretching” exercises. Whenever you do the “Being with Your Anxiety” exercise, be sure to note the sensations you targeted and how you brought them on. We recommend that you download the form at [www.newharbiner.com/20801](http://www.newharbiner.com/20801) and keep it handy.)

## **Bringing on Bodily Sensations of Anxiety**

The following table includes suggested actions for bringing on eleven specific bodily sensations of anxiety for the “Being with Your Anxiety” exercises

<b>Bodily Sensations of Anxiety</b>	<b>Suggested Actions</b>
Sweating or flushing	Put on heavy clothing, cover up in blankets, or both, and then turn up the temperature in your home (if possible, or use a space heater); or sit in a sauna at the gym until you start to sweat or notice flushing.
Blushing	This can be a tough one to bring on. One possibility is to imagine a situation that you suspect will bring on blushing (such as noticing that you had food in your teeth throughout a conversation and so on). Also, if one of your concerns about blushing is appearing red in the face, you can try bringing that on with the previous suggestions for sweating (your face may turn red when it’s warm).
Trembling	Grip a glass or other object tightly, until your hand starts to tremble; hold a push-up until your arms start to tremble; balance on one leg until it starts to tremble.
Dry mouth	Put absorbent material in your mouth to soak up any saliva; the rolls that your dentist uses would work well.
Palpitations	Run in place until you notice your heart racing; step up and down repeatedly on stairs or an exercise step.
Muscle tension	Hold a push-up position or tense all your muscles until you notice tension (often after about one minute).
Blurry vision	Stare at a light for about one minute and then read a paragraph.
Trouble swallowing	Swallow quickly for about four times; apply pressure to your throat for about one minute.
Shortness of breath (breathlessness)	Stand up and breathe deeply through your mouth for about one minute; hold your breath for about thirty seconds; breathe through a small straw with your nose plugged for one to two minutes.
Dizziness or vertigo	Shake your head back and forth for about thirty seconds; lay your head on your knees and sit back up repeatedly for about thirty seconds (head lifts); spin in a chair for about one minute, or just stand and spin around (then stand still without holding on to anything).
Feelings of unreality	Stare at a spot for about two minutes, stare at your hand for about three minutes, or stare at yourself in the mirror for about two minutes.
Other sensations not previously listed	Record your own suggestions for bringing on the sensations:

## Being with Your Anxiety Recording Form

Date	Sensation targeted	Exercise	Observations
	<b>Example:</b> dizziness	<b>Example:</b> Spin in a chair for 30 seconds	<b>Example:</b> Dizziness wasn't very intense; try 45 seconds next time

## **Session 6: Homework**

\*MAWSAS: The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### **1. Mindfulness Practice:**

Each day practice with one or more of the audio downloads from previous sessions: The Observing Mountain, Body Scan, Awareness of Thinking, and Mindful Stretching.

For a few minutes each day practice mindfulness of daily activities such as eating, seeing, and hearing.

Continue to record mindfulness practices in your **Mindfulness Log**.

### **2. VITAL-Action Exercises:**

Read MAWSAS\*, Chapter 7: pgs 99-100 and 114-119.

Using the **Weekly Schedule** (attached) plan for one or two daily VITAL-action exercises that involve being observed by others and brief conversations. For suggestions see pgs 123-125 in MAWSAS\*.

For each exercise complete a **VITAL-Action Worksheet** (one copy is attached; you can make additional copies or download copies at <http://www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-and-acceptance-workbook-social-anxiety-and-shyness>). Fill in Part 1 of the worksheet, **Preparing for VITAL Action**, before doing an exercise. Fill in Part 2, **Debriefing VITAL Action**, after completing an exercise.

A **VITAL Action** handout is attached which might be helpful for you to keep with you as a reminder of the 4 parts of VITAL.

## Mindfulness Log

Day	Mindfulness Activity	Observations
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

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## Weekly Schedule

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

## VITAL-Action Worksheet

My Action/Step: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Preparing for VITAL Action

**V:** What are the values and goals underlying the action?

Value(s):\_\_\_\_\_ Goal(s):\_\_\_\_\_

**I:** How will you remain in the present moment during the action?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**T:** What internal experiences are you likely to take notice of during the action (using which observer image)? and

**AL:** What strategies can you use to allow your experience to be while taking action?

observer image: \_\_\_\_\_

feelings: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

urges to use safety behaviors: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Other preparation:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Debriefing VITAL Action

What happened, including successes and barriers? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Actions to address barriers, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## VITAL Action

As you take action on your social-anxiety playing field, you can use the following skills to guide you in each and every action:

- V* Identify your *values and goals*. (Hint: Values guide your actions and are never “finished”; goals are things you can check off and say you’re done with.)
- I* Remain *in the present moment*, first anchoring your attention to the breath and then shifting your focus to, and staying fully present with, what really matters in the situation; revisit your anchor as needed when your focus drifts from the present moment.
- T* Take notice of your experience from your observer perspective (perhaps embodying your inner mountain or another observer image), noticing feelings, thoughts, and urges to use safety behaviors (including avoidance).
- AL* Allow your experience to be exactly as it is, with the assistance of metaphors (flip on your willingness switch, drop the rope, welcome Uncle Leo, and so on) and defusion strategies (labeling, thank your mind, and so on). Try bringing attitudes of curiosity, openness, compassion, and acceptance to your experience.

## **Session 7: Homework**

\*MAWSAS: The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### **1. Mindfulness Practice:**

Imagining VITAL Action, daily (Mp3 recording, 7.1 is available to download from the New Harbinger website). Written instructions for Imagining VITAL Action are on pgs 101-102 in MAWSAS\*.

Continue to practice mindfulness of daily activities such as eating, hearing and seeing.

Continue to record mindfulness practices in your **Mindfulness Log**.

### **2. Goal Stepping:**

In class you chose one goal from your **Choosing-Goals Worksheet**, and broke it into steps which you recorded on a **Goal-Stepping Worksheet**. For homework, repeat that process for each of the remaining goals that you plan to work toward in the next few weeks. For more on goal stepping, see pgs 108-111 of MAWSAS.

Once you have completed the **Goal-Stepping Worksheets**, choose several steps that are feasible for you to carry out during the upcoming week and mark them on a **Weekly Schedule**. Aim to carry out at least one action per day.

### **3. Taking VITAL Action:**

For each step/action included on your **Weekly Schedule**, complete a **VITAL-Action Worksheet**: Fill in Part 1 of the worksheet, **Preparing for VITAL Action**, before doing an action. Fill in Part 2, **Debriefing VITAL Action**, after completing an action.

**Please Note:** Copies of the **Goal-Stepping Worksheet**, **Weekly Schedule**, and **VITAL-Action Worksheet** are attached. Additional copies can be downloaded at [www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-and-acceptance-workbook-social-anxiety-and-shyness](http://www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-and-acceptance-workbook-social-anxiety-and-shyness).

**REMINDER:** As discussed in class, please bring ideas for Taking VITAL Action exercises you would like to do in the remaining sessions of the group.

## Goal-Stepping Worksheet

My goal is: \_\_\_\_\_.

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:

Step 6:

Step 7:

Step 8:

Step 9:

Step 10:

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## Weekly Schedule

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

## VITAL-Action Worksheet

My Action/Step: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Preparing for VITAL Action

**V:** What are the values and goals underlying the action?

Value(s):\_\_\_\_\_ Goal(s):\_\_\_\_\_

**I:** How will you remain in the present moment during the action?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**T:** What internal experiences are you likely to take notice of during the action (using which observer image)? and

**AL:** What strategies can you use to allow your experience to be while taking action?

observer image: \_\_\_\_\_

feelings: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

urges to use safety behaviors: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Other preparation:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Debriefing VITAL Action

What happened, including successes and barriers? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Actions to address barriers, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Session 8: Homework**

\*MAWSAS: The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### **1. Mindfulness Practice:**

Your choice of audio recorded mindfulness exercises, daily: The Observing Mountain, Body Scan, Mindful Stretching, Awareness of Thoughts, Imagining VITAL Action.

**Optional:** Listen to a 20-minute guided self-compassion exercise on Kristen Neff's website:

<http://www.self-compassion.org/LKM.self-compassion.MP3>

Continue to practice mindfulness of daily activities such as eating, hearing and seeing.

Continue to record mindfulness practices in your **Mindfulness Log**.

### **2. Schedule your Goal Stepping:**

Choose several steps from your **Goal-Stepping Worksheets** (completed for homework after session 7) that would be feasible for you to carry out during the upcoming week and mark them on a **Weekly Schedule**. Aim to carry out at least one action per day.

### **3. Taking VITAL Action:**

For each step/action included on your **Weekly Schedule**, complete a **VITAL-Action Worksheet**: Fill in Part 1 of the worksheet, **Preparing for VITAL Action**, before doing an action. Fill in Part 2, **Debriefing VITAL Action**, after completing an action.

**Please Note:** Copies of the **Goal-Stepping Worksheet**, **Weekly Schedule**, and **VITAL-Action Worksheet** are attached. Additional copies can be downloaded at [www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-and-acceptance-workbook-social-anxiety-and-shyness](http://www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-and-acceptance-workbook-social-anxiety-and-shyness).

**REMINDER:** As discussed in class, please bring ideas for Taking VITAL Action exercises you would like to do in the remaining sessions of the group.

## Mindfulness Log

Day	Mindfulness Activity	Observations
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

## Goal-Stepping Worksheet

My goal is: \_\_\_\_\_.

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:

Step 6:

Step 7:

Step 8:

Step 9:

Step 10:

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## Weekly Schedule

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

## VITAL-Action Worksheet

My Action/Step: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Preparing for VITAL Action

**V:** What are the values and goals underlying the action?

Value(s):\_\_\_\_\_ Goal(s):\_\_\_\_\_

**I:** How will you remain in the present moment during the action?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**T:** What internal experiences are you likely to take notice of during the action (using which observer image)? and

**AL:** What strategies can you use to allow your experience to be while taking action?

observer image: \_\_\_\_\_

feelings: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

urges to use safety behaviors: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Other preparation:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Debriefing VITAL Action

What happened, including successes and barriers? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Actions to address barriers, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Session 9: Homework**

\*MAWSAS: The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Social Anxiety and Shyness

### **1. Mindfulness Practice:**

**Loving-kindness, daily** (Mp3 recording, 8.1 is available to download from the New Harbinger website); Written instructions for the loving-kindness practice are on pgs 132-133 in MAWSAS\*. Alternatively, you could alternate the loving-kindness practice with the self-compassion exercise found at: <http://www.self-compassion.org/LKM.self-compassion.MP3>.

Continue to practice mindfulness of daily activities such as eating, hearing and seeing.

Continue to record mindfulness practices in your **Mindfulness Log**.

### **2. Schedule your Goal Stepping:**

Choose several steps from your **Goal-Stepping Worksheets** (completed for homework after session 7) that would be feasible for you to carry out during the upcoming week and mark them on a **Weekly Schedule**. Aim to carry out at least one action per day.

### **3. Taking VITAL Action:**

For each step/action included on your **Weekly Schedule**, complete a **VITAL-Action Worksheet**: Fill in Part 1 of the worksheet, **Preparing for VITAL Action**, before doing an action. Fill in Part 2, **Debriefing VITAL Action**, after completing an action.

**Please Note:** Copies of the **Goal-Stepping Worksheet, Weekly Schedule, and VITAL-Action Worksheet** are attached. Additional copies can be downloaded at [www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-and-acceptance-workbook-social-anxiety-and-shyness](http://www.newharbinger.com/mindfulness-and-acceptance-workbook-social-anxiety-and-shyness).

## Mindfulness Log

Day	Mindfulness Activity	Observations
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

## Goal-Stepping Worksheet

My goal is: \_\_\_\_\_.

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:

Step 6:

Step 7:

Step 8:

Step 9:

Step 10:

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## Weekly Schedule

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

## VITAL-Action Worksheet

My Action/Step: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Preparing for VITAL Action

**V:** What are the values and goals underlying the action?

Value(s):\_\_\_\_\_ Goal(s):\_\_\_\_\_

**I:** How will you remain in the present moment during the action?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**T:** What internal experiences are you likely to take notice of during the action (using which observer image)? and

**AL:** What strategies can you use to allow your experience to be while taking action?

observer image: \_\_\_\_\_

feelings: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

urges to use safety behaviors: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Other preparation:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Debriefing VITAL Action

What happened, including successes and barriers? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Actions to address barriers, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **SESSION 10: RESOURCES**

**If you haven't already, join us on Facebook:**

[www.facebook/ACTonSocialAnxiety](http://www.facebook/ACTonSocialAnxiety)

### **ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY:**

Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life: The New Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, by Steven Hayes, New Harbinger Publications, Inc., Oakland, CA, 2005.

The Happiness Trap by Russ Harris, Trumpeter Books, Boston, 2008.

The official website for Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is: [www.contextualscience.org](http://www.contextualscience.org).

A public discussion group is available at:

[http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/ACT\\_for\\_the\\_Public/](http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/ACT_for_the_Public/).

### **MINDFULNESS:**

There are 16 brief mindfulness practices (video) available at <http://elishagoldstein.com/videos/>.

A Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Workbook

by Bob Stahl and Elisha Goldstein, New Harbinger Publications, 2010.

Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness, by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Dell Publishing, New York, 1990.

Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life, by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Hyperion, New York, 1994.

### **COMPASSION:**

A number of resources, including guided self-compassion and loving-kindness exercises are available on Dr. Kristin Neff's website at: <http://www.self-compassion.org/>.

The Compassionate-Mind Guide to Building Social Confidence: Using Compassion-Focused Therapy to Overcome Shyness and Social Anxiety, by Lynne Henderson, New Harbinger Publications, Oakland, CA, 2010.

Self Compassion: Stop Beating Yourself Up and Leave Insecurity Behind, by Kristen Neff, HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, 2011.

### **DEPRESSION:**

The Mindful Way Workbook: An 8-Week Program to Free Yourself from Depression and Emotional Distress by John D. Teasdale PhD, J. Mark G. Williams, Zindel V. Segal PhD and Jon Kabat-Zinn, The Guilford Press, 2014.

The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Depression: Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to Move Through Depression and Create a Life Worth Living, by Kirk Strosahl and Patricia Robinson, New Harbinger Publications, 2008.

## **COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL APPROACH:**

The Shyness and Social Anxiety Workbook (third edition), by Martin M. Antony & Richard P. Swinson, New Harbinger Publications, Inc., Oakland, CA, 2017.

Free webinar offered by the Anxiety Disorders Association of America (ADAA):

<https://www.adaa.org/living-with-anxiety/ask-and-learn/webinars#Overcoming%20Social%20Anxiety>

## **COMMUNITY RESOURCES:**

(insert resources relevant to your geographical area)

Public Speaking: Check out [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)

## **MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION (MBSR) AND MINDFULNESS-BASED COGNITIVE THERAPY (MBCT) PROGRAMS:**

You can do a Google search for a program in your geographical area or, for MBSR programs, check out: <http://w3.umassmed.edu/MBSR/public/searchmember.aspx>

**For an 8-week online MBSR program:**

<http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/stress-reduction/mbsr-8-week-online-live/>

**A free online MBSR program** is offered by Dave Potter, a certified Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) instructor: <https://palousemindfulness.com>

## **PART III: Additional Self-Compassion Materials (Therapist and Participant)**

## Introduction

We have included additional self-compassion materials, outlined below, in Sessions 1, 6, 8 and 9 of the 10-session mindfulness and acceptance group program for social anxiety that we offer at The Mindfulness Clinic in Toronto. Clinicians are welcome to follow this outline or incorporate these materials in different ways depending on their preference.

### Session One: Safety Mode

After discussion of the mindful eating exercise we now finish the session with a brief definition of self-compassion and a compassionate breathing exercise.

*We'll finish today's session with paying mindful attention to the breath for a couple of minutes. The mind often wanders during this practice and there can be a tendency to think this is wrong or to beat oneself up when it happens. So during the practice we want you to bring an attitude of self-compassion to any experience of the mind wandering. We will talk a lot more about self-compassion in later sessions and there is an expanded definition in the Handouts but for now I'll introduce it with the following definition by Russ Harris: Self-compassion involves acknowledging your own suffering and responding kindly. In other words, treating yourself with the same warmth, caring and kindness that you'd extend to someone you love if they were in similar pain.*

Instructions are given for sitting with eyes closed, and the intention is set to focus on the breath; after a bit, suggest that whenever the mind wanders to recognize that it's normal, that's what all minds do, don't give yourself a hard time, simply return the attention to the breath. Repeat similar instructions a couple of times during the 2 minutes. Afterward, brief review of the practice with focus on bringing compassion and kindness to the wandering mind. Mention that self-compassion can also be applied to the mindful eating exercise, for example at times when you think you are "doing it wrong", etc.

The homework materials for Session One now include the following handout.

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### Definitions of Self-Compassion

Self-compassion involves acknowledging your own suffering and responding kindly. In other words, treating yourself with the same warmth, caring and kindness that you'd extend to someone you love if they were in similar pain. *Russ Harris*

When we suffer, caring for ourselves as we would care for someone we truly love. Self-compassion includes kindness, a sense of common humanity, and mindfulness. *Kristin Neff*

#### Three elements of self-compassion, from Neff's website, [www.self-compassion.org](http://www.self-compassion.org)

##### 1. Self-kindness vs. Self-judgment

Self-compassion entails being warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate, rather than ignoring our pain or flagellating ourselves with self-criticism. Self-compassionate people recognize that being imperfect, failing, and experiencing life

difficulties is inevitable, so they tend to be gentle with themselves when confronted with painful experiences rather than getting angry when life falls short of set ideals. People cannot always be or get exactly what they want. When this reality is denied or fought against suffering increases in the form of stress, frustration and self-criticism. When this reality is accepted with sympathy and kindness, greater emotional equanimity is experienced.

## **2. Common humanity vs. Isolation.**

Frustration at not having things exactly as we want is often accompanied by an irrational but pervasive sense of isolation – as if “I” were the only person suffering or making mistakes. All humans suffer, however. The very definition of being “human” means that one is mortal, vulnerable and imperfect. Therefore, self-compassion involves recognizing that suffering and personal inadequacy is part of the shared human experience – something that we all go through rather than being something that happens to “me” alone.

## **3. Mindfulness vs. Over-identification.**

Self-compassion also requires taking a balanced approach to our negative emotions so that feelings are neither suppressed nor exaggerated. This equilibrated stance stems from the process of relating personal experiences to those of others who are also suffering, thus putting our own situation into a larger perspective. It also stems from the willingness to observe our negative thoughts and emotions with openness and clarity, so that they are held in mindful awareness. Mindfulness is a non-judgmental, receptive mind state in which one observes thoughts and feelings as they are, without trying to suppress or deny them. We cannot ignore our pain and feel compassion for it at the same time. At the same time, mindfulness requires that we not be “over-identified” with thoughts and feelings, so that we are caught up and swept away by negative reactivity.

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## Session Six: Taking VITAL Action

In the opening mindfulness practice, instead of Acceptance of Feelings and Thoughts, we now do a practice called Cultivating Self-Compassion using a Compassionate Image:

*This mindfulness exercise is about developing a compassionate image and about developing feelings of compassion toward yourself. In each part you don't have to have any particular feelings or emotions - just by committing to do the exercise you are setting an intention to incline the mind and heart towards compassion.*

*So taking a posture that allows you to feel a sense of being firmly rooted and alert. And if it feels comfortable, allow the eyes to close or simply choose a spot on the floor to focus the gaze on. And simply noticing how it feels to breathe in and to breathe out. Perhaps a gentle expansion as you breathe in, and releasing or dissolving as you breathe out. On each inbreath, seeing if you can connect to a physical feeling of spaciousness and expansion, and dissolving that on the exhale.*

*Then, noticing a sense of spaciousness as you breathe in, and perhaps a sense of grounding or rootedness as you breathe out. See if you can feel that quality in your feet connected to the earth, your seat connected to the chair, noticing how the spine lengthens up out of the pelvis, connecting with a sense of being grounded and centered.*

*Now, bring to mind someone who represents for you a supremely compassionate being. This could be a person you know now or knew in the past. It could be a religious figure or even an animal. This person or being would have the qualities of caring, acceptance, wisdom and strength. You do not need to worry about choosing the perfect person or being for this image, just accept that whoever or whatever comes to mind for now is good enough for this exercise.*

*As you picture this being, notice what it feels like to be in their presence. Now, imagine that you too, in the presence of this compassionate being could embody these qualities of compassion: of strength, wisdom, caring and acceptance. Imagine and feel yourself as a compassionate being with these qualities. Now imagine that you could breathe in and out through the heart area or the centre of the chest, picturing or sensing a warm glowing light at the centre of the chest as you experience any feelings of caring, acceptance, warmth and strength.*

*And with this feeling of being anchored by your breath, bring to mind a social situation in your life where you were worried, embarrassed or disappointed. It could be in the past or the present.*

*Choose a specific memory about that social situation, and notice how you feel about yourself when you think about the experience.*

*How does your heart feel?*

*Do any self critical judgments arise in your mind making you feel or believe at some level that you're not good enough?*

*That you deserved what you experienced or that there is something wrong with you?  
Let your normal habitual responses arise to this scenario, how you might ordinarily talk to yourself and feel about this scenario.*

*And now contemplating a different way of relating to yourself in the face of difficulty and suffering.*

*Recognizing that you can respond with compassion, with a sense of non judgmental concern, tenderness, and the urge to do something about it.*

*Perhaps refreshing your feeling of being in the presence of your compassionate image and embodying the qualities of compassion. Imagine what it would be like to relate to your own suffering with warmth, acceptance, wisdom, caring and strength. Noticing again any sensations you might feel around your heart area or the centre of the chest.*

*Imagine again that you could inhale and exhale through the centre of the chest. And as you breathe in, imagine warm light coming from your compassionate image. Imagine as you breathe in that this warmth and light can transform the constriction and tension of your suffering. Imagine as you exhale there is a sense of releasing and letting go.*

*And silently saying to yourself:*

*May I be free from suffering*

*May I be free from pain and sorrow*

*May I know peace and joy*

*Breathing in warmth and light. Breathing out, releasing, and letting go*

*Repeating silently again to yourself:*

*May I be free from suffering*

*May I be free from pain and sorrow*

*May I know peace and joy.*

*Notice what it is like to offer yourself these wishes. If there is any difficulty, saying silently to that part of yourself that resists*

*May that which resists compassion in me be free from suffering*

*May that which resists compassion in me be free from pain and sorrow*

*May that which resists compassion in me know peace and joy.*

*Now bringing your awareness back to the simple sensations of breathing in and out, of your posture here in the chair, the sensations of making contact with the ground and the chair. In your mind's eye begin to visualize the room and space around you. Acknowledge your willingness to participate in this practice and to be present for any feelings that arose.*

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The homework materials for Session Six now include the following instruction:  
Each day practice with one or both of the following audio recordings of guided self-compassion exercises, available at:

<http://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/meditations/LKM.self-compassion.MP3> (20 minutes, narrated by Kristen Neff)

<https://soundcloud.com/dennis-tirch-phd/compassionate-other-imagery> (25 minutes, narrated by Paul Gilbert)

## Session Eight: Taking VITAL Action (continued)

In this session the opening mindfulness exercise is now Taking a Self-Compassion Break-Guided Preparation:

*Today we will do a 2-part preparation for a practice next week called “Taking a self-compassion break”, a practice that can be helpful to use when you are feeling worried or stressed, or when you are ruminating about something that happened in a social situation.*

*First, we’ll explore soothing self-touch, an easy way to support and comfort ourselves when we’re feeling badly. We’ll explore a number of options with the aim of finding one or more gestures of touch that you each find comforting.*

*So, taking a posture that allows you to feel a sense of being firmly rooted to the earth. And if it feels comfortable, allow the eyes to close or simply choose a spot on the floor to focus the gaze on. And simply noticing how it feels to breathe in and breathe out. Perhaps a gentle expansion as you breathe in, and releasing or dissolving as you breathe out.*

*Now, gently place one or both hands over your heart, the area to the left of your breast bone. Simply feeling the gentle pressure and warmth of your hand or hands. Feeling the natural rising and falling of your chest as you breathe in and as you breathe out.*

*The hand(s) over the heart is the most common gesture used in self-compassion practices but does not resonate with everyone. Next, we’ll explore several more options. Simply notice your experience for each one, in particular how soothing it feels.*

- One hand on your cheek
- Cradling your face in your hands
- Crossing your arms and giving a gentle squeeze
- Gently stroking your arms with your thumbs or hands
- One hand on your heart and one on your belly
- Both hands on your belly
- Cupping one hand in the other in your lap

*Now, letting go of these self-soothing gestures and taking a moment to reconnect with the breath.*

*Next, we’ll explore compassionate phrases.*

*Two weeks ago we did a self-compassion practice that involved using a compassionate image.*

*Near the end of the exercise we repeated the following phrases to ourselves:*

*May I be free from suffering*

*May I be free from pain and sorrow*

*May I know peace and joy*

*Those phrases may or may not have resonated with you. Tonight, we want to help you discover one or more phrases that are meaningful to you and that would be helpful to you at difficult*

*times. I will ask you to reflect on a couple of questions and then there will be time to record your thoughts and phrases on paper.*

*So, again taking a posture that allows you to feel a sense of being firmly rooted and alert. And if it feels comfortable, allow the eyes to close or simply choose a spot on the floor to focus the gaze on. And simply noticing how it feels to breathe in and breathe out. Perhaps a gentle expansion as you breathe in, and releasing or dissolving as you breathe out.*

*Then asking yourself the question, “What do I need? What do I truly need?” Let the answer be a universal human need such as the need to be connected, to be kind, to be peaceful, to be free, or whatever need is important to you.*

*Now, try translating one or more of your chosen needs into wishes for yourself, such as:*

*May I feel connected to others*

*May I be kind to myself*

*May I live in peace*

*Or whatever need has resonated with you*

*There is no need to come up with perfect phrases today. You are just taking the first steps on a journey. Whatever comes to mind today is what is right for you today.*

*Now, letting go of those needs and phrases and asking yourself these questions:*

*“What do I long to hear from others? What words do I long to hear spoken to me because, as a person, I need to hear words like this?” Open the door of your heart and wait for words to come, perhaps, “I love you, I’m here for you, You’re a good person”.*

*Words that we long to hear from others are often qualities that we wish to actualize in our own lives. They are subtle wishes for ourselves. For example, longing to hear “I love you” can mean that we wish to know we are lovable. Try shaping the words you want to hear from others into an explicit wish for yourself. For example:*

*“I love you” can become the wish, “May I love myself just as I am”*

*“I’m here for you” can become the wish, “May I be there for myself”*

*“You’re a good person” can become the wish “May I know my own goodness”*

*You can offer yourself what you long to hear from others.*

*Sitting with these phrases for a minute or so.*

*Now, letting go of those phrases and coming back into the room. BELL*

*Please take a few minutes to record your experiences with this exercise. Which soothing touch(es) was/were most helpful. What phrases about your needs resonated with you? Which words do you wish to hear from others and how can you offer yourself those words?*

The homework materials for Session Eight now include the following handout.

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### Taking a Self-Compassion Break - Preparation

“Taking a self-compassion break” is a practice that can be helpful to use when you are feeling worried or stressed, or when you are ruminating about something that happened in a social situation. Review the following summary of the exercise we did in class and see if you would like to refine your choices for soothing touch and compassionate phrases.

#### **Part 1: Soothing Touch**

To prepare, first explore soothing self-touch, an easy way to support and comfort ourselves when we’re feeling badly. Explore a number of options with the aim of finding one or more that you find comforting/soothing.

The hand(s) over the heart is the most common gesture used in self-compassion practices but does not resonate with everyone. Try these additional options. Simply notice your experience for each one, in particular how comforting/soothing it feels.

- One hand on your cheek
- Cradling your face in your hands
- Crossing your arms and giving a gentle squeeze
- Gently stroking your arms with your thumbs or hands
- One hand on your heart and one on your belly
- Both hands on your belly
- Cupping one hand in the other in your lap

#### **Part 2: Compassionate Phrases**

The second and final preparation is to explore compassionate phrases. Ask yourself the question, “*What do I need? What do I truly need?*” Let the answer be a universal human need such as the need to be connected, to be kind, to be peaceful, to be free, or whatever need is important to you.

Now, try translating one or more of your chosen needs into wishes for yourself, such as:

*May I feel connected to others*

*May I be kind to myself*

*May I live in peace*

*Or whatever need has resonated with you*

There is no need to come up with perfect phrases. You are just taking the first steps on a journey. Whatever comes to mind today is what is right for you today. Now, try asking yourself these questions:

“*What do I long to hear from others? What words do I long to hear spoken to me because, as a person, I need to hear words like this?*” Open the door of your heart and wait for words to come, perhaps, “*I love you, I’m here for you, You’re a good person*”.

Words that we long to hear from others are often qualities that we wish to actualize in our own lives. They are subtle wishes for ourselves. For example, longing to hear “*I love you*” can mean that we wish to know we are lovable. Try shaping the words you want to hear from others into an explicit wish for yourself. For example:

“*I love you*” can become the wish, “*May I love myself just as I am*”

“*I’m here for you*” can become the wish, “*May I be there for myself*”

“*You’re a good person*” can become the wish “*May I know my own goodness*”

You can offer *yourself* what you long to hear from others.

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## **Session Nine: Taking VITAL Action (continued)**

In this session the opening mindfulness exercise is now Taking a Self-Compassion Break-Working with a Social Situation:

*Today we will build on the mindfulness practice we did last week. We will focus on “Taking a self-compassion break”, working with a specific social situation where you experienced or anticipate experiencing some struggle: perhaps anxious or self-judging thoughts, worry, fear of rejection, unpleasant emotions or physical sensations, rumination, or anything else you struggled with or imagine you will struggle with.*

*So, before we start, bring to mind a situation you’d like to work with. It could be in the past, present or future.*

*Now, taking a posture that allows you to feel a sense of being firmly rooted to the earth. And if it feels comfortable, allow the eyes to close or simply choose a spot on the floor to focus the gaze on. And simply noticing how it feels to breathe in and breathe out. Perhaps a gentle expansion as you breathe in, and releasing or dissolving as you breathe out.*

*Now, with the social situation in mind, getting in touch with any internal experiences you struggled with/are struggling with/or imagine you will struggle with about the situation: anxious thoughts, feelings, physical sensations, urges to use safety behaviours.*

*(Pause 20 seconds)*

*Now, we’ll move to bringing self-compassion to these struggles. We’ll do this using four steps:*

*1. We start by acknowledging our struggles, saying to ourselves, for example:*

*This is a moment of embarrassment/shame/self-doubt, or whatever describes/captures your experience.*

*2. The next step is to get in touch with our common humanity, our knowledge that all of us suffer at times. Try saying to yourself:*

*Embarrassment/shame/self-doubt, etc. is a part of life, or  
I’m not alone. Many others experience the same feelings/thoughts, or  
We all struggle in our lives*

*3. Next, place one or both hands over your heart or choose one of the other soothing touches that we explored last week:*

- One hand on your cheek
- Cradling your face in your hands

- *Crossing your arms and giving a gentle squeeze*
- *Gently stroking your arms with your thumbs or hands*
- *One hand on your heart and one on your belly*
- *Both hands on your belly*
- *Cupping one hand in the other in your lap*

*□□Finally, as you feel the warmth and gentle touch of your hands, say to yourself one or more of the compassionate phrases you worked with over the past week, phrases that would be helpful right now, for example:*

*May I be kind to myself*

*May I feel connected to others*

*May I accept myself just as I am*

*Asking yourself, what do I need right now, what words do I want to hear from others, and turning those needs and desires into wishes for yourself.*

*Sitting with your chosen phrase or phrases for a bit.*

*Now, let's repeat those four steps:*

*1. Acknowledging your struggle by saying to yourself*

*This is a moment of embarrassment/shame/self-doubt, or whatever describes/captures your experience.*

*2. Getting in touch with common humanity by saying to yourself:*

*Embarrassment/shame/self-doubt, etc. is a part of life, or*

*I'm not alone. Many others experience the same feelings/thoughts, or*

*We all struggle in our lives*

*3. Using a soothing touch of your choosing.*

*4. Finally, saying to yourself one or more compassionate phrases of your choosing:*

*May I be kind to myself*

*May I feel connected to others*

*May I accept myself just as I am, etc.*

*Sitting with your chosen phrase or phrases for a bit.*

*Now, letting go of those phrases and coming back into the room.*

The homework materials for Session Eight now include the following handout.

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### **Taking a Self-Compassion Break - Working with a Social Situation**

You can take a self-compassion break and work with a specific social situation whenever you are experiencing or anticipate experiencing some struggle: perhaps fusion with anxious or self-judging thoughts, worry, fear of rejection, unpleasant emotions or physical sensations, rumination, etc.

At these times try bringing self-compassion to your experience, in four steps:

1. Acknowledge your struggle, saying to yourself, for example:

*This is a moment of embarrassment/shame/self-doubt, or whatever describes/captures your experience.*

2. Get in touch with common humanity, our knowledge that all of us suffer at times. Try saying to yourself:

*Embarrassment/shame/self-doubt, etc. is a part of life, or  
I'm not alone. Many others experience the same feelings/thoughts  
We all struggle in our lives*

3. Place one or both hands over your heart or choose another soothing touch:

- One hand on your cheek
- Cradling your face in your hands
- Crossing your arms and giving a gentle squeeze
- Gently stroking your arms with your thumbs or hands
- One hand on your heart and one on your belly
- Both hands on your belly
- Cupping one hand in the other in your lap

4. As you feel the warmth and gentle touch of your hands, say to yourself one or more compassionate phrases, asking yourself, “*what do I need right now, what words do I want to hear from others*”, and turning those needs and wishes into wishes for yourself, for example:

*May I be kind to myself  
May I feel connected to others  
May I accept myself just as I am*

**Note:** You may find that you can use the same touch and phrases for most situations or you can also change these as needed depending on the situation.

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