

The Noticer

The **Noticer** helps us appreciate the wisdom of our feelings and choose wisely rather than react mindlessly or impulsively.

Step 1: Normalize

Emotional experiences are normal and the Advisor's rules about emotions aren't always helpful. Feelings are not a problem to be fixed. They do not need to be controlled, eradicated, changed or down-regulated. All feelings pass, often quite quickly if they are allowed to come and go naturally.

If you ever tell yourself:

"It isn't okay to feel this."

"I can't stand this."

"It's bad to feel this."



Try this instead:

"It's okay to feel."

"Feelings just are."

"Feeling come and feelings go."

"All feelings are okay."

"This feeling will pass."

"I don't have to act on this feeling."

Step 2: A.N.D (Aware, Name, Describe) Practice

Aware

Be aware of physical sensations. Scan your body and ask yourself questions such as:

"Where do I feel this in my body?"

"How does my chest feel?"

"How do my hands feel?"

"Do I have an urge to move?"

Name

Add a name to your experience, using clear statements such as:

"My stomach feels queasy."

"My chest is tight."

"My fists are clenched."

"I feel like I need to run away."

Describe

Describe the sensations as an emotion with a feeling label such as:

"That queasiness is me feeling nervous."

"That tightness in my chest means I feel worried."

"My clenched fists are a sign that I'm angry."

"Wanting to run is a signal that I'm scared and want to escape."

Step 3: Allow

The benefit of Allowing is that it greatly expands your ability to respond and act in valued ways. We can only seek to succeed if we are willing to allow fear of failure. We can only build positive relationships if we are willing to allow feeling of vulnerability. The alternative to control is choosing to allow or be willing to experience whatever comes up.

The Willingness Question:

Am I willing to allow _____ (internal state/feeling) in order to _____ (do a valued activity)?

If your answer is yes, notice feelings and allow them to come and go as you do the activity. Don't fight them.

If the answer is no, consider engaging in a different valued activity.

Dropping The Struggle With Your Emotions

We often receive message suggesting that painful emotions should be avoided – that it's bad to feel angry, not okay to feel insecure or that sadness is unbearable. These messages are so common most people don't even realize there is an alternative. Consider the following:

Imagine you're swimming in the ocean with some friends. You have a beach ball with you, but you don't want your friends to see it, so you try to keep it hidden by holding it beneath the surface. Despite your best efforts, your friends can see you're holding something down. After a few minutes, your hands and arms tire and suddenly the beach ball slips from your grasp and shoots high into the air. Now everyone can see it, and it attracts their attention. You quickly grab it and try to hide it again, but now everyone is asking you questions: "Why are you hiding that beach ball from us." Even when nobody is around, you sometimes try to push it down and hide it from yourself. You don't even want your own self to see the beach ball. The problem is, holding the ball under water is exhausting – and ultimately impossible. It's always shooting up out of the water and creating a spectacle, and then you have to look at it. Plus, you don't get to swim or surf because you're constantly working on holding the ball underwater.

Can you think of any alternatives to holding the ball underwater?

Let's say you let the ball float around nearby. Sometimes your friends can see it, and they might even give it a nudge, but most of the time they don't notice it because they're busy with their own things. You also discover that when you let the ball float on its own, you can engage with your friends. It doesn't take much effort just to let it be there. But if you try to hide it, that takes a lot of effort, and when you get tired it shoots up and creates a big spectacle, attracting a lot of attention. Imagine your feelings are like the ball. What do you notice?