

Avoiding the Second Arrow: Caring for Ourselves & Our Students with Compassion

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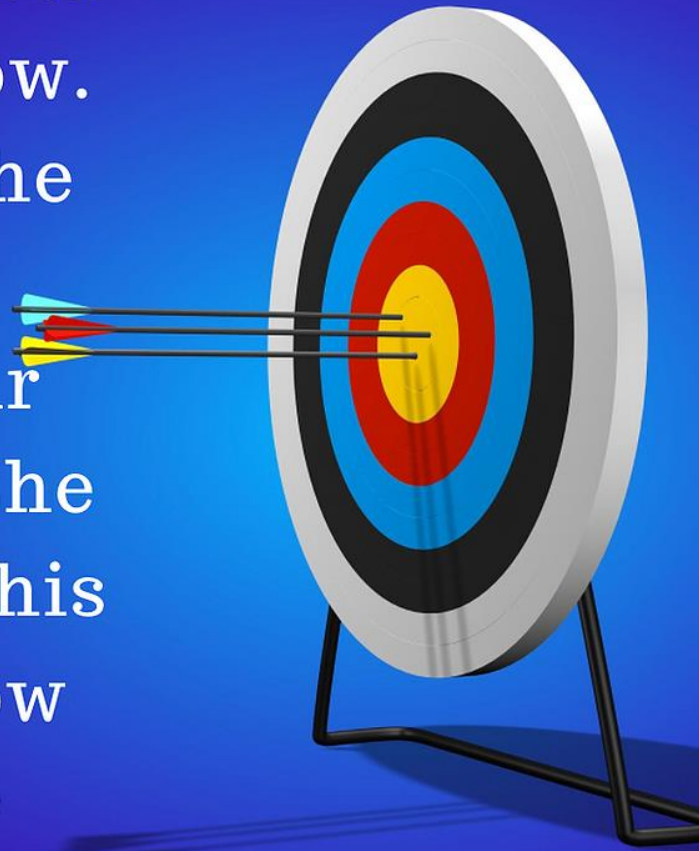
ESTABLISHED 1979



Buddhist Parable of the Second Arrow

- Imagine yourself walking through a forest. Suddenly, you're hit by an arrow. You experience significant pain. But the archer isn't finished. Can you avoid the second arrow?

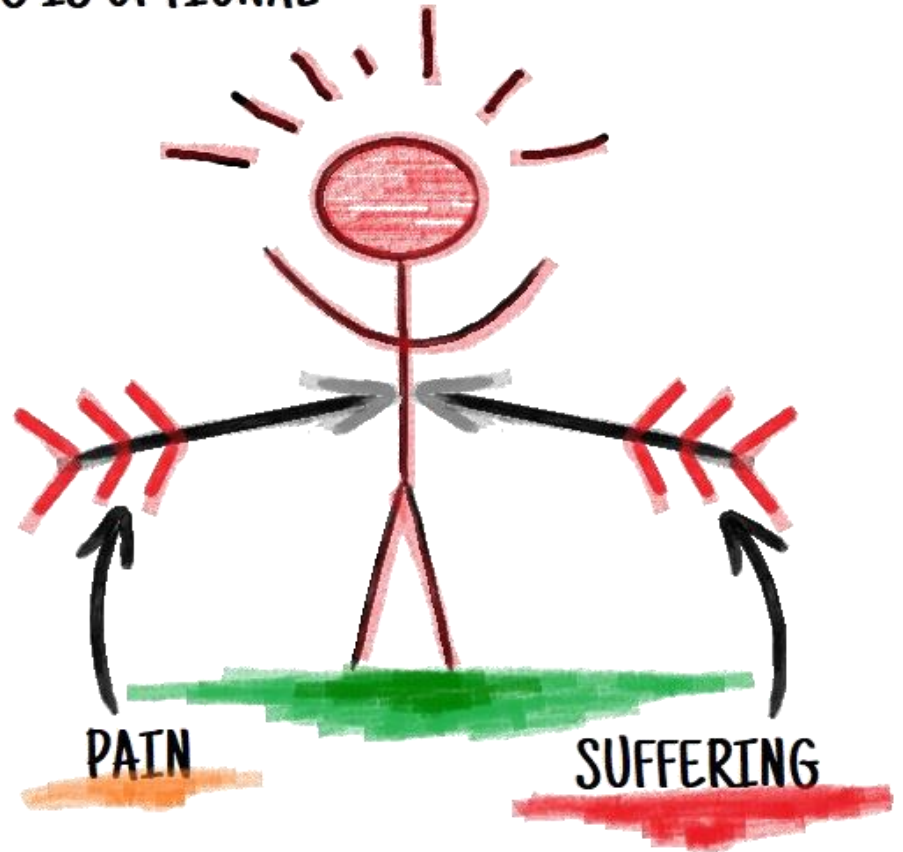
In life, we cannot
always control
the first arrow.
However, the
second
arrow is our
reaction to the
first. With this
second arrow
comes the
possibility of
choice.



Your First Arrow

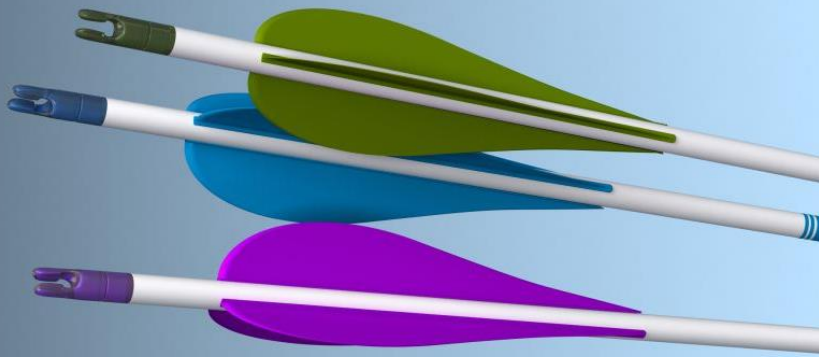
- Buddhism posits that pain, sadness, and discomfort are an inevitable part of life. This is the first arrow. We cannot control it nor predict it with any certainty.
- **What is your First Arrow?**
 - I was just diagnosed with ...
 - My family member was just diagnosed with...
 - My supervisor just assigned me a case that involves...
 - A hurricane just destroyed my house.
 - The child with the most challenging behaviors was placed in my classroom.
 - A terrible disease has hit our world.
 - I just lost my job.
 - ***What other First Arrows have you encountered? Think about that for a moment.***

PAIN IS INEVITABLE
SUFFERING IS OPTIONAL



Choosing to Avoid the Second Arrow

- Our **reaction** to the pain, sadness, and discomfort is the second arrow. This we **can control**.
- With the second arrow, we have the **possibility of choice**.
- Although we **cannot control** the outside environment and **cannot control** those first arrows, with practice, being in the present moment, and choosing to do so, we can **change the pattern** of shooting the second arrow after the first.



Choosing to Avoid the Second Arrow

- What does your Second Arrow look and sound like?
 - I'm so stupid.
 - I can never do anything right.
 - This is the end of my career as a teacher, behavior analyst, ...
 - I can never be a good parent now.
 - This is all too much for me to handle.
 - I'll never meet someone again.
 - My pain will never go away.
 - I can't live like this.
 - Why is this all happening to me.
 - Nobody has to go through what I'm going through.
 - **What else does your Second Arrow look like and sound like? Notice the thoughts that show up. Notice the feelings associated with that.**



a setback is a setup for a comeback

— *T. D. Jakes* —

AZ QUOTES

Suffering & Struggling Caused by Second Arrows



Most of our suffering and struggling is caused by second arrows rather than the first arrows.



With negative, self-defeating thinking, you now have two battles you are fighting against:

-the **initial problem/arrow** (COVID-19, hurricane, loss, divorce, losing your job, challenging behavior)
-and the **enemy of your mind** (second arrow).



Second arrows contribute to the mind's anger, anxiety, negativity, frustration, and history of always seeking what's wrong, what could go wrong, and negative self-statements. This often leads to what? **Avoidance and escaping what is meaningful in your life.**

worrying won't stop
the bad stuff from happening
it just stops you
from enjoying the good.



Growth through Experience



In life, we encounter many situations in which things break or have been disrupted...a cell phone, water spilling, a leaking roof, a broken arm. In the physical world, oftentimes we can fix these. **Think about something you've recently fixed.**



If you care about something, especially if you care a great deal with tremendous passion, you are likely to encounter events in life which are quite simply **unfixable**.



This doesn't mean that *you* are unfixable, or even unable to live a meaningful life. Rather, if you practice with self-compassion, you will see this as another opportunity for growth that arises from these experiences.

What if Discomfort and Stress are a Fact of Life?

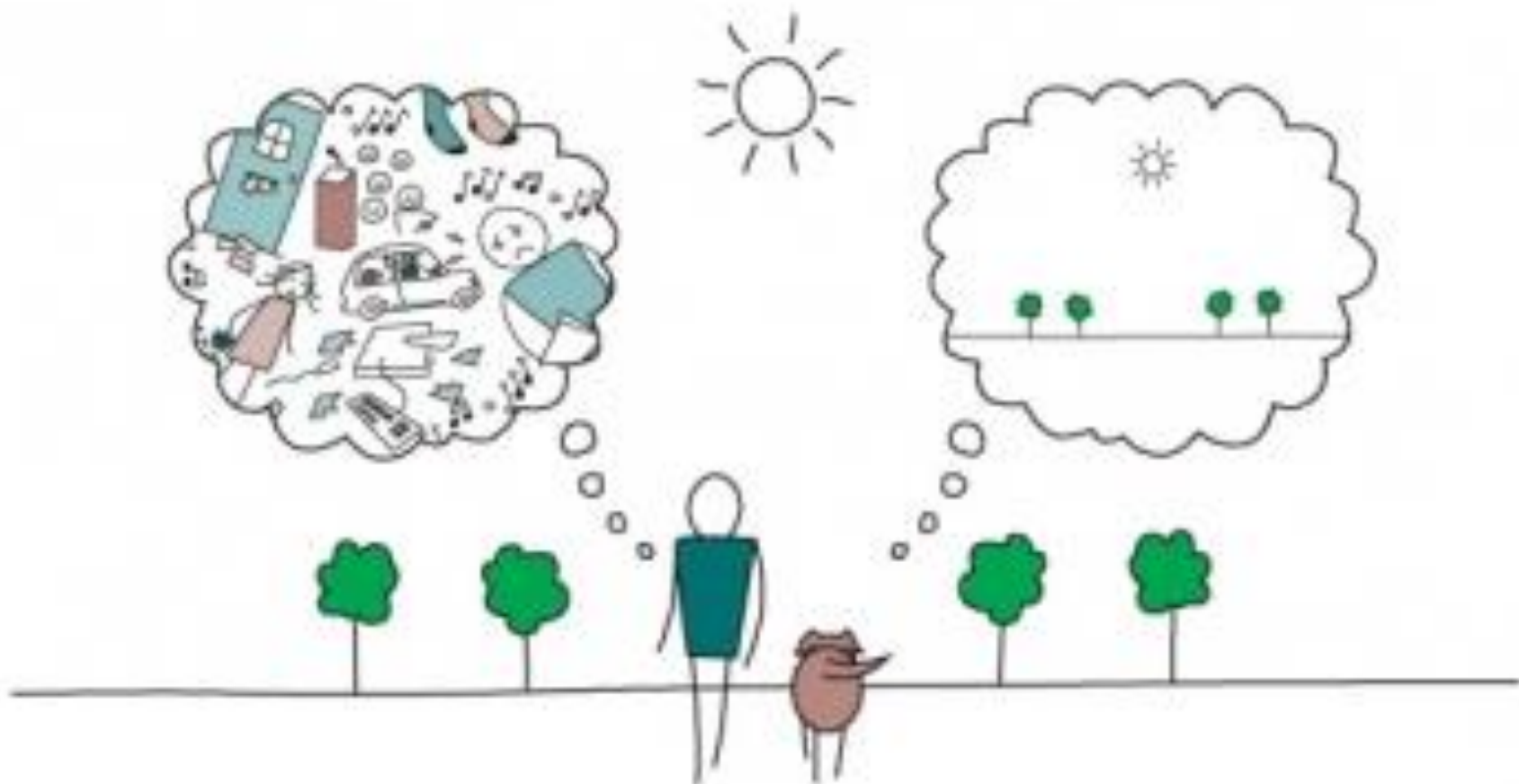
- All humans will and do experience discomfort, including stress, self-doubt, fatigue, and fear
- Attempts to eliminate discomfort are *doomed* to fail
- The more you try to get rid of discomfort the more you “got” it (like Chinese finger trap)
- Solutions to *eliminate* discomfort now become the *problem*





“We hurt where we care. We care where we hurt.” (Steven Hayes, Ph.D.)

- If you didn't care, you wouldn't experience hurt and there would be no potential struggle.
- ***Think about the last time you were sad, frustrated, worried, scared, embarrassed, angry, lonely, etc. Now notice what you care about that contributed to your feelings. Care and discomfort often go hand in hand.***
- However, there doesn't have to be a “struggle.” There can and is a better way of managing the situation, our thoughts, and emotions.



Mind Full, or Mindful?

Make Contact with the Present Moment

- Mindfulness practice is based on the premise that we need to be in the experience of the current/present moment to accurately perceive what is truly happening and to behave/act in a committed way consistent with our values.
- Post-It Note “Now” on Clock



Notice What Comes Up

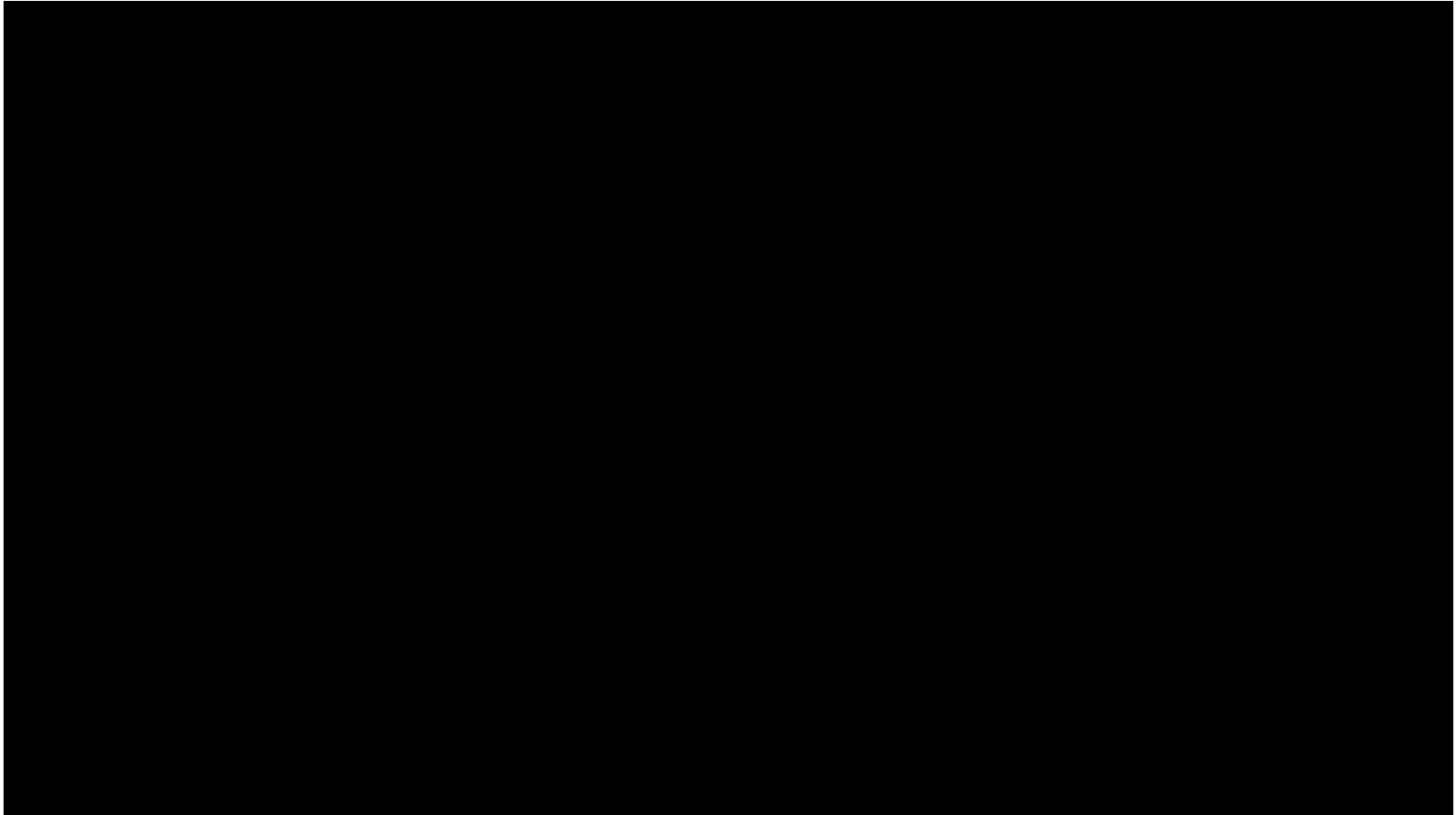
- Unpleasant thoughts
- Unpleasant feelings
- Unpleasant memories



Noticing

- It is possible to notice and acknowledge the hurt, sadness, frustration, disappointment, etc., be willing to experience it for what it is, AND be fully engaged in what and who matters to you. Thus, you can avoid the second arrow if you **choose**.

The Struggle Switch



The Mindful STOP (Russ Harris, 2017)

www.actmindfully.com.au



S – Slow down (slow your breathing; slowly press your feet down; slowly stretch; slowly press fingertips together)



T - Take note (notice your thoughts & feelings, & where you are & what you are doing)



O - Open up (make room for your thoughts & feelings & allow them to freely flow through you)



P - Pursue values (take action, guided by values)

Noticing the Pattern of the Second Arrow

- Become increasingly more aware of what you do and say, what you don't do and don't say.
- This is not easy. We are often inclined to engage in self-blame, self-deprecation, and self-loathing. This often gives us some emotional distancing instead of being willing to experience the difficult emotions that have shown up. When we are in the thick of it, it is very difficult to be a more mindful observer of ourselves.
- ***Think about the last time you did this. Did it give you some short-term relief? Did it ultimately help you emotionally?***
- ***Our students need to consider the same.***

Noticing the Pattern of the Second Arrow

- Think about the level of frustration you have when you are sitting on the highway in stand-still traffic, clearly going to be significant late for the concert, show, or sports event you paid hundreds of dollars to see. The thought patterns might resemble this:
 - “I should have left two hours earlier.”
 - “I should have stayed overnight in the city.”
 - “I never plan ahead.”
 - “I should have used a different app.”
 - “People are just stupid drivers.”
 - “This is all my fault.”
 - Or even worse... “This better be a serious accident and not just rubberneckers.”
 - “This is why I never go into the city.”



Noticing the Pattern of the Second Arrow

- These are examples of the second arrow. This part of the pain, suffering, and anxiety is something that you can learn to control. You do have a choice even when your mind is telling you that you don't.
- Practice self-compassion (kindness) when you notice this.
 - “Oh yeah, that’s that second arrow that Dr. Selbst was talking about.”
 - “What would I tell my best friend to do if they called me in the same situation?”
 - “How would I want to look back on this situation a year from now, five years now, if my kids were modeling my behavior, if this entire event was on YouTube?”



Hero vs. Coward



Hero vs. Coward

- What's the difference between a hero and a coward? Nothing. They're both afraid of getting hurt or dying, but it's what the hero does that makes him a hero, and what the coward doesn't do that makes him a coward.

--Unknown

Acceptance and Commitment Training / Therapy (ACT)

- Acceptance and Commitment Training / Therapy (ACT) is an evidence-based approach that relies heavily on helping people identify values and live a life according to their values.
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy is built on empirically-based principles aimed to increase psychological flexibility. It uses a mindfulness-based approach and incorporates behavior change strategies.
- Since 1986, there have been approximately 1,100 ACT randomized controlled trials.
- *A major goal in ACT is to help people live a fulfilling life, one that includes both pleasant and unpleasant feelings.*



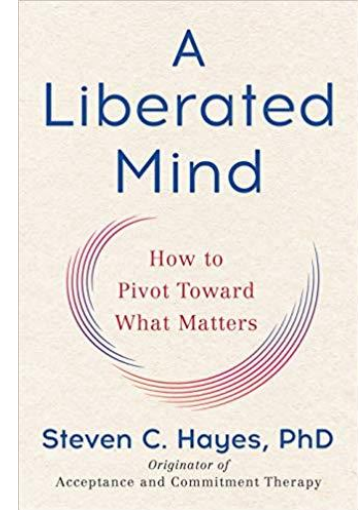
ACT Co-Developers

- Co-developed by Steven Hayes and his colleagues, Kelly Wilson and Kirk Strosahl



ACT Founder

- Dr. Hayes, the originator and co-developer of ACT, describes in his book, **A Liberated Mind**, that his goal is a psychology of human functioning that transforms how we live our lives.
- His passion derives from personal pain. As a young professional, Dr. Hayes struggled with panic disorder, was at his lowest point in 1981 (www.bit.ly/StevesFirstTED), and discovered a way forward by turning toward pain and suffering, subsequently allowing him to turn toward meaning and purpose. As a result, he immediately noticed movement forward not just in himself, but also in his clients.
- Once “liberated”, one can **avoid the second arrow.**



We can Identify Old Solutions

- What have you tried?
- How has it worked?
- What has it cost you?
- The person recognizes their solutions are HOPELESS!
- Before you can try something new, you have to stop what doesn't work



Managing Problems Check-in – *time for some self-reflection*

- Think about a problem you've been experiencing.
- Write down everything that your problem has *cost* you. (Be as specific as possible...money, job, relationships, time, physical health, emotional well-being, etc.)
- Write a list of everything you've done to solve this problem (Be as specific as possible, such as swearing you were going to stop, blaming others, using your willpower, getting mad at yourself in order to push yourself on, avoiding, criticizing, procrastinating, etc.)
- Evaluate honestly how far each of these strategies has brought you towards solving the problem.
- Given this, would it make sense to continue doing what you've been doing? [HINT...In most cases, the answer is NO]



Daily Diaries to review our experiences and willingness

- Daily Experiences Diary
- Daily Willingness Diary

*(from The Happiness Trap,
Harris, 2008)*

DAILY EXPERIENCES DIARY

Day	What was the experience?	What were your feelings while it was happening?	What were your thoughts while it was happening?	What were your bodily sensations while it was happening?	What did you do to handle your thoughts, feelings, or bodily sensations?
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

Daily Willingness Diary: At the end of each day, rate the following three dimensions about the day:

Day	UPSET (e.g. Anxiety, Depression, Worry, Anger, Grief) 0 - None to 10 - Extreme	STRUGGLE (How much effort was put into getting this to go away?) 0 - None to 10 - Extreme	WORKABILITY If life were like this day, to what degree would doing what you did today be part of a vital, workable way of living? 0 – Not at all workable to 10 – Extremely workable	COMMENTS
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				

What do you Value?

- Values are a reflection of who/what is important in our life and who/what we really care about.
- “Values are your heart’s deepest desires for how you want to behave as a human being. Values are not about what you want to get or achieve; they are about how you want to behave or act on an ongoing basis.” (Harris, 2010)

The One Thing



Identify Values



VALUES WORKSHEET

(adapted from Kelly Wilson's Valued Living Questionnaire)

Deep down inside, what is important to you?

What do you want your life to stand for?

What sort of qualities do you want to cultivate as a person?

How do you want to be in your relationships with others?

Values are our heart's deepest desires for the way we want to interact with and relate to the world, other people, and ourselves.

They are leading principles that can guide us and motivate us as we move through life.

http://thehappinesstrap.com/upimages/Values_Questionnaire.pdf

Set Goals to move in the direction toward that which you value



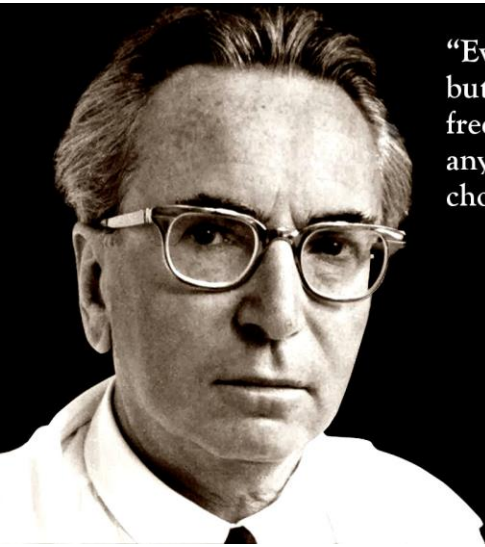
What does Acceptance mean?

- Noticing all thoughts and feelings when they show up
- Awareness of all thoughts and feelings when they show up
- Fully experiencing all thoughts and feelings when they show up
- Not trying to get rid of, reduce, or eliminate unpleasant thoughts and feelings



What does Acceptance mean?

- To be clear, 'Acceptance' isn't the same as saying, 'bad stuff happens, you'll have to get over it', instead, it is acknowledging what is already there and a genuine willingness to experience distressing/uncomfortable thoughts and emotions.



“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

Viktor E. Frankl

“In between stimulus and response there is a space, in that space lies our power to choose our response, in our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

Victor Frankl

Author of Man’s Search for Meaning (1945)

Psychological Flexibility

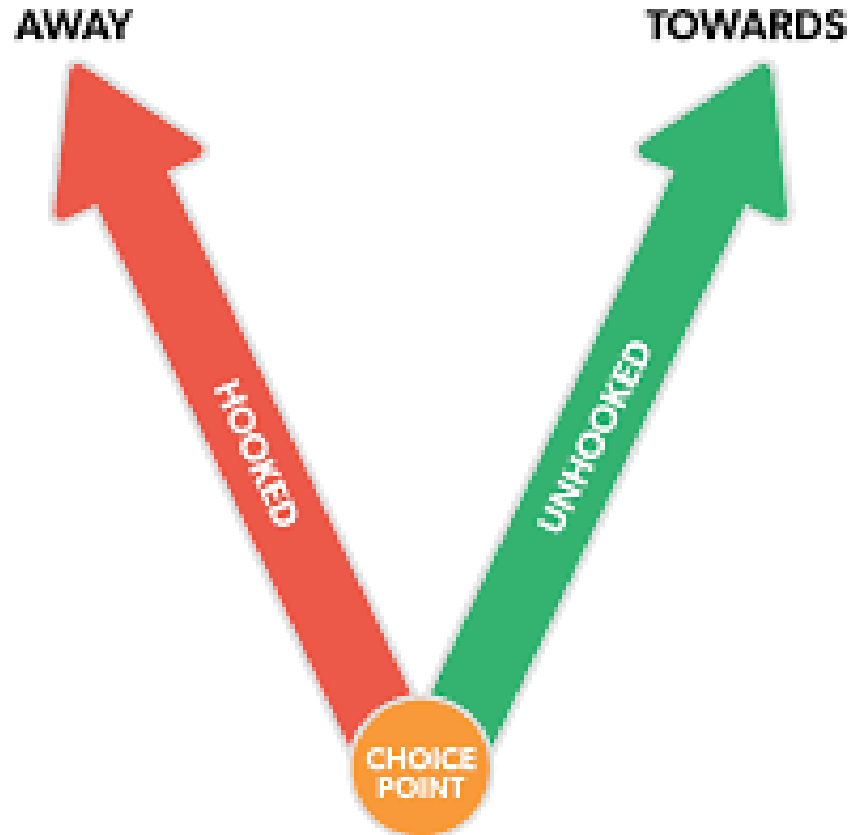
- Getting better and better at noticing the difference between toward and away behaviors...this is the **choice point** we all have. It is not helpful to say “You/I don’t have a choice.”
- Pausing, choosing which way to act, and being willing to experience discomfort while moving toward what/who you care about is Psychological Flexibility. This is the essence of Resilience and Grit.



Choice Point 2.0

Russ Harris, 2016 adapted from the 'Choice Point' by Bailey, Ciarrochi, Harris (2013)

What I do that's ineffective, behaving unlike the person I want to be.



What I do (or want to do) that's effective, behaving like the person I want to be.

Resilience: Dealing with Challenging Situations (Harris, 2016)

4 Approaches To Any Problematic Situation. You do have a choice!

- Choice 1: Leave the situation
- Choice 2: Stay & Change what can be changed
- Choice 3: Stay & Accept what can't be changed
- Choice 4: Stay & Rely on emotional control strategies (e.g., worry, ruminate, and analyze, or get angry, anxious, or depressed).

***Yet, we often tell ourselves or others, “You don’t have a choice.”

Resilience: Dealing with Challenging Situations (Harris, 2016)

- When someone chooses the 4th choice, they engage in emotional control strategies to try and feel better. This may include substance use, avoidance, procrastination, food, video games, internet, TV, self-harm & suicidality.
- Typically, such emotional control makes you feel better in the short-term but results in greater long-term suffering.
- Whatever you choose to do, when you choose, you are choosing to act on your values, engage fully in the moment, and practice acceptance.

Resilience: Dealing with Challenging Situations (Harris, 2016)

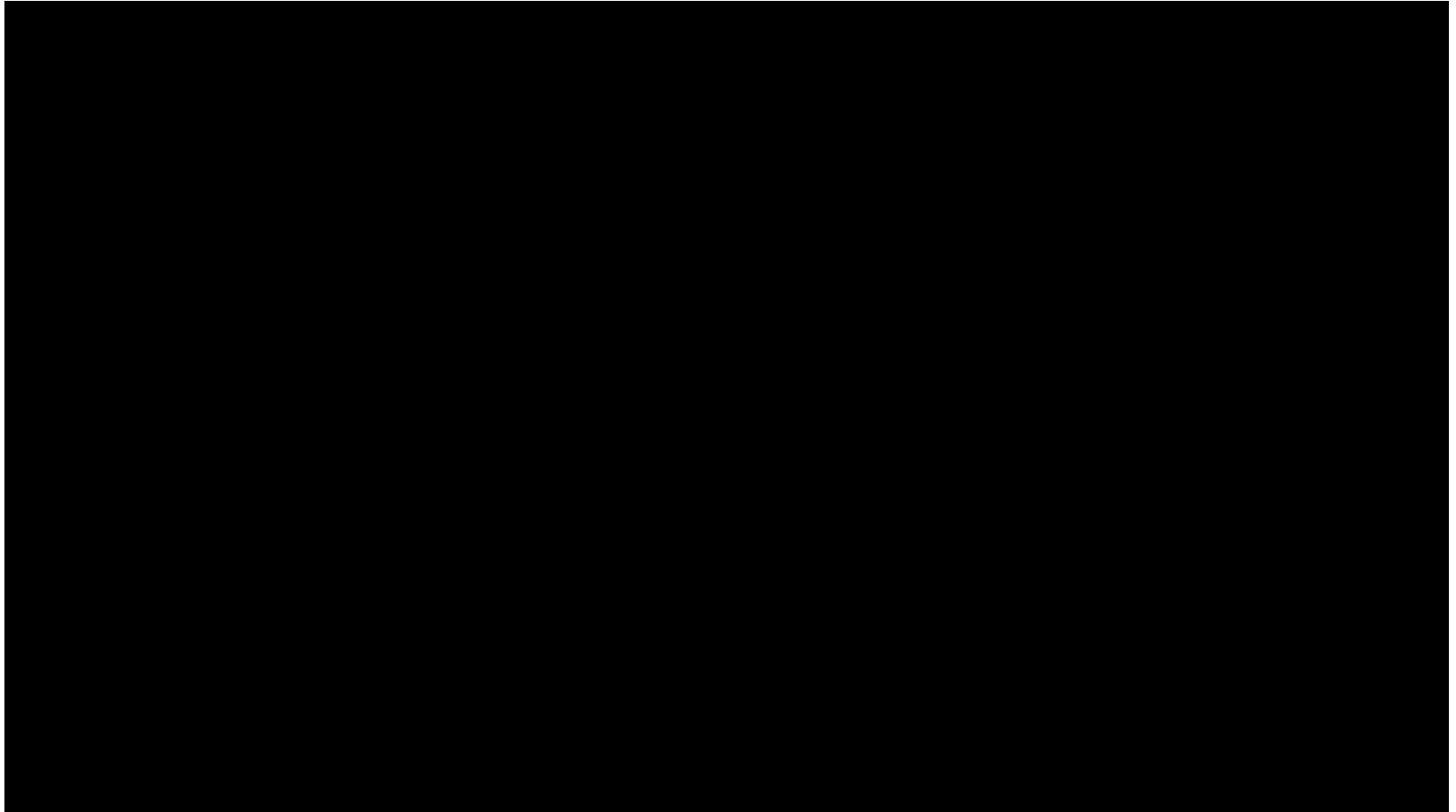
- There is no way *not* to choose. You either choose to “sit on the fence”, or you choose to climb down from the fence onto one side or the other.
- The reality is that if you choose to stay up on the fence long enough, ultimately the fence will fall, taking you with it! Thus, sitting on a fence is okay for a short while, but before long, it becomes incredibly painful.
- So, are you going to get off the fence or remain there in significant discomfort until the fence falls over?



Avoid the
Second
arrow
and...



Unwanted Party Guest



Additional Helpful Tools

Mindful Action Plan

<https://drdjmoran.com/drdjmoran/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/TheMindfulActionPlan.pdf>

*Included here with Dr. Moran’s permission, including permission for participants to use with students/clients.

Mindful Action Plan	
<i>I am here now, accepting the way I feel and noticing my thoughts, while doing what I care about.</i>	
Addressing Internal-World Issues	
I Am	Notice if you are being influenced by any unhelpful self-descriptions. Let go of any problematic thoughts that you are believing about yourself.
Here Now	Center your situational awareness on what you are doing. Notice what is happening here and now, and rather than getting wrapped up in events not in your present control, let go of these distracting events. Focus on what is relevant to your actions.
Accepting	Allow yourself to acknowledge any emotions you are having without trying to control the emotions. Be willing to simply have those feelings while moving forward with valuable actions.
Noticing	Prepare to simply notice thoughts that arise while moving forward with your valued actions. Let those thoughts go if they are not helpful. Treat distracting thoughts as disconnected from action while choosing to act in a meaningful manner.
Doing	To-Do List
What I Care About	Values-Based Motivation
	-- Personal Values: Describe your motivation for engaging in your chosen actions and why you aim for optimal performance.
Designing Success with Performance Management	
Make sure all required resources for successful actions have been acquired.	
Publicly announce your commitment to meet performance goals.	
Alert your accountability partner about your commitment and goals.	
Describe incentives, performance criteria, and deadlines:	

Replace “But” with “And”

- “I want to help my friend/family member *and* they’re not ready for help.
- “I want to be more caring / responsible / positive / supportive *and* it’s difficult.”
- “I want to educate my client/student *and* they don’t seem to be receptive to what I’m saying.”
- “I want to start... / stop... *and* it’s very difficult to change what I’ve always been doing.
- **Create one for yourself: “I want to _____ *and* _____.” Envision yourself moving forward.**

Yes AND to life...

- Accept what's happening (thoughts, feelings, sensations, stories about meaning, etc.)
- Notice what's important (values, valued goals, how you'd like to show up, what you'd like to stand for in this situation)
- Dare to take action – choose to do something that moves you towards values/desired outcomes of the situation

Your homework for this week is to identify a situation or relationship that is very difficult to “yes AND.” This may be one that elicits anxiety or fear to the extent that avoidance seems like a good solution, or one in which you find yourself continuing to act out in ways you're not proud of or satisfied with.

Once you have a situation or relationship identified, go through a process of looking at what a yes AND might look like. Identify the challenging thoughts, feelings, beliefs, sensations, etc that emerge in or when thinking about approaching this situation. Then identify what is important about this situation. What really matters here. What qualities, attributes and values do you wish to be about and stand for in this situation? Finally, identify as many different actions you can take that you believe would be more values based than what you've been doing in this situation or relationship.

What I need to accept in this situation or relationship:

Thoughts/fears:

Emotions:

Sensations:

What is important about this relationship or situation? What do I wish to stand for here:

What could I dare do differently that may be more values congruent:

Yes AND to Life

Brooks Witter, MA, LPC
Therapist, Coach, Trainer
ACBS Peer-reviewed ACT Trainee
www.luminouscounseling.com
www.impactpsychcolorado.com



Self-Care:

Present moment awareness

Aware of your stress and burnout

Aware that what you've been doing has not been workable

Noticing that this is getting in the way of being the kind of leader, employee, co-worker, partner, friend, parent, etc. you want to be

Choosing to do something different for self-care and aligned with what you value

Self-Care



COMMITTED ACTION



CHOOSE ACTIONS CONSISTENT
WITH WHAT/WHO IS MEANINGFUL
TO YOU (I.E., YOUR VALUES)



COMMIT TO THOSE ACTIONS WITH
A PLAN

START THE WEEK WITH SELF-CARE

Practicing self-care is important. Try these simple tips to reduce stress and improve your mood and energy.



GO FOR A WALK

Feel the air or the warmth of the sun.



TAKE A BREATH

Take a pause with some deep breaths.



YOGA MOMENT

At your desk or in your living room, do some relaxing moves.



TAKE A WARM BATH

This is also a way to take a digital break from your phone and/or computer.



CALL A FRIEND

Catch up and share the latest. This will boost your happiness and it's a natural way to destress.



SLEEP

Go to bed early, read, relax, do some bed yoga, sleep soundly, and wake up refreshed!



ACTION CALENDAR: MINDFUL MARCH 2021



MONDAY

1 Set an intention to live with awareness and kindness

8 Eat mindfully. Appreciate the taste, texture & smell of your food

15 Stop, breathe and just notice. Repeat regularly during the day

22 Walk a different route today and see what you notice

29 Notice what is working today and be thankful that this is so

TUESDAY

2 Notice five things that are beautiful in the world outside

9 Take a full breath in and out before you reply to others

16 Get really absorbed with an interesting or creative activity

23 Tune in to your feelings, without judging or trying to change

30 Mentally scan down your body and notice what it is feeling

WEDNESDAY

3 Start today by appreciating your body and that you're alive

10 Get outside and notice how the weather feels on your face

17 Look around and spot 3 things you find unusual or pleasant

24 Appreciate your hands and all the things they enable you to do

31 Notice the joy to be found in the simple things of life

THURSDAY

4 Notice how you speak to yourself. Try to use kind words

11 Stay fully present while drinking your cup of tea or coffee

18 If you find yourself rushing, make an effort to slow down

25 Focus your attention on the good things you take for granted

FRIDAY

5 Take three calm breaths at regular intervals during your day

12 Listen deeply to someone and really hear what they are saying

19 Cultivate a feeling of loving-kindness towards others today

26 Notice when you're tired and take a break as soon as possible

SATURDAY

6 Bring to mind people you care about and send love to them

13 Pause to just watch the sky or clouds for a few minutes today

20 Celebrate the International Day of Happiness dayofhappiness.net

27 Have a device-free day and enjoy the space it offers

SUNDAY

7 Have a 'no plans' day and notice how that feels

14 Find ways to enjoy any chores or tasks that need doing

21 Listen to a piece of music without doing anything else

28 Appreciate nature around you, wherever you are

"Mindfulness means that we commit fully in each moment to be present" - Jon Kabat-Zinn



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

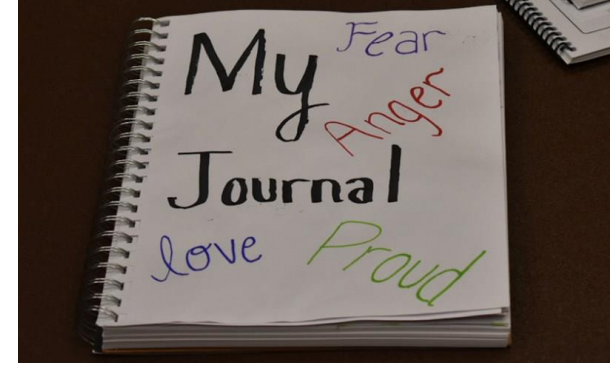


www.actionforhappiness.org

Learn more about this month's theme at www.actionforhappiness.org/mindful-march

Happier · Kinder · Together

Keeping a Thought Diary / Journal



Noticing and accepting

Noticing and accepting your thoughts/feelings "I'm noticing I'm having the thought that...", "Thanks mind for telling me."

Choosing

Choosing not to reject reality

Self-Care: Practice to Protect against (or minimize) the “struggle” & burnout

- Increase Vitality (becoming stronger, active, and energetic)
- Plan for mindfully eating, exercising, and connecting with others in your life
- Maintain a consistent sleep schedule
- Build routines of self-care to increase your capacity to handle stress
- Plan and commit time for meaningful leisure activities
- Cultivate and maintain positive relationships outside of the relationship where you are providing direct care



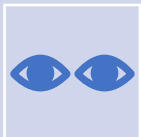
Self-Care: Practice to Protect against (or minimize) the “struggle” & burnout



Say “Yes” to scheduled time for yourself and say “No” to other events that could get in the way of your own committed time. “The ONE Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results.” Gary Keller (2018)



Be mindful of when to initiate and respond to phone calls, emails, & text messages



Learn when you need to give yourself a break / timeout (close eyes, deep breath, notice thoughts and feelings, go for a walk)



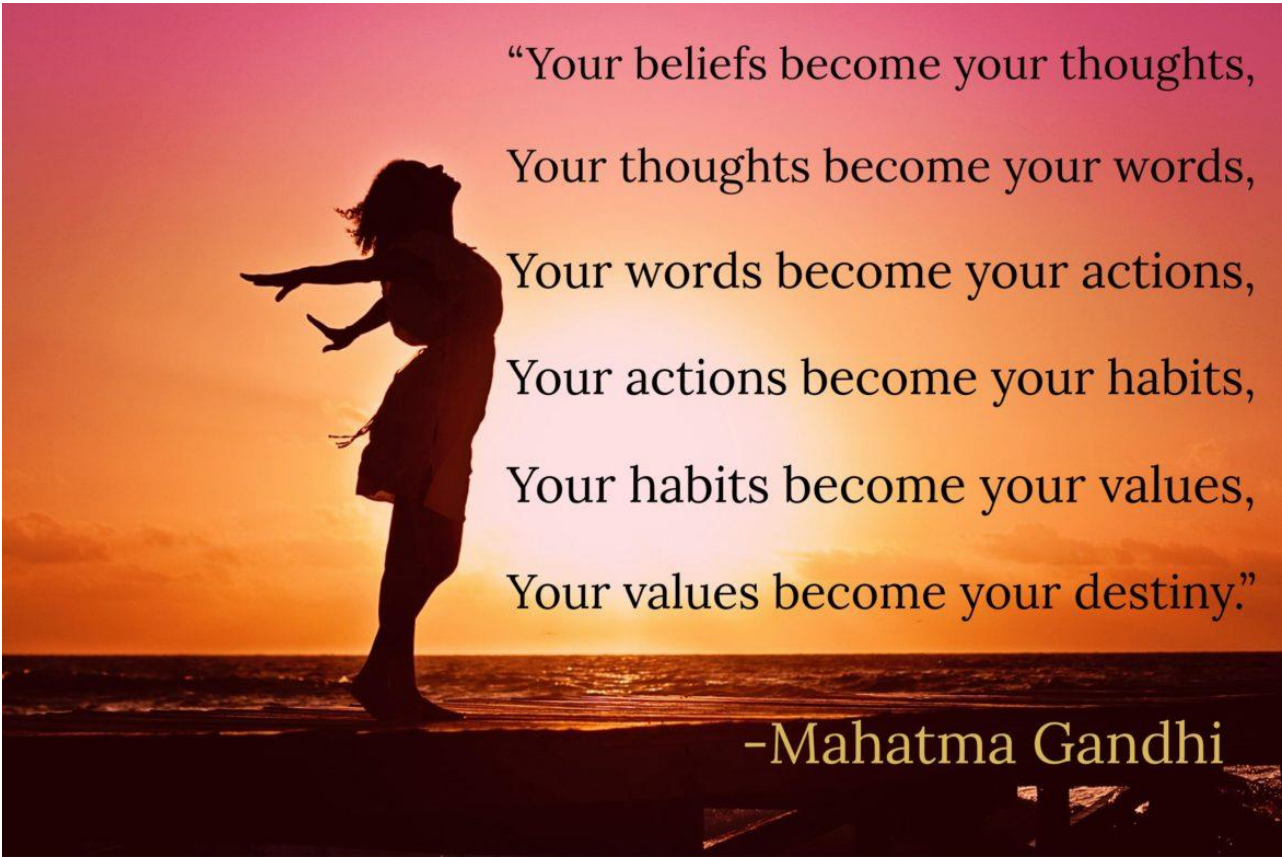
Next Steps...

- What is the One Thing you can do after leaving this webinar that will make a meaningful difference in your personal and professional life?

- When will you do this?

- Schedule this now.

LIVE THE WAY YOU WANT TO BE *Remembered*

A silhouette of a person standing on a beach, looking out at the ocean during a sunset. The person's arms are slightly out, and they appear to be in a contemplative or expressive pose. The sky is a mix of orange, red, and pink, with the sun low on the horizon.

“Your beliefs become your thoughts,
Your thoughts become your words,
Your words become your actions,
Your actions become your habits,
Your habits become your values,
Your values become your destiny.”

-Mahatma Gandhi

YOU HAVE BRAINS IN YOUR HEAD.
YOU HAVE FEET IN YOUR SHOES.
YOU CAN STEER YOURSELF
ANY DIRECTION YOU CHOOSE.
YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN.
AND YOU KNOW WHAT YOU KNOW.
AND YOU ARE THE ONE WHO'LL DECIDE
WHERE TO GO.....

Dr. Seuss



Related Resources

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Related Resources

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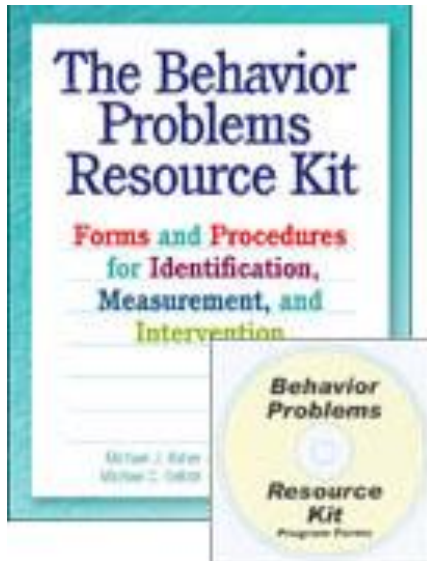


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