

Emotions

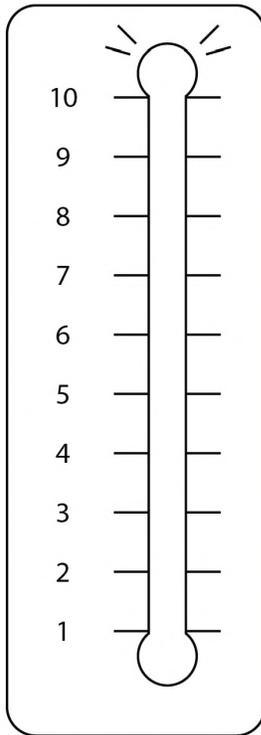
Welcome back to
CALM

Calming
Anxiety
Living
Mindfully

Chapter 4

My Anxiety Meter

Please think back on the past week, and rate your weekly average on this scale of 0-10.



- 10 - Highest anxiety/distress you have ever felt, unable to function
- 9 - Extremely anxious/distressed, highly affecting performance
- 8 - Very anxious/distressed, significantly impacting performance
- 7 - Quite anxious/distressed, moderately impacting performance
- 6 - Elevated anxiety/distress, some impact with performance
- 5 - Moderate anxiety/distress, uncomfortable, can still perform well
- 4 - Mild/moderate anxiety/distress, hard to ignore, fairly uncomfortable
- 3 - Mild anxiety/distress, no interference with performance
- 2 - Minimal anxiety/distress
- 1 - Alert and awake, concentrating well
- 0 - Totally relaxed

Check-in:

How did relating to your suffering in a new way go this week?

How was practicing Radical Acceptance this week?

Let's practice the 3-Minute Breathing Space Meditation

Growing up, many of us are taught so little about understanding, valuing, and managing our emotions. So let's begin with the question... "Why listen to my emotions?"

Why Listen to my Emotions?

1. Our Emotions Communicate to us

Emotions help you better understand situations, our goals and needs. They signal that something important is happening. For example, feeling intense anger after being mistreated can signal that you deserve to be treated better.

2. Emotions Communicate to (and Influence) Others

Facial expressions, body language, and vocal tones communicate faster than words, and often are more genuine than what people are saying. We constantly communicate to each other and influence one another through emotions. For example, when you see sadness in others, or they see it in you, there is often a pull to help and comfort.

3. Emotions Enrich our Experiences in Life

Emotions enrich life by bringing feelings like joy, excitement, and contentment to your life experiences. Even our so-called "negative emotions" like sadness, anger, or fear make life more meaningful. Sadness and fear can bring you closer to others, while pain deepens empathy, appreciation, and compassion for others.

4. Emotions Motivate us to Take Action

Emotions fuel the values and passions that guide you. Emotions also trigger urges to take immediate action ("action urges"). These help you make quick decisions when there's not enough time to wait think it through. Emotions can help you overcome obstacles. For example, frustration about avoiding important goals due to anxiety can motivate you to take courageous steps.

Adapted from Linehan, 2015; Orsillo & Roemer, 2011

"Trying to get rid of emotions can just make them feel worse and stick around"

– Orsillo & Roemer, 2011

Functions of Emotions:

To solve problems we encounter

Love motivates us to find, be with, and attach ourselves to other people and things.

Anger functions to protect us from harm or loss of important people, things, or goals. It urges us to approach, attack, and defend against those who might hurt us or block our goals.

Sadness pulls us into ourselves to figure out what really matters to us and what to do when we have lost something important. It also signals to others that help is needed.

Fear tries to keep us safe by urging us to escape danger by avoiding, running away, or hiding from anything that threatens us.

Anxiety functions to prepare us to handle threats that may happen in the future.

Guilt urges us to repair behaviors that violate our moral values, and to prevent making future violations.

Shame functions to prevent us from being rejected. It leads us to hide anything that could elicit rejection from others. If discovered, it leads us to try and make amends to prevent rejection.

Messages and Action Urges of Emotions:

Action Urges: Each emotion urges us to act in a certain way. Sometimes acting how the emotion wants is very helpful, and other times, it keeps us stuck or makes things worse!

Emotion	Message of Emotion	Action Urge
Fear	There is a threat	Escape
Anxiety	A threat may be coming	Avoid
Sadness	There has been loss	Isolate
Happiness	There's been gain, meaning, connection	Approach Further
Anger	Goals or needs threatened	Approach/Attack
Guilt	Went against values or expectations	Avoid
Shame	Will be rejected by anyone who knows	Hide
Jealousy/Envy	Someone has, or took, what I deserve	Control
Love	This connection is healthy and valued	Approach

Adapted from Linehan, 2015

Is this Action Urge Effective?

When you notice an emotion strongly pulling you to do something, ask yourself, “What does this emotion want me to do?” Then, consider “Is that effective?”

Does reacting the way this emotion wants go with your goals, values and best interests? Is this something that you will likely regret later?

With anxiety, the urge to escape or avoid when feeling afraid is effective and justified when your life, health, or well-being is threatened.

For example, feeling afraid of a rattle snake and going with the action urge of getting away from it is very effective. However, giving in to the urge to avoid class due to anxiety is not effective.

1) Start by observing how you feel and what this makes you want to do:

“I’m feeling nervous and overwhelmed. I have an urge to skip class.”

2) Validate how you feel AND question whether your action urge is effective:

“My fear of talking to classmates is understandable, but avoiding class is not effective. Even though these feelings are intense, I’m going to be brave and still go.”

Skill: Opposite Action

Use Opposite Action when the action urge of the emotion is not justified or effective. Opposite action includes taking opposite steps of what the emotion is pulling you to do.

Examples:

When anxiety is telling you to avoid ever talking to classmates, opposite action would be intentionally taking steps to talk, interact, and get to know others in your class.

When sadness is pulling you to isolate and stay in bed, opposite action could involve calling up friends, going on a walk, attending an event, or perhaps spending time in a coffee shop.

Discussion: How could you practice opposite action in your life right now?

Messages and Action Urges of Emotions:

Emotion	Message	Action Urge	Opposite Action
Anxiety	There is a threat	Escape / Avoid	Approach (if fear ≠ facts)
Sadness	There has been loss	Withdraw Isolate	Take Action & Connect
Anger	Goal Blocked/Threat	Approach /Attack	Avoid or Approach, Gentle & Assertive
Shame	Done Wrong/Rejected	Hide / Avoid	Tell Accepting People / Repeat Action
Jealousy	I want what you have	Control	Acceptance/Gratitude of what you have
Love	You are good for me	Connect / Appreciate	Avoid or Set Boundaries

Adapted from Linehan, 2015

Urge Surfing



Image: Pixabay.com

“You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn how to surf”

– Jon Kabat-Zinn

Urge surfing can be used with any urges you experience, including action urges of emotions that don’t serve you well.

It was first developed by psychologist Alan Marlatt, and has been applied to any unhelpful habits or urges. A few examples of what else this can be used with includes urges to: avoid, procrastinate, isolate, eat sweets, yell, self-harm, vape tobacco, or drink alcohol.

Urge Surfing Anxiety

With anxiety, the action urge of the emotion is powerful. It screams at us to leave or avoid whatever seems to be bringing discomfort.

We often feel the urge to avoid even when there's no physical danger and doing so goes against our best interests.

To Urge Surf, visualize urges rising and falling like waves. Rather than trying to fight the wave, practice your skill surfing the wave until it's lost its power.

Each urge has 3 stages:

- 1) The **ramp-up** is when the urge is triggered or begins, and is building up
- 2) The **peak** is the point the urge is the strongest, like the crest of the wave as it peaks
- 3) The **fall-off** starts when the urge begins to lessen, like a wave after it has peaked and starts falling back into the ocean

During the ramp-up, coping strategies can help keep the wave from growing as large.

The peak of the urge is often reached within 20-30 minutes or sooner (10 min. or less for panic)

The fall-off happens whether we give in to the urge or not!

How to Urge Surf Anxiety:

- 1) Observe the urge and take a slow deep breath
- 2) Choose to surf: Turn your mind toward Willingness
- 3) Remind yourself: "Here's another wave of anxiety. I'm going to ride this out and notice this wave rise and fall."

Additional Urge Surfing Tips:

- Notice, with curiosity, the sensations you experience during the urge
- Observe thoughts that pull you to act on the urge without automatically believing them
- Acknowledge your effort and practice of this skill even when you only delay acting on the urge

Activity: Let's Urge Surf!

Reducing Vulnerability by “Building My Buffer”



Image: Pixabay.com

Buffer Check: Thick versus Thin Buffer

Please imagine the two different scenarios read by the group facilitator

What is my “buffer?”

Imagine your buffer as a shield or force field around you. No one can see it, but you can feel it when your buffer gets thin or thick.

When it is thick, you feel less affected and upset by challenges. Your buffer helps shield and protect you when something stressful happens.

Our buffers are always changing. Often, despite our many efforts and resilience, our buffers have been worn thin. Doing a “buffer check,” can help you be more self-aware and approach challenges effectively.

“Buffer Check”

Please circle your current buffer level: 0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

10 = Most refreshed and strongest buffer possible

7-9 = High / strong buffer

6 = Above average buffer

5 = Average buffer

4 = Below average buffer

1-3 = Very low / compromised buffer

0 = Most depleted and worn out

Getting Buffer!

On the handout below, please list a few ideas that could help build up your buffer.

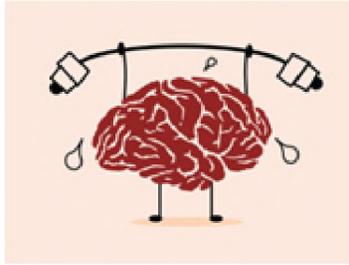


Image: Pixabay.com

Physical Health: _____

(sleep, healthy eating, avoiding or reducing caffeine or other substances, exercise, etc)

Emotional Health: _____

(journaling, talking with supportive people, engaging in something meaningful or spiritual, affirmations, fair and honest self-talk, outlets like drawing, dancing, photography, etc)

Relational Health: _____

(consider people in your life who tend to pull you down or lift you up. Is it possible to spend a little more or less time with certain people in your life, or set some appropriate boundaries?)

What would help raise your buffer by at least 1 today? _____

Adapted from Lee et al., 2008

When your buffer is thin, consider ways to restore it with a **RESET**

Rest

Eat

Sleep

Exercise

Talk (with someone supportive)

Preparing for Mindfulness of Emotions Meditation

This mindfulness of emotions practice is completely voluntary. If you decide to try this, you can also choose to end at any time you wish. This exercise will involve bringing your attention to a memory of a specific time when you felt anxious. It's usually best to begin by choosing a time you felt quite anxious, but not completely overwhelmed.

In a moment, we'll ask you to visualize a recent situation when your anxiety was fairly intense, but not so high it was a 9 or 10/10 in intensity. Then, you'll practice noticing the details you can recall of that event, and the thoughts, images, sensations, and emotions that arise during this practice.

Please allow yourself to accept whatever comes up. Tears are just fine if they come to surface, and there is no right or wrong way to do this. We are simply practicing moving toward our emotions with curiosity and compassion.

My Mindfulness of Emotions Experience:

.....

Weekly Mindful Exercises

Thank you for joining us today!

To get the most out of this experience, please read about primary and secondary emotions in the appendix.

Also, consider ways you can follow through with the "building my buffer" exercise, and search for opportunities to urge surf!