



Embracing Your Anxiety: Exploration of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Concepts

Every person experiences feelings of anxiety at some point in their life. Anxiety is an emotion and there to send us a message. Anxiety can be uncomfortable to experience. It may cause us to have physical symptoms in our bodies, negative thoughts in our mind, and feelings of being trapped. Today we are going to discuss anxiety and learn how to better manage it. We will explore common things people do when dealing with anxiety, how these things have been helpful or unhelpful, and learn more about why we do these things. In addition, we will work on introducing skills we can use when we are experiencing anxiety.

Not everyone who experiences anxiety has a diagnosed anxiety disorder. It is a common emotion felt by all at some point in their lives. There are many different anxiety disorders as outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders or DSM. Some of these diagnoses include Social Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, and Adjustment Disorders. Anxiety cannot be clumped into one category. For example, a person who struggles with Social Anxiety Disorder will feel the most anxiety during social situations and in turn will often avoid situations where they need to interact with others. While, in contrast, a person who struggles with Panic Disorder will have frequent and unexpected panic attacks. These examples show that each person will experience anxiety differently. Remember that only a doctor or licensed mental health professional can diagnose a specific mental health disorder.

Another important area to be aware of is related to co-occurring disorders. Many times, people who experience anxiety will also experience the addition of another issue. Some of these areas include feelings of depression, abuse of alcohol or drugs, or even medical issues. Some medical conditions, such as thyroid problems, inner ear and balance issues, seizure disorders, asthma, or heart conditions can trigger symptoms of anxiety due to the way they make us physically feel. Please seek medical support if you are experiencing any new symptoms

When we begin to explore emotions, it can be easy to put them all in the same bucket. One difference that is important to be aware of when it comes to anxiety is the difference between anxiety and fear. Fear is an emotion we experience in the present moment. It signals an alarm response to protect yourself. Fear is there to tell us we must survive, or we are in a dangerous situation. Even though it can be uncomfortable to experience fear, like all emotions, it is there to protect us. Fear causes our bodies to



go into overdrive, and by doing this, heightens our awareness of our surroundings. This helps us to stay focused on the present moment and take action to get ourselves to safety.

Anxiety is a future oriented emotion. Anxiety causes us to worry. It can ebb and flow for days, weeks, months, or years. Anxiety is fueled by what our mind says rather than actual sources of danger and fear. Experiencing anxiety can often feel like being on a rollercoaster or riding a wave. There are peaks and valleys. It may be more intense at times and then manageable at others. Ultimately, this is how all of our emotions function. It is normal to have our emotions ebb and flow, however, if this begins to interfere with our normal daily life, we may require additional support.

What have you done in the past when you have experienced anxiety? While each person experiences anxiety differently, there are commonalities to how we manage our anxiety. Let's explore some of these and what they mean. Flight or fleeing. This means we run away from the situation that is causing us to feel scared, nervous, anxious, or uncomfortable. This can include physically leaving a situation or mentally removing ourselves from the situation. This can also lead to avoidance. When we avoid something that makes us feel anxious it means we stay away from people, places, or things that cause us to feel this way. This can also include avoiding memories of being scared, nervous, anxious, or uncomfortable. Distraction, which is similar to avoidance, is when we find something else to do other than focusing on the thoughts, feeling, or memories that are causing us anxiety. Suppression or stuffing is when we do whatever is possible to push away any disturbing thoughts, feelings, or memories we are experiencing.

We may also have developed some skills to help us change our thoughts. This is when we work to replace the uncomfortable thoughts we are experiencing with a more comfortable or positive thought. This can certainly take some practice. We often tend to use safety in situations where we may experience anxiety. Safety can include staying close to people or places that make us feel safe, and avoiding things that cause us uncomfortable feelings. We may also develop rituals to help us manage anxious feelings. Rituals can include carrying around something that makes us feel safe, such as a worry stone or piece of jewelry, or performing a ritualistic task to reduce the feeling of anxiety. We may also vent our thoughts and feelings to someone or seek support from a friend or support group. Self-help, prescribed medication, and seeking therapy or counseling can also help with managing uncomfortable emotions.



It's important to not label emotions and our experiences of them as good or bad, but rather to explore them. Once we identify which things we do when we experience anxiety, there are questions we can ask ourselves. Take a moment and ask yourself: have these things I've done before helped me? Have these things hindered me? Did these things help me as I had hoped they would? Lastly, what have these things cost me? It is important to take stock in the costs of anxiety. Anxiety can cost us in both the short term and long term. This may be seen in the following areas: relationships, career, education, health, energy, finances, and freedom.

Anxiety is not a one size fits all. As we have been reviewing, we all experience anxiety differently. Anxiety impacts us in many ways. We may have physical, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms associated with anxiety. Identifying these can help us to learn what our red flags for anxiety are. Physical symptoms can include the following: sweaty palms, flushed skin, feeling physically nauseous and sick, or an increased heart rate. This may show up as the inability to catch our breath when it is our turn to speak to the provider at a doctor's appointment. Cognitive symptoms can include the following: difficulty concentrating, anticipating the worst outcome, our mind going blank, extreme fears and dread, or uncontrolled obsessive thoughts. This may show up when we receive news about a friend that makes us worried. We may only think of the worst possible outcome, or we may be awoken at night by feelings of dread. Behavioral symptoms of anxiety can include difficulties falling or staying asleep, getting tired easily or feeling exhausted, experiencing muscle tension, or feeling withdrawn from friends and family. This may show up when we have a day of chores planned, but upon waking up, our energy feels drained. These symptoms can cause us to feel as though we can not be an active participant in our lives.

Now that we have spoken about anxiety and how we experience it, we will look at anxiety through the lens of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, also known as ACT. ACT was developed in the 1980s by psychologist Steven C. Hayes, a professor at the University of Nevada. Hayes used his own personal experiences with panic attacks to assist in the development of this theory and therapy. ACT concepts are meant to help people stop avoidance, denial, and struggles with their inner emotions. The goal instead is to accept that these deeper feelings are appropriate responses to different situations that should not prevent us from moving forward in our lives. ACT concepts can help us to begin to evaluate ourselves and make behavioral changes in our lives to help us move forward.



Let's practice a skill called "mind watching." With awareness being key, this is a tool that can help us become more aware of our experiences. Let's get started.

Take a moment to get into a comfortable position for you. This may be seated with your feet pressed on the floor, or it may be standing tall with your shoulders settled down. Try to disregard any distractions that may be around you. Remember, this time is for you. Time for you to take a moment for yourself and relax. If you feel comfortable enough, and it is safe to do so, gently close your eyes. If closing your eyes is not an option, simply pick a space on the wall or the floor, in front of you, and focus on that spot.

Imagine that your mind is an escalator. The thoughts get on at the bottom, and off at the top. Watch each thought as it appears on the escalator, takes a ride, and then gets off at the top. For example, the first thought for me is that the laundry needs folding- that thought rides up the escalator. Next, I have the grocery list appear, and then picking up medications from the pharmacy.

Keep watching the thought until it leaves. Don't try to over analyze it, don't try to hold onto it. Let it take its natural ride. It gets on the escalator, you watch it through the whole process, and then it gets off at the top. It is only there for a moment of time. Don't try to argue or rationalize with your mind's judgement. If you find yourself doing this, it's okay. Simply say to yourself "That is a judgement" and allow yourself to move forward. For example, I am starting to think that I will not have enough time today to fold all of the laundry and get to the pharmacy. I am judging my ability to complete these tasks. I am going to let go of that judgement. No need to become upset or angry or stay focused on it for too long. Notice the thought for what it is, simply a thought. The key is to notice when you are judging, not argue the judgement. Simply recognize that it is there and move on.

Continue to breathe. Continue to watch. Continue to label. A thought is just a thought, simple as that. There is no need to react to the thoughts we are having. The thought is not making us do anything, the thought does not change who we are. Continue to observe your thoughts. The thoughts are like the people who step on the escalator and get off at the top. Simply a user of the service. None of them are wrong, they are fine just how they are. Allow them time to ride the escalator from bottom to top. And when they are there, allow them to leave. Don't hold onto them. Let them go when they are ready. Continue this. As the thoughts enter, greet them, and allow them to move on, from the next to the next, they continue to move.



Continue this for several moments. Allow yourself to detach your emotions from the thoughts. Allow yourself to distance yourself from the thoughts you are having. After all, they are simply thoughts, and nothing more. Let the judgements that you are having begin to fade, noticing that the longer you complete this exercise, the easier it is to allow the judgement to leave, just as the thoughts. They are no longer important; they no longer require any action.

When you are ready, begin to bring your attention back to your surroundings. Begin to wiggle your fingers and toes. Gently open your eyes if you have chosen to close them. Gaze around the space you are in to settle yourself back to the here and now. Take your time if needed. Allow yourself time to readjust to the present moment. Slowly take a look around, noticing what is around you. When you are ready, be here with us back in the present moment.

Take a moment to assess how you are feeling now. Were you able to fully participate in the exercise? If not, that's okay. It's important to remember that new coping skills take time and practice. We may never truly master this, but slowing down and noticing can be helpful, nonetheless. Practicing these skills on a consistent basis, even when we are feeling well, can help them be more effective for us when we are in an uncomfortable situation. Observing ourselves and practicing mind watching can help us to increase our attention and improve our concentration. It can help us to feel more grounded and improve our emotional balance. WE may learn how to effectively manage uncomfortable emotions when they arise, knowing we can turn to this and carry a solution with us everywhere we go.

Let's switch to another tool we can add to our toolbox. Another skill that can be helpful is learning to practice mindful acceptance. It is important to remember that accepting something and approving of something are different. We can easily accept something, but not like it. For example, we may accept that our overall grocery bill has gone up each week because we know this to be the truth, however, it is not something we like or are pleased with- it is just the truth. Essentially, we are taking things as "it is what it is", based in fact and not opinion. Acceptance means "to take what is offered." When we combine mindfulness and acceptance together it means we are an active participant, fully conscious, and exhibiting a softer stance towards our mind, body, and life experience.

Let's do a short practice using this in the present moment. This exercise is called "Oh! What a ____ rose!" To get a sense of what mindful acceptance is, try this together. If the



option is available to you, close your eyes and visualize a long-stemmed rose, freshly cut after a gentle rain, hovering in front of you. Look it over carefully. Notice all of the details- the textures, the smell, the shape, and the colors. See the light and shadows, the dewdrops, and stem. In your mind, simply notice the qualities of the rose and your experience of it. Take a moment to sit with this.

Okay, let's now gently begin to open our eyes if we have them closed. Now ask yourself, did my mind throw in any evaluations of the rose? Did I judge it or label it? Was it beautiful or vivid? It's very likely that you did make some evaluations! However, your own evaluation of the rose does not change the rose one bit. The rose is still a rose regardless of what your mind calls it. Recognize that your evaluations of the rose are not the rose. The rose will not change because you call it this or that. Mindful acceptance is a powerful way for us to notice when we are caught up in evaluations of our experiences more than experiencing the experience in its present, natural state. Let's sit with this experience for a moment.

Moving on from our roses, the next topic we are going to discuss today is core beliefs. Every person has their own core beliefs. What are they? Core beliefs are the unconditional beliefs that people hold. They serve as a basis for screening, categorizing, and interpreting our experiences. These beliefs are often outside of our awareness and not clearly verbalized. Why is this? This is because everyone looks at the world differently. Two people can have the same experience, yet they may have very different interpretations of what happened. Core beliefs are deeply held and influence how we interpret our experiences. For example, a core belief may be "Others can't be trusted" or "I'm undeserving." Think of core beliefs like a pair of sunglasses. Everyone has a different shade that causes them to see things differently or through their own lens.

To illustrate, let's review an example of two different people's interpretation of the same event. The event we are looking at involves Alice and Michael attending a caregiver support meeting in their community and meeting a new person and thinking about asking them to go out for coffee. The experience is the same, however, Alice and Michael hold different core beliefs based on their past experiences. Alice has a core belief of "I am not worthy", while Michael has a core belief of "I am worthy." When confronted with this situation, Alice thinks to herself "Why would they ever go out for coffee with me?" The consequence of this is Alice does not ask the person to go out for



coffee. On the other hand, Michael thinks to himself “we might have fun if we go out together for coffee” and based on this, he asks the person to go out for coffee.

Many people have negative core beliefs that cause harmful consequences. For instance, Alice has now lost out on the opportunity to meet someone new and develop a friendship. In order to challenging your own negative core beliefs, you first need to identify what they are. Some common examples may be “I’m not good enough”, “I’m unlovable”, or “I’m a bad person.” Caregiving is hard and rough days may cause you to think these things. I would ask you to take time to reflect on what negative core beliefs you might hold. Remember, core beliefs are held deeply and often times outside of our awareness. When we begin to bring awareness to these thoughts we have and identify them, we can then work to change them. One way to begin challenging these thoughts is to identify pieces of evidence contrary to the negative belief.

Let’s look at Alice again. She holds the belief that “I am not worthy.” This belief likely developed over time due to her interpretation of different experiences. These experiences could have been throughout her childhood or adulthood. One thing we know, is this belief has been reinforced and Alice has believed this for a long time. If we asked Alice to look for evidence that does not support this belief it will certainly be difficult. After increasing her awareness and insight though, she will likely be able to identify evidence that is contrary to her negative belief. For example, she might identify that “I am a really good friend and offer a listening ear when my friends are struggling” or “I do a really great job making sure that I get my dad to all of his appointments so we can take care of his medical needs.” Sometimes the lens of our sunglasses get foggy or discolored when we don’t acknowledge our positive qualities, experiences, and thoughts.

Next, shift gears and take a look at another concept: schemas. Schemas often include our core beliefs. A schema is a framework within our minds to help us to organize and interpret information. Think of schemas kind of like a blueprint of the way we navigate our own personal world. They can be useful because they allow us to take shortcuts in interpreting the vast amount of information we take in each day from our environment. However, because schemas are like a blueprint we tend to follow, these mental frameworks often cause us to exclude some important information too. This can cause us to focus only on things that confirm our pre-existing beliefs or ideas. Schemas often contribute to stereotypes we may hold and make it difficult to retain new information that does not conform with our established ideas about the world around us.



There are four main areas that people develop schemas around. The four areas are: events, self, objects, and roles. Event schemas are used to describe behaviors and daily activities. Event schemas help us to anticipate things in the future, set goals, and make plans. These schemas are typically automatic and can be difficult to change. For example, the behavior where people are supposed to become hungry in the evening may lead someone to make evening reservations at a restaurant.

Self-schemas describe the beliefs, experiences, and generalizations about the self. They often influence our behavior towards others and impact our motivation. Self-schemas evolve throughout our lifetime as we continually accumulate information from our experiences and social interactions. For example, a person who typically takes care of themselves and does not ask for help from others may have a self-schema of "I am self-sufficient."

Object schemas help us to interpret inanimate objects. They help to inform what an object is, what its function is, and what we can expect from them. For example, we may have an object schema around how to use a pen properly, how to open a door, or how to start a car. For example, I need to place my hand on the knob of the door, turn it, and then open it, in order to fully open the door.

Role schemas inform us about how people are supposed to behave based on their roles in different situations. For example, imagine you meet someone who introduces themselves as a firefighter. Automatically, a "firefighter schema" is activated. You begin making assumptions, essentially stereotyping. You may think, this person is brave, selfless, and community oriented. Despite not knowing this person at all, you have already unknowingly made judgments about them. Role schemas can help us to fill in gaps in information that we receive from the world around us. However, sometimes these gaps we fill in are not accurate. For example, this firefighter may not be community oriented and instead chose this line of work to pay the bills while attending college for a degree in history.

Event schemas are a set of behaviors that can feel like a routine. For example, think about what you do when you walk onto an elevator. First, the doors open, and you wait to let exiting passengers leave the elevator. Next, you step into the elevator and turn around to face the doors, looking for the correct button to push. Event schemas are automatic and can be difficult to change. They often involve routines that we follow. Think about the routine you follow when your phone rings or when you go to sleep at night. They are not likely to differ much from one time to another. It is important to



remember that event schemas can vary widely among different cultures and countries. One common example that is often given when discussing event schemas is how to greet a person. Typically, in the United States, people greet one another with a handshake. However, in Tibet, people greet one another by sticking out their tongue and in Belize people tend to greet one another by fist bumping.

Now that we have reviewed core beliefs and the four types of schemas you may be wondering, how does this relate to anxiety? Core beliefs and schemas often begin to develop in early childhood when we have unmet needs. This is often accompanied by uncomfortable emotions, which could very well be anxiety, worry, or fear. We view our world around us, others, and ourselves through our schemas. They govern our beliefs and feelings about the world, others, and ourselves. Often times, they are resistant to change. This is partially due to our unawareness of them, but also because they have served us throughout our lives in some way. They are automatic.

Experts in the world of schemas and schema therapy share that schemas can be changed through a couple of processes: assimilation or accommodation. Assimilation is the adjustment of a schema by adding information similar to what is already known. This allows for us to avoid being short sighted based on what we may think we know about a situation and instead of about it with an open mind. We might still hold on to our ideas with assimilation, but we also add new ideas. In contrast, accommodation relates to our schemas being altered based on us gaining new information and knowledge about something in order to learn and grow. This is us actively working on changing our ideas- becoming aware and working toward changing the way we react as we go about our daily lives.

Let's put this information into practice by exploring an example through a child's lens. The event is a parent reading a child a book about a dog. The child sees pictures of the dog and hears about the dog throughout the story. They begin to develop a schema about dogs based on what is described and seen in the book. The child identifies that the dog has ears, four legs, and a tail. Later, the child visits the park with their parent. They see a dog while there. By observing the dog, they begin to expand their understanding of what a dog is. This is the process of assimilation by gaining new information through their observation and adding it to the ideas they already had. The dog begins to bark, which is not part of what they had identified in their dog schema. This is new information. The child realizes that the dog is covered in fur. Again, this was not a part of their dog schema. This is also new information. The child seeks



reinforcement from their parent that this is in fact a dog, by asking “is this a dog?” The parent tells the child “Yes, this is a dog.” The child’s dog schema now includes the information from the book and their observation of a dog in the park. Not only does the dog have ears, four legs, and a tail, but dogs also bark and are furry.

Now, let’s look at accommodation in this example. Remember here we are adding new information that we didn’t previously have to create a brand-new experience. Now, the child sees a cat in the park. Even though the cat has some traits of the dog, there are differences. The child is now going to develop a schema about cats. Instead of barking, the child hears the cat meow. The child begins to observe the cat and seeks reinforcement from their parent. Because the cat has some similar qualities to a dog such as four legs, ears, and a tail, the child asks if the cat is a dog. The parent tells the child, “No this is a cat.” The child then develops a new schema about cats and is able to now have two separate schemas: one about dogs and one about cats.

It's important to note that schemas develop from different events and experiences we have in our life. When we experience an event, our schema is automatic. We will have thoughts about it, emotions, physical sensations, and behaviors. When we are faced with similar situations more than once, our schemas are often confirmed. This is why they are so deeply rooted. The good news is, with support, schemas can change and be healed. Awareness, identification, and examining them can help you to change negative core beliefs and schemas you may hold.

Another important aspect of anxiety management and concepts of ACT or Acceptance and Commitment Therapy includes exploration of your personal values. Not morals, beliefs, or philosophy, but what you actually believe is right, wrong, just, or true. Values in this sense, refer to actions- the things that you do. For example, if a value of yours is to help others, this needs to be shown by the action of actually helping others. Values orient you to the direction you want your life to go in.

When we set our sights on values in our life, we begin to feel more motivation. This can be beneficial in learning how to accept anxiety we may experience. Values help us to decide which actions are useful and which are not. Sometimes, when we are overwhelmed by our worries, fears, and anxieties, it can be difficult to identify what our values are. Think about this example a person may think to themselves, “I don’t care about spending time with my family anymore. Every time I try, I get overwhelmed with anxiety and think I will have a panic attack.” On the surface it may seem like this person does not care about seeing their family, but they do. They are overwhelmed by the



uncomfortable emotions of anxiety, but stating they are trying to maintain the social relationship; however, anxiety is a barrier in this instance.

Oftentimes, anxiety stems from feelings of being overwhelmed or unsure about our choices. When we are able to clarify what our values are, we are able to create a solid foundation to make decisions. This can create a sense of inner calmness and assurance when we truly have a clear understanding of what is important to us. Learning that anxiety often arises when our actions are not aligned with our core values can be transformative, but it does not happen overnight. Finding ways to incorporate this into your daily life can help. Clarification of our values helps us to engage in self-reflection and grow as a person. We may uncover aspects about ourselves that are often overlooked or have been buried deep. This helps us to gain a better understanding of why certain things in the world resonate so deeply with us, while others do not. By increasing our self-awareness, we can make informed, conscious choices that align with our true selves. We begin to feel more authentic and will likely experience more positive emotions. Just like most things, our values can evolve and change as we grow and have different experiences. Being able to embrace our changing and altered values throughout our life can help us be more adaptable, open-minded, and receptive to changes. Given these conditions, we stand to be far less anxious as we navigate our daily lives as well!

One way you can work towards this is evaluating your values. Think about the areas of your life that are important to you. If you are a notetaking person, you may want to take out a piece of paper and pen to jot some things down here. Some examples may be caregiving, work or career, social relationships, parenting, education, learning, personal growth, health or physical care, spirituality, and community involvement. Pick one of these areas, or an area you have identified as important to yourself. Use a scale of 0 being no importance, 1 being moderately important, and 2 being very important. Ask yourself, how important is this area to me? Look inside yourself and make an honest rating, you are only sharing this with yourself. Pause and reflect on the area and your rating of its importance. Let's take 5 seconds to do this now. Now, think about how satisfied you are with this area. Are you not satisfied at all? Moderately satisfied, or very satisfied? We can have a value that is very important to us, yet we are not fully satisfied with that area of our life. Now ask yourself, what are my intentions in this area? An intention is a statement that reflects the direction you want to move in for the foreseeable future. Simply, it is a statement of how you would like to live your life and



capture what is most important to you in this area. Listen to your heart and genuinely reflect on your wishes when identifying your intentions.

Remember, intentions are not goals. They are not something you can check off and say, "I've accomplished that." Instead, they speak to how you want to live your life every day. For example, if the area you identified is health and physical care, to explore your intentions you might ask yourself the following questions: how and why do I take care of myself? Why do I want to take care of my body and my health? In what ways can I continue to take care of myself every day? Through exploration, a possible intention may be: I want to take care of my physical health so I am able to remain active and healthy to play with my grandchildren and take care of my spouse. This is an on-going intention that can be lived through each day. If your area of importance is community involvement you may ask yourself: what can I do to make the world a better place? Why are community activities important to me? What do I care about in the environment or nature? Through exploration, a possible intention may be: It's important for me to stay involved in my community in order to strengthen my social connections with others and have a neighborhood I am comfortable living in. Again, this is an on-going intention that can be lived through each day.

We have covered a lot today. We have talked about what the concepts of ACT are, symptoms of anxiety, skills related to mind watching and mindful acceptance, core beliefs, schemas, and values. Learning about and exploring these things, while practicing the skills shared, help to provide a compass for navigating through life's challenges while staying true to ourselves.

In closing, let's review some inspirational tactics to help you stay the course in managing anxiety and staying true to yourself.

First, recommitment. Things get tough in life. It can be easy to get off track and forget the importance of managing our emotions and staying true to ourselves. If this happens, recommit, even if you aren't feeling that you want to follow through. Your own choices and actions will be the things to determine what happens with the barriers and setbacks you face.

Second, move with the barriers and setbacks. Easier said than done but try to find ways to "roll with the punches." Bring awareness to yourself and what you are experiencing. Accept the thoughts and emotions you may be having without judgement. Remember to treat yourself with kindness and compassion for what you are experiencing.



Third, don't let the mind machine trap you. Your mind is not going to stop its chatter because you have decided to take action and control of a situation. Remember, you may have to take your worries, fears, and anxieties with you, but awareness of them can make this so much easier.

Fourth, watch for idleness and fill it with active vitality. When you do nothing, you create a big void in your mind. Your mind will do whatever it can to fill that void. This can be a high-risk situation for getting stuck. You have two choices in this situation. You can welcome what your mind brings and do nothing with it, or you can welcome what shows up and get moving!

Last, practice flexibility. Things surely do not always go as planned. When you are feeling "stuck in a rut" take the time to get yourself out of it by doing something new. Feed your mind and experiences with vitality.

There are four questions you can ask yourself when you are feeling stuck that can help. One, If the thought I am having could give advice, would the advice point me forward in my life or keep me stuck? Two, what would I advise my best friend or someone I truly care about to do? Three, if others could see what I am doing now, would they see me doing the things I value? And Four, what does my experience tell me about the solution? What do I trust more, my mind and feelings or my experiences?

Let's take one more moment for ourselves before we end today. Close your eyes, if able and safe, or pick a spot in front of you to focus on. Take a deep breath in, and out... in and out. I would like you to repeat after me, you can speak this aloud or in your mind "I choose to be open to and accepting of myself, others, and life," "I choose to be caring towards myself, others, and the environment," "I choose to act with kindness towards myself and others," and lastly, "I choose to be conscious of, open to, and curious about my present experiences."

As you begin to gently open your eyes, remember that we all experience a range of emotions. When we can learn to accept the uncomfortable ones, this leaves more room for experiencing the comfortable ones. While we may not like feeling uncomfortable emotions, emotional discomfort is there for a reason. It is our teacher. It is a place for opportunity and growth. A meaningful life is built one step at a time, it does not develop overnight. We hope you found this helpful. Most importantly, remember, with the skills we reviewed today you have the power to choose your path and move forward in new and hopeful ways as you continue your journey. The choice is yours.