

Seeking Serenity

Student Workbook



**Plymouth State University
Counseling Center
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<http://campus.plymouth.edu/counseling>

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Introduction to Seeking Serenity

Welcome to Seeking Serenity. We hope that you find Seeking Serenity helpful in learning how to recognize and better manage the concerns that led you to the Plymouth State University Counseling Center. Many people pursue therapy with the idea that the therapist will be able to “fix” them. While Seeking Serenity is designed to provide specific strategies to better manage overwhelming emotions, it is also designed to help **you** get a better idea of how to apply these strategies to **your own** situation. In order to get the most out of Seeking Serenity, it is important to complete all 3 seminars in addition to the exercises in this workbook.

Many of us get stuck in old coping strategies that may help to reduce distress temporarily (e.g., avoiding an anxiety-producing situation), but actually cause more problems later on. Sometimes relying on these old coping strategies become so automatic that we have difficulty thinking about using new coping strategies that may be more effective in the long-run. Seeking Serenity will help you to examine the old coping strategies that you are using that may not be optimally effective, and build new skills to function more fully in your life.

As you begin your journey, please remember that change is not linear. Be prepared for setbacks. Snags can be due to any number of factors, including difficult situational events, changes in motivation, sliding back into old habits, fear of the unknown, etc. Many people find that they take one step back for every two steps forward. That’s okay. You can see this as an obstacle, or you can embrace this as a natural rhythm of the change process, and focus on the positive changes you have made.

The main goal of Seeking Serenity is to give you tools to better manage emotional distress. Seeking Serenity focuses on non-judgmentally assessing what is and is not allowing you to live the life you want to live, and learning skills that allow you to come closer to living your desired life. It focuses on identifying and changing the things that contribute to distress that are within your capacity to change, and accepting and better managing the things that you are unable to change.

If, at any time, you feel that you need additional support, please let your Seeking

Serenity seminar leader know or contact the Counseling Center at (603)535-2461. You may also find additional resources online at: campus.plymouth.edu/counseling.

About Psychological Pain

Everyone experiences psychological pain. This can be sadness, anger, anxiety, heartbreak, embarrassment, etc. Not only is pain normal, but it communicates important information about our experiences. Much like how the pain from a paper cut tells us that we have an injury, psychological pain serves a similar function.

However, some of us experience significant difficulty managing overwhelming emotions, which can make it difficult to focus on what our pain is trying to tell us. Sometimes it may feel that we are being hit with a tidal wave of emotions. At these times, we may act in ways that help us feel better temporarily, but only cause us more distress later on (for example, consuming a significant amount of alcohol after having a fight with a partner, and then not being able to adequately focus on a test the next day due to having a hangover). At other times, we may try to shut down our emotions so that we do not have to feel them (for example, avoiding attending office hours for a class we are struggling with because we do not want to appear “stupid”). However, neither approach actually helps us to solve our problems in the long-run, and since some pain in life is inevitable, utilizing these strategies can become counter-productive.

Seeking Serenity will focus on identifying and changing the things that contribute to distress that are within our capacity to change, and accepting and better managing the things that we are unable to change. By non-judgmentally assessing what is and is not allowing us to live a more fulfilling life, and by learning skills that allow us to come closer to living this life, we create flexibility in how we manage difficulties in general.

Different strategies work for different people, and it is because of this that we present a variety of behavioral strategies in Seeking Serenity. It is important for Seeking Serenity members to at least attempt the exercises that are done in group in order to get a feeling for them. Although some amount of discomfort is inevitable throughout any change process, we also want you to take care of yourself and silently excuse yourself from an activity if it feels like it is “too much.” You can simply sit quietly while the rest of the group finishes the exercise and re-join when you feel comfortable. If at any time you feel like you cannot be in the Seeking Serenity session any longer, please notify your Seeking Serenity session leader or the Counseling Center front desk staff.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is Seeking Serenity?

Seeking Serenity is a 3-week workshop that focuses on distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and mindfulness. It was designed to help students manage overwhelming emotions. Each topic gets its own week in order to give you time to fully understand each concept to practice the exercises.

Why does Seeking Serenity use a 3-session model?

Teaching Seeking Serenity over the course of 3 sessions allows you sufficient time to understand the concepts with time to practice in between sessions. Keeping it to 3 weeks allows you to find time in your busy schedule to learn Seeking Serenity.

What if I need more than 3 weeks to learn the model?

You are not alone. The skills taught in Seeking Serenity are difficult and take time to build. Feel free to complete Seeking Serenity more than once. If you need more resources, we encourage you to follow-up with your referring clinician.

What if I don't feel comfortable in groups?

Many people feel anxious about the idea of participating in a group. Seeking Serenity is structured and curriculum-driven, like a class. Sharing some of your reactions to the exercises and topics allows all the participants to learn and support one another. However, you are not required to speak at all during group if you do not feel comfortable doing so. You can still benefit from the information presented. The Seeking Serenity facilitators respect each participant's right to share only what they are comfortable sharing and never require you to share sensitive or potentially embarrassing information about yourself.

What if I have a problem that's hard to define?

This is one of the ways Seeking Serenity can be particularly helpful. Seeking Serenity is designed to help you manage overwhelming emotions regardless of what is causing them. Once students are better able to manage some of these overwhelming emotions, they are better able to articulate what is contributing to their distress. Therefore, Seeking Serenity may help you to better understand your concerns. In addition, students who successfully complete Seeking Serenity may be eligible to enroll in another Emotional Wellbeing Workshop.

What if I have a mood disorder or another psychiatric condition that is probably the result of a biochemical irregularity?

Even with an identified mood disorder or other psychiatric condition that has a biological basis, an approach that focuses on building skills in managing overwhelming emotions can be helpful. Improving our ability to better manage overwhelming emotions can make it easier to identify when a psychiatric episode is happening, which can allow a person to more effectively manage it. Plus, research suggests that various psychotherapies change the brain in positive ways, even where there is a biochemical irregularity.

What if I am a survivor of a traumatic event?

While no one can change events that have already happened, we can learn to better manage our emotional reactions when we are confronted with things that remind us of the traumatic event. In fact, this is often the first step in treatment for traumatic experiences. Indeed, for people who experience significant difficulties managing overwhelming emotions due to a traumatic experience, there is evidence that attempting to process the experience without having sufficient skills (the very skills that we teach in Seeking Serenity) to manage the upsetting thoughts and feelings can actually cause a person to feel worse (Courtois & Ford, 2013).

What if I have an urgent need to see a counselor during Seeking Serenity?

Simply let the Seeking Serenity facilitator or the Counseling Center front desk staff know and they will facilitate you getting the help you need.

IN SESSION WORKSHEETS

Seminar 1: Distress Tolerance

The Cost of Old Coping Strategies

Old Coping Strategy	Possible Costs
Spending a great deal of time thinking about past pain, mistakes, and problems	Missing good times that might be happening now; regret; depression about the past Other: _____ _____ _____
Worrying about possible future pain, mistakes, and problems	Missing good things that might be happening now; anxiety about the future Other: _____ _____
Isolating yourself to avoid possible pain	Spending more time alone and thus feeling even more distressed; missing out on time with friends/family; missing opportunities to make new connections Other: _____ _____ _____
Using alcohol and other drugs to numb yourself	Addiction; loss of money; academic/work problems; legal problems; relationship problems; health consequences Other: _____ _____
Displacing painful feelings onto others	Loss of friendships, romantic relationships, and family members; other people avoiding you; loneliness; guilt; legal consequences Other: _____ _____
Engaging in harmful behaviors (e.g., self-cutting, burning, etc.)	Infection; scarring; shame; physical pain Other: _____ _____ _____

Engaging in unsafe sexual activity (e.g., unprotected sex, frequent sex with strangers, etc.)	STIs; pregnancy; shame; embarrassment Other: _____ _____ _____
Remaining in destructive relationships	Potential physical/verbal/emotional abuse; getting burned-out doing things for other people; not getting your needs met; resentment; depression Other: _____ _____
Over-eating, restricting, or engaging in harmful compensatory behaviors (throwing up, excessive exercise, etc.)	Dangerous weight gain/loss; health consequences; medical complications; embarrassment; shame; isolating from friends/family during meals Other: _____ _____
Attempting suicide or engaging in other life-threatening activities	Possible death; hospitalization; long-term medical consequences; disruption in academics; shame; embarrassment Other: _____ _____
Avoiding pleasant activities (e.g., social events, exercise, etc.)	Lack of enjoyment; missing out on time with friends/family; isolation; depression Other: _____ _____
Surrendering to pain and feeling unfulfilled in your life	Pain/distress; regrets; depression Other: _____ _____

(From *The Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Workbook* by McKay, Wood & Brantley. © 2007, New Harbinger Publications.)

Distraction Strategies

Instructions: Check all of the distraction strategies that you are willing to try.

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in a hobby (specify:_____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Go to an event (specify:_____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean/organize | <input type="checkbox"/> Play video games |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go to a coffee shop | <input type="checkbox"/> Play a sport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write in a journal | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surf the web | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch a sporting event |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read a magazine | <input type="checkbox"/> Get a haircut |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunbathe | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do a puzzle | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a gym class |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paint nails | <input type="checkbox"/> Go for a drive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Call/text/visit a friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Go shopping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go for a walk | <input type="checkbox"/> Do laundry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go out for a meal | <input type="checkbox"/> Make something for someone else |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Draw | <input type="checkbox"/> Do something for someone else |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watch T.V. | <input type="checkbox"/> Do volunteer work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sing along to the radio | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch soap operas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wash dishes | <input type="checkbox"/> Read a book |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cook favorite food | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch a movie |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make a scrapbook | <input type="checkbox"/> Make a video |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do homework | <input type="checkbox"/> Read a joke book |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recite a song | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen/watch a comedy routine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Count as high as you can | <input type="checkbox"/> Read funny greeting cards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Squeeze a stress ball | <input type="checkbox"/> Count/name the colors you see |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lift weights | <input type="checkbox"/> Blow bubbles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go for a run | <input type="checkbox"/> Take photographs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nature-watch | <input type="checkbox"/> Paint |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interact with animals | <input type="checkbox"/> Call a crisis line |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Look at funny memes online | <input type="checkbox"/> Play a game on your phone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write a poem/short story/play | <input type="checkbox"/> Look up new Apps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make list of 10 places you want to go | <input type="checkbox"/> Change your hair color |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learn words to a new language | <input type="checkbox"/> Name all the sounds you can hear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Send a thank you letter/card/email | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do a crossword/word search puzzle | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:_____ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:_____ |

(Adapted from *Skills Training Manual* by Marsha Linehan. © 1993. The Guilford Press)

Relaxation Strategies

Instructions: Check all of the relaxation strategies that you are willing to try.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Light a scented candle | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to soothing music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Burn incense | <input type="checkbox"/> Play an instrument |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Observe nature around you | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to a white noise machine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Look at an art/photography book | <input type="checkbox"/> Spray a pleasant fragrance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sit at the beach/watch the waves | <input type="checkbox"/> Focus on sounds around you |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Star-gaze | <input type="checkbox"/> Put on perfumes/lotions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fix hair/nails/makeup | <input type="checkbox"/> Slowly eat a popsicle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Samples flavors in an ice-cream shop | <input type="checkbox"/> Bake cookies/cake/bread |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Let ice melt in your mouth if it's hot outside | <input type="checkbox"/> Eat a dessert |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Touch something soft | <input type="checkbox"/> Eat chocolate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a bubble bath | <input type="checkbox"/> Work on an art project |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pet your dog/cat | <input type="checkbox"/> Drink tea/hot chocolate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soak your feet | <input type="checkbox"/> Get a massage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sit in a comfortable chair | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to a visualization tape |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practice deep breathing | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a warm/cool shower |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hug/squeeze a pillow | <input type="checkbox"/> Put on a fuzzy shirt/
scarf/hat/slippers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to upbeat music | <input type="checkbox"/> Put a cold compress on your forehead |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pray/meditate | <input type="checkbox"/> Hug someone you care about |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slowly suck on a hard candy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buy/pick a single beautiful flower | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Look up beautiful places online | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blow bubbles | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to a recording of nature sounds | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lie in/smell the grass | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make a collage of pleasing images | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

(Adapted from *Skills Training Manual* by Marsha Linehan. © 1993. The Guilford Press)

Planning to Use Your Plan

Instructions: Write down 3 situations over the upcoming week when you anticipate it could be helpful to use your distraction and relaxation plans.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Seminar 1 Homework

Homework 1: Keep your index card with you and practice your distraction and relaxation plans at least 4 times. Track your progress on pages 16-18

Homework 2: Practice staying in the moment by noticing your breath for 5 minutes at least 4 times. Track your progress on pages 16-18

Homework Tracking

When you notice yourself feeling especially distressed, take a minute to note your distress level on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being no distress at all and 10 being the most distress you have ever experienced. Then complete and exercise from your index card and note your distress level on a scale of 1 to 10. If you do not feel any relief, chose another item. Continue until you have completed all of the items on your index card. If you do not feel any reduction in your distress once going through all of the items, pick an item and start over again. Repeat until you notice a reduction in distress. Try to track at least 4 days out of 7.

Day 1 (Date: _____)

Distraction Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Distraction Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Distraction Plan

Relaxation Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Relaxation Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Relaxation Plan

Noticing Breath: Y/N (circle)

Strategies: _____

Day 2 (Date: _____)

Distraction Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Distraction Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Distraction Plan

Relaxation Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Relaxation Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Relaxation Plan

Noticing Breath: Y/N (circle)

Strategies: _____

Day 3 (Date: _____)

Distraction Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Distraction Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Distraction Plan

Relaxation Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Relaxation Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Relaxation Plan

Noticing Breath: Y/N (circle)

Strategies: _____

Day 4 (Date: _____)

Distraction Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Distraction Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Distraction Plan

Relaxation Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Relaxation Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Relaxation Plan

Noticing Breath: Y/N (circle)

Strategies: _____

Day 5 (Date: _____)

Distraction Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Distraction Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Distraction Plan

Relaxation Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Relaxation Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Relaxation Plan

Noticing Breath: Y/N (circle)

Strategies: _____

Day 6 (Date: _____)

Distraction Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Distraction Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Distraction Plan

Relaxation Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Relaxation Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Relaxation Plan

Noticing Breath: Y/N (circle)

Strategies: _____

Day 7 (Date: _____)

Distraction Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Distraction Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Distraction Plan

Relaxation Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Relaxation Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Relaxation Plan

Noticing Breath: Y/N (circle)

Strategies: _____

Seminar 2: Emotion Regulation

Homework Review

If you practiced the homework, what strategies did you try? What did you observe? If you practiced these strategies more than once, what did you notice across practices?

If you did not practice the homework, what got in the way? If something got in the way, what could you do over the upcoming week to try to reduce this barrier?

What Good Are Emotions?

EMOTIONS COMMUNICATE TO (AND INFLUENCE) OTHERS

- Facial expressions are a hard-wired part of emotions. In societies and among animals, facial expressions communicate faster than words and may replace words.
- When it is important to us to communicate to others, or send them a message, it can be very hard for us to change our emotions.
- Whether we intend it or not, the communication of emotions influences others.

EMOTIONS ORGANIZE AND MOTIVATE ACTION

- Emotions motivate our behavior. The action urge connected to specific emotions is often "hard-wired." Emotions prepare us for action.
- Emotions save time in getting us to act in important situations. We don't have to think everything through.
- Strong emotions help us overcome obstacles in our mind and in the environment.

EMOTIONS CAN BE SELF-VALIDATING

- Our emotional reactions to other people and to events can give us information about the situation. Emotions can be signals or alarms that something is happening.
- When this is carried to an extreme, emotions are treated as facts: "If I feel incompetent, I am." "If I get depressed when left alone, I shouldn't be left alone." "If I feel right about something, it is right." "If I'm afraid, it is threatening." "I love him, so he must be OK."

(From *Skills Training Manual* by Marsha Linehan. © 1993. The Guilford Press)

Myths About Emotions

1. There is a right way to feel in every situation.

CHALLENGE: _____

2. Letting others know that I am feeling bad is admitting weakness.

CHALLENGE: _____

3. Negative feelings are bad and destructive.

CHALLENGE: _____

4. Being emotional means being out of control.

CHALLENGE: _____

5. Emotions can just happen for no reason.

CHALLENGE: _____

6. Some emotions are really stupid.

CHALLENGE: _____

7. All painful emotions are a result of a bad attitude.

CHALLENGE: _____

8. If others don't approve of my feelings, I obviously shouldn't feel the way I do.

CHALLENGE: _____

9. Other people are the best judge of how I am feeling.

CHALLENGE: _____

10. Painful emotions are not really important and should be ignored.

CHALLENGE: _____

11. _____

CHALLENGE: _____

12. _____

CHALLENGE: _____

(From *Skills Training Manual* by Marsha Linehan. © 1993. The Guilford Press)

Reducing Vulnerability to Negative Emotions

A way to remember these skills is to remember the acronym **PLEASE**:

take care of	<u>Ph</u>ysical health
balance	<u>E</u>ating
limit	mood-<u>A</u>ltering drugs
balance	<u>S</u>leep
get	<u>E</u>xercise

Strategy	Resources*
Take care of <u>Ph</u>ysical health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seek appropriate medical care - Take medication as prescribed - Get extra sleep when sick - Practice Safer Sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PULSE - Health Services - 24-Hour Nurse Line - Pharmacy
Balance <u>E</u>ating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seek Nutritional Support from Professionals - Pay attention to how foods make you feel - Practice mindful eating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PULSE - Health Services - Registered Dietician - Dining Services
Limit Mood-<u>A</u>ltering Drugs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limit Alcohol Consumption - Limit Marijuana Use - Limit Other Recreational Drugs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PULSE - Better Decisions Group (Counseling Services) - Alcoholics Anonymous (on campus)
Balance <u>S</u>leep <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7 – 9 Hours of Sleep Per Night - Go to Sleep/Wake Up at Same Time - Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol 4-6 hours before sleep - Avoid naps until sleep cycle is regulated - Limit naps to 30-45 minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PULSE - Health Services
Get <u>E</u>xercise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seek Out Enjoyable Exercise - Set reasonable exercise goals - Schedule time to exercise - Work up to exercising 75-150 minutes per week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PULSE - Recreation Center

(Adapted from Skills Training Manual by Marsha Linehan. © 1993. The Guilford Press)

Plan to Reduce Vulnerability to Negative Emotions

Instructions: List 3 strategies that you plan to engage in over the next week to help you reduce vulnerability to negative emotions. Be as specific as possible. For example, rather than writing, "Get adequate sleep," write, "Go to sleep by 11:00 p.m. each night."

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Seminar 2 Homework

Homework 1: Keep your plan to reduce vulnerability plan with you and practice one strategy at least 4 times. Track your progress on pages 16-18

Homework 2: Practice your distraction and relaxation plans at least 4 times. Track your progress on pages 16-18

Homework 3: Practice staying in the moment by noticing your breath for 5 minutes at least 4 times. Track your progress on pages 16-18

Homework Tracking

Instructions: Check the strategies that you practice this week, and list the strategies that you engage in. Note your distress on a scale of 1 to 10 both before and after engaging in your Distraction/Relaxation Plans. Try to track at least 4 out of 7 days.

Day 1 (Date: _____)

Reduce Vulnerability to Negative Emotions: Y/N (circle)

Distraction Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Distraction Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Distraction Plan

Relaxation Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Relaxation Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Relaxation Plan

Noticing Breath: Y/N (circle)

Strategies: _____

Day 2 (Date: _____)

Reduce Vulnerability to Negative Emotions: Y/N (circle)

Distraction Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Distraction Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Distraction Plan

Relaxation Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Relaxation Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Relaxation Plan

Noticing Breath: Y/N (circle)

Strategies: _____

Day 3 (Date: _____)

Reduce Vulnerability to Negative Emotions: Y/N (circle)

Distraction Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Distraction Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Distraction Plan

Relaxation Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Relaxation Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Relaxation Plan

Noticing Breath: Y/N (circle)

Strategies: _____

Day 4 (Date: _____)

Reduce Vulnerability to Negative Emotions: Y/N (circle)

Distraction Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Distraction Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Distraction Plan

Relaxation Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Relaxation Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Relaxation Plan

Noticing Breath: Y/N (circle)

Strategies: _____

Day 5 (Date: _____)

Reduce Vulnerability to Negative Emotions: Y/N (circle)

Distraction Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Distraction Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Distraction Plan

Relaxation Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Relaxation Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Relaxation Plan

Noticing Breath: Y/N (circle)

Strategies: _____

Day 6 (Date: _____)

Reduce Vulnerability to Negative Emotions: Y/N (circle)

Distraction Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Distraction Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Distraction Plan

Relaxation Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Relaxation Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Relaxation Plan

Noticing Breath: Y/N (circle)

Strategies: _____

Day 7 (Date: _____)

Reduce Vulnerability to Negative Emotions: Y/N (circle)

Distraction Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Distraction Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Distraction Plan

Relaxation Plan: Y/N (circle)

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress before Relaxation Plan

___ Score on 1 to 10 scale of distress after Relaxation Plan

Noticing Breath: Y/N (circle)

Strategies: _____

Seminar 3: Mindfulness

Homework Review

If you practiced the homework, what strategies did you try? What did you observe? If you practiced these strategies more than once, what did you notice across practices?

If you did not practice the homework, what got in the way? If something got in the way, what could you do over the upcoming week to try to reduce this barrier?

Journal Exercise: Focus on a Single Object

Instructions: Write about any reactions you had to the “Focus on a Single Object” exercise.

Journal Exercise: Band of Light

Instructions: Write about any reactions you had to the “Band of Light” exercise.

Journal Exercise: Inner-Outer Experience

Instructions: Write about any reactions you had to the “Inner-Outer Experience” exercise.

Journal Exercise: Create Your Mindfulness Plan

Instructions: Write down 3 times over the upcoming week when you will have some quiet time alone to practice these mindfulness exercises – even for just a few minutes. For example, this could be right after you wake up, before you go to sleep, or in the shower.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Appendix

Noticing Breath Script (From Seminar 1)

To begin, I invite you to get comfortable in your chair, let your shoulders drop, and let your feet rest on the floor. You can either close your eyes, or if you feel more comfortable, simply focus your gaze on a particular spot in front of you. Take a few slow, deep breaths. (*pause*)

Take a moment to notice how you are feeling. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being no distress at all and 10 being the most distress you have ever experienced, where would you currently put yourself? Keep this number in the back of your mind, as we will be coming back to it later. (*pause*)

Next, taking a long, slow breath through your nose or month. Then slowly exhaling through your mouth. Again, taking a long, slow breath through your nose or mouth. Noticing how your stomach rises as you take a full breath. (*pause*) Imagining your belly filling up like a balloon as you breathe in, and then feeling it deflate as you breathe out, as if you were slowly letting the air out of that balloon. (*pause*) Noticing how your breath feels cool as you breathe in deeply through your nose or mouth, and noticing how it feels warm as you breathe slowly out through your mouth. (*pause*)

Now, as you continue to breathe, begin counting your breath each time you exhale. Taking a slow, deep breath in, then counting “1” to yourself as you slowly breathe out. Now breathing in again slowly through your nose or mouth, and counting “2” as you exhale slowly through your mouth. Again breathing in slowly through your nose or mouth, and counting “3” as you breathe out. Continue breathing in through your nose or mouth, and counting “4” as you breathe out. Then start over again at “1.” (*pause*)

You will notice that your mind begins to wander during this exercise. You will start thinking about something else – an upcoming test, an appointment you have later, or maybe even your thoughts about this exercise. This is completely normal. Our minds are designed to have thoughts constantly coming and going. When you notice yourself feeling distracted from your breath, rather than criticizing or getting frustrated with yourself, simply noticing that your mind is wandering, returning your attention to your breath, and beginning to count again at 1. Again, imagining your belly filling up like a balloon as you take a deep, slow breath in through your nose or mouth. As you slowly breathe out through your

mouth, imagining that balloon deflating, as if you were slowly letting all the air out of it. Continuing to count your breaths from 1 to 4. (*pause*)

Again, you will notice yourself becoming distracted. Maybe you notice the ticking of the clock, a sound coming from outside the room, or maybe you're even distracted by the sound of my voice. This is perfectly normal. When this happens, just returning your attention to your breath. (*pause*)

Now as you prepare to bring your awareness back to the room, noticing any additional sensations in your body – how your body feels in the chair, how your arms feel in your lap, how your feet feel against the floor. (*pause*) On a scale of 1 to 10, again with 1 being no distress at all and 10 being the most distress you have ever experienced, where would you put yourself now? (*pause*) When you're ready, take a couple of normal breaths, and then open your eyes as you exhale.

Ways to Describe Emotions (From Seminar 2, Optional Activity)

We tend to use a narrow range of vocabulary to describe our emotions (e.g., “sad,” “mad”). Having a wider range of words to describe how we are feeling can help us have more awareness of our experiences. Below is a list of words that describe emotions. Go through and circle all of the words that describe how you are feeling right now. Use this list in the future when you are having difficulty identifying your specific emotions.

Love Words

Love	Caring	Enchantment	Liking	Sentimentality
Adoration	Charmed	Fondness	Longing	Sympathy
Affection	Compassion	Infatuation	Lust	Tenderness
Arousal	Desire	Kindness	Passion	Warm
Attraction				

Joy Words

Joy	Ecstasy	Exhilaration	Joviality	Satisfaction
Amusement	Elation	Gaiety	Jubilation	Thrill
Bliss	Enjoyment	Gladness	Optimism	Triumph
Cheerfulness	Enthrallment	Glee	Pleasure	Zaniness
Contentment	Enthusiasm	Happiness	Pride	Zest
Delight	Euphoria	Hope	Rapture	Zeal
Eagerness	Excitement	Jolliness	Relief	

Anger Words

Anger	Cruelty	Ferocity	Irritation	Resentment
Aggravation	Destructiveness	Frustration	Jealousy	Revulsion
Agitation	Disgust	Fury	Loathing	Scorn
Annoyance	Dislike	Grouchiness	Mean-	Spite
Bitterness	Envy	Grumpiness	Spiritedness	Torment
Contempt	Exasperation	Hate	Outrage	Vengefulness
		Hostility	Rage	Wrath

Sadness Words

Sadness	Dejection	Distraught	Hurt	Pity
Agony	Depression	Gloom	Isolation	Rejection
Alienation	Disappointment	Glumness	Loneliness	Sorrow
Anguish	Discontentment	Grief	Melancholy	Suffering
Crushed	Dismay	Homesickness	Misery	Unhappiness
Defeated	Displeasure	Hopelessness	Neglect	Woe

Fear Words

Fear	Dread	Hysteria	Panic	Terror
Apprehension	Edginess	Jumpiness	Scared	Uneasiness
Anxiety	Fright	Nervousness	Shock	Worry
Distress	Horror	Overwhelmed	Tenseness	

Shame Words

Shame	Discomposure	Humiliation	Invalidation	Regret
Contrition	Embarrassment	Insult	Mortification	Remorse
Culpability	Guilt			

(Adapted from *Skills Training Manual* by Marsha Linehan. © 1993. The Guilford Press)

Focus on a Single Object (From Seminar 3)

To begin, take out an object – any object – from your pocket, backpack, or purse. Put the object in front of you on the table but don't touch it. Next I invite you to get comfortable in your chair, let your shoulders drop, and let your feet rest on the floor. Take a few slow, long breaths. (*pause*)

Now, without touching the object, begin to look at it and explore its different surfaces. Take your time exploring what the object looks like. Try to imagine all of the different qualities of the object. (*pause*) What does the surface of the object look like? Is it shiny or dull? Does it look smooth or rough? (*pause*) Does it look soft or hard? Is it a single color or multi-colored? What else is unique about the way this object looks? (*pause*)

You will notice your attention wandering as you observe the object. Perhaps you find yourself thinking about how you did on a recent test, an assignment you have to turn in later today, or an argument you had with a friend or partner. This is completely normal and expectable. When you notice this, simply return your focus to the object. Continue to take long, slow breaths. (*pause*)

Now pick up the object and hold it in your hand. Begin to notice the different ways that it feels. Is it smooth or rough? Does it have ridges or is it flat? (*pause*) Is it soft or hard? Is it rigid or flexible? Does it have areas that feel different from each other? (*pause*) How warm or cool is it? How heavy is it? (*pause*)

Continue to explore the object with your senses of sight and touch. As you do this, continue to take slow, long breaths. Again, you will notice your attention wandering or being distracted by something else. Just notice this when it happens, and again return your focus to the object. For the next few moments, continue to focus on the object, again gently redirecting your attention back to the object when you find yourself becoming distracted. Do so until I tell you to stop. (*Wait at least 1 minute*). Stop.

(Adapted from *The Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Workbook* by McKay, Wood & Brantley. © 2007, New Harbinger Publications.)

Band of Light (From Seminar 3)

Make yourself comfortable in your chair by letting your shoulders drop, and let your feet rest on the floor. You can either close your eyes, or if you feel more comfortable, simply focus your gaze on a particular spot in front of you. Take a few slow, long breaths. (*pause*)

Now in your mind, imagine a narrow band of white light circling the top of your head like a halo. As you continue to take slow, deep breaths, notice any physical sensations that you feel in the part of your body that the band is circling. Perhaps you notice your scalp tingling or itching. Whatever sensations you notice are fine, just use your observation skills to notice that the sensation is there. (*pause*)

Now imagine the band of light slowly descending around your head, passing over your eyes and the top of your nose. As it does, become aware of any sensations, even small sensations, that you feel there. Notice any sense of tension across your forehead or eyes. (*pause*)

As the band of light descends slowly over your nose, mouth, and chin, continue to focus on any physical sensations you might be feeling there. Focus on any sensations you may be experiencing in your mouth, on your tongue, and on your teeth. (*pause*) Notice any sensations you might be having in your ears or at the back of your head. (*pause*)

Continue to watch the band of light descend down your neck. Notice any feelings in your throat or any muscle tension in the back of your neck. (*pause*)

Now imagine that the band widens as it begins to move downward and across the width of your shoulders. Notice any sensations, muscle tension, or tingling you might be feeling in your shoulders, upper back, upper arms, and chest. (*pause*)

As the band of light continues to descend around your arms, notice any feelings you're having in your elbows, forearms, wrists, hands, and fingers. Become aware of any tingling, itching, or tension you might be holding in these places. (*pause*) Now become aware of your chest, the middle of your back, the side of your torso, your lower back, and your stomach. Continue to notice any sensations, no matter how small they might be. (*pause*)

As the band continues to move down your lower body, become aware of any sensations in your hips, pelvis, and upper legs. Be sure to pay attention to the backs of your legs and notice any feelings there. (*pause*)

Continue to watch the band of light descend down your lower legs, around your calves, and over your shins, feet, and toes. Notice any sensations or tension you're experiencing. (*pause*)

As the band of light disappears, take a few more slow, deep breaths, and when you feel comfortable, slowly open your eyes and return your focus to the room.

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Inner-Outer Experience (From Seminar 3)

Make yourself comfortable in your chair by letting your shoulders drop, and let your feet rest on the floor. You will be keeping your eyes open for the first part of this exercise. Take a few slow, long breaths.

Focus your attention on an object in the room. Notice what that object looks like. Notice its shape and color. Imagine what the object would feel like if you could hold it. Imagine what the object weights. Describe the object silently to yourself, being as descriptive as possible. Take a minute to do this. Keep breathing. If your focus begins to drift, simply return your attention to the exercise without criticizing yourself. (*pause*)

Next, either let your eyes slowly close, or you can focus your gaze on a particular spot in front of you. Now turn your focus to your body. Become aware of the weight of your body resting in the chair. Notice the weight of your feet resting on the floor. Notice the weight of your head resting on top of your neck. (*pause*) If you become distracted by your thoughts as you do this, simply notice this and refocus your attention as best you can on your physical sensations. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. (*pause*)

Now redirect your attention to your sense of hearing. Notice any sounds that you can hear. Notice sounds you hear coming from outside the room, and note to yourself what they are. (*pause*) Now become aware of any sounds you hear coming from inside the room and note to yourself what they are. Try to notice even small sounds, such as the ticking of a clock, the sound of the wind, or the beating of your heart. (*pause*) If you become distracted by any thoughts, return your focus to your sense of hearing. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing. (*pause*)

Now redirect your attention again to your physical sensations. Scan your body from your head to your feet. Notice any muscle tension that you might be holding, any tingling you might be experiencing, or any other sensations of which you are aware. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. (*pause*)

Once again, redirect your attention. This time, place your focus on your sense of smell. Notice any smells that are in the room, pleasant or otherwise.

If you don't notice any smells, just become aware of the flow of air moving into your nostrils as you breathe in through your nose. Try your best to maintain your focus on your sense of smell. *(pause)* If you become distracted by any thoughts, return your focus to your nose. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing. *(pause)*

Now again return your focus to your physical sensations. Notice what is going on in your core. Perhaps notice the feeling of your heart beating in your chest. Notice any physical sensations in your belly. *(pause)* Become aware of the air gently expanding your lungs, and then slowly leaving your body. *(pause)* If your thoughts distract you, do your best to return your focus to your physical sensations. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. *(pause)*

Now, finally, redirect your attention to your sense of touch. Reach out with one of your hands to touch the chair you are sitting on, your sleeve, your watch, or any other object within reach. Notice what the object feels like. *(pause)* Notice if it's smooth or rough. Notice if it's flexible or rigid. Notice if it's soft or solid. Notice what the sensation feels like on your fingertips. *(pause)* If your thoughts begin to distract you, simply return your focus to the object that you're touching. Take a minute to do this, and keep breathing slow, deep breaths. *(pause)*

Now take another couple of slow, long breaths, open your eyes, and return your focus to the room.

(Adapted from *The Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Workbook* by McKay, Wood & Brantley. © 2007, New Harbinger Publications.)

Resources

Apps for Smartphone, Tablet, or Computer

BreatheX
DBT Distress Tolerance Skills
DBT Emotion Regulation Tools
My Mood Tracker Lite
Take a Break!
What's Up?

Books for Further Reading

Bourne, E. (2015). *The anxiety and phobia workbook, 6th Edition*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

McKay, M., Wood, J.C., & Brantley, J. (2007). *The dialectical behavior therapy skills workbook*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

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