



Section 2: How to move away from unhelpful storylines.

The information in section two takes the learning from section one, a step further. Once we notice and recognise the stories that we are telling which make us unhappy, we can actively practise diverting our attention away from them and stopping them in their tracks. Explain how by choosing not to follow unhelpful stories again and again, they free themselves from them. Section two uses mindfulness practise to do this. Engaging the individual in simple mindfulness practises will really help them to use this skill to benefit them daily. Any basic mindfulness practices will support them at this stage. If everyone is new to mindfulness, a good starting point is to use the free meditations on the Headspace app/website.

Topics for discussion:

- Discuss how the unhelpful storylines that make us stressed or unhappy happen in our virtual thinking world, not our sensory world.
- Explore practising moving your attention around between virtual and sensory spaces: For example, notice what you are thinking, now listen to the sounds around you, now let the mind wander back into thought, now notice a physical sensation in the body, like the feet touching the floor. Help them to explore what this process feels like, when they move their attention around like this. Help them to explore how listening and thinking feel different, for example. Really drill down into the processes. Notice how it feels to move our attention away from storylines that don't serve us and might not even be true. Discuss what the potential impact of this work could mean for their life and improved wellbeing.
- Explore with them what happens to a train of thought when we choose to divert our attention away from it (i.e., from thinking to listening). Or when we move our attention from thinking to feeling the sensations that happen in our body as we breathe. Notice how the story line stops in its tracks and loses its power. Repeat this process again and again to get a real feel for it.
- A lot of stress in life comes from feeling that we are not in control. So discuss how choosing to place their attention in the present, as an alternative to being stuck inside an unhelpful storyline, gives them greater control of their experience right now.
- Explore which metaphors might help. Can they watch the trains of thought/story lines in their mind, in the same way they might watch a film or watch the moving traffic on a road? Or can they see thoughts like clouds passing across the sky or like waves breaking on the top of the ocean. See if they can come up with their own metaphors to explain how their mind thinks, this is the best way to get them to recognise the thoughts they have. Help them to practise noticing the pauses between thoughts, and how that feels? Discuss the sensations and concept of stillness and quiet that exist behind the chattering mind, and how this can bring a sense of peace and calm.
- Practise basic mindfulness techniques with them again and again. For example, noticing the physical sensations of the breath in the body, noticing sounds around you, scan through the body to notice how different parts feel. Where possible engage them in regular mindfulness meditation practices, either through an app/website or by joining a class.
- The quickest way to explore acceptance is to separate the feeling from the story and address each one. You can talk kindly to your thoughts with phrases like "So what,this is just what it is" and you can talk kindly to your feelings with phrases like "hello old friend, here you are

again, bring it on, you are welcome to stay as long as you'd like". Explore phrases that work best for the individual.

- Kindness and compassion towards ourselves is covered much more in section 3b. But here you start with discussions around the pitfalls of negative self-talk and having a low opinion of yourself. As well as the great wellbeing benefits that come from feeling kind and compassionate towards yourself.