

How to tame your bully mind using Mindfulness

Making the Most of University Life

Making the Most of University Life is a course that will help you to understand yourself better, and to understand your Mind. The course is based on *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)*. ACT helps people to overcome their distress using techniques such as 'Mindfulness'. ACT also aims to help people to understand how to live in accordance with their own important values. This course is all about you having a better life.

Facing up to Life

There are some things you can change and some you cannot. You can't change how you are feeling by an *act of will* e.g. you cannot just "cheer up", "calm down", or "get over it".

We can't switch our feelings on and off.

Everyone has strange and unwanted thoughts at times, however, for some people these thoughts are very distressing. Trying to avoid or suppress these thoughts will make them become stronger and more frequent.

Struggling against our feelings makes things worse. If we struggle in quicksand we sink faster, and if we dig to get out of a hole the hole gets deeper. We often use quick fixes (distraction, drugs, alcohol, junk food etc.) to try and avoid difficult emotions, but sometimes we need to **respond** Mindfully rather than **react** automatically.

Pain and Suffering

Our natural reactions to pain often add to our distress. We increase our distress when we try:

1. To fix what can't be fixed
2. To suppress unwanted thoughts and feelings
3. To put life on hold until "things get sorted"
4. To avoid situations we fear

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Being Mindful

Your Mind often confuses *descriptions* and *evaluations*. It invents judgements about you (often critical and cruel) which it presents as true descriptions or facts e.g. You're stupid, you're useless.

	Descriptions	Evaluations
The woman is ...	aged 60	old
The chair is ...	blue	comfortable
The price is ...	£50	expensive
Confusing description and evaluations means we confuse things that are factual with opinion.		

Thoughts and Reality

We can become very distressed by our own thoughts. Our Mind may bring up memories from the past, or worry us with thoughts about the future. When we confuse thoughts and reality we can get upset by many things that aren't real. This is called FUSION.

Fusion example: You are out shopping and have the thought that you could steal something. This thought makes you feel guilty and as if you have actually stolen something.

Thinking it is not the same as doing it. A thought popping into your head is something that happens to you, it is NOT something you do purposefully.

De-fusion

ACT has developed a wide range of strategies to help people overcome FUSION. These are known as DE-FUSION techniques.

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Mindfulness

Mindfulness has been shown to be a powerful way of reducing the suffering generated by pain and emotional distress.

It is a way of paying attention to what is going on in the here and now. It does not involve CHANGING what you think. It does involve changing HOW YOU RESPOND to your thoughts and feelings. You simply NOTICE your thoughts and feelings in a gentle, curious, detached way without letting them overwhelm you.

Mindfulness is NOT...

A way of controlling our thinking (*but it does help to stop our thinking controlling us*)

A way of becoming more relaxed or having a blank Mind.

Things you can do Mindfully

Eating

Drinking

Breathing

Going for a walk

Swimming

Brushing your teeth

Having a shower

Watching clouds

Wellbeing Mindfulness audios:

<http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing/support/self-helpandpeersupport/relaxationandmindfulness/>