

2.8 Experiential Avoidance

Name: _____ Date: _____

Think about some of the thoughts and feelings you've tried to get rid of in the past, then answer the following questions:

The thoughts I'd most like to get rid of are:

The feelings I'd most like to get rid of are:

The behaviors I'd most like to get rid of are:

The memories I'd most like to get rid of are:

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Now that you've created your list, look at the list of strategies below for avoiding experiences. Place a check mark by each strategy you've ever used in an effort to get rid of the thoughts, feelings, behaviors and memories that you listed on the previous page.

- Worrying about it
- Trying not to think about it
- Trying to distract myself
- Staying busy
- Finding other things to do
- Dwelling on the past
- Catastrophizing about the future
- Fantasizing about escaping the situation (e.g., quitting your job, leaving your spouse, etc.)
- Imagining revenge
- Imagining suicide
- Thinking "Life's not fair"
- Thinking "I must" or "I must not"
- Thinking "I should have" or "I would have" or "I could have"
- Second-guessing past decisions
- Anticipating future problems
- Blaming myself
- Shaming myself
- Guilt-tripping myself
- Blaming others
- Shaming others
- Guilt-tripping others
- Blaming the world
- Substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, etc.)
- Overeating, or not eating, as a method of stress relief
- Addictive behaviors (gambling, worrying, being depressed, "woe is me" pity parties)
- Other: _____

Now ask yourself:

1. Did any of these strategies work in the long run?
2. Did any of these strategies actually make the things worse instead of better?
3. If you were able to live in the "now" of existence, instead of in the mind trap, how many of the things you were trying to get rid of would still be a problem?

Think of one thing from the list that you would like to get rid of. Go outside to your own sacred space, ground and center, and just allow yourself to experience the thing you were trying to get rid of. Open yourself completely to the experience in the present moment, without assumptions about the past or expectations about the future. Just be in the now with the thing you were trying to get rid of.

Did this change your experience? By accepting it instead of trying to avoid it, do you look at it in a different way? What did being in your sacred space add to the experience, if anything?