
PART I CONFIDENCE WORKSHEET

Need More Help

Somewhat Confident

Confident

Got It!

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Chapter		Confidence Level
1	New Perspectives on Depression	
2	Human Vulnerabilities in Depression	
3	It's All About Workability	
4	Understanding the Mind and Mindfulness	

If your confidence rating is 5 or less for any chapter, you might want to reread those sections of the chapter that were confusing to you. Or you might share the chapter with a friend and see if putting your heads together helps deepen your understanding of the material. Enlisting this type of support can often inspire you to keep working your way through the program. It takes patience to make changes in your life. Remember to be kind to yourself!

IDENTIFY YOUR DEPRESSION TRIGGERS

To help you better understand the smoldering problems that might increase your vulnerability, read through the list of depression-risk situations below, and for any that might apply to you, rate how big of a problem it is on a scale of 1 to 10, whereby 1 is not a big problem at all and 10 is an extremely big problem. In the right-hand column, indicate whether the risky situation has developed recently or has been around for a long time.

Depression Risk Inventory

Risky Situation or Trigger	Rating (1 to 10)	Problem (recent or long term)
My relationship with my life partner is not satisfying.		
I don't enjoy myself when I have free time.		
I have a lot of physical pain or poor health.		
I'm not really inspired by what I do for a living.		
I am in a time-consuming caretaker role for someone with chronic health problems.		
I don't feel good about how I'm taking care of my body.		
I have regrets about things I did earlier in my life.		
I don't get enough sleep and feel tired often.		
I don't have a spiritual practice.		
I believe that my friends have let me down or used me.		
I'm alienated from or have frequent conflicts with my children, siblings, or parents.		
I'm struggling with memories of childhood abuse or trauma.		
I use drugs, alcohol, or tobacco more frequently than I should.		
I'm under a lot of pressure at home or at work.		
I worry about money a lot.		
My partner is physically or emotionally abusive.		
Other (describe):		

Further Exploration. What did you discover as you completed this risk assessment? Did you mark a lot of areas or just one or two? How much emotional turmoil does each risk factor cause? Some of these problems might be chronic or long-standing issues, and others may have surfaced only recently. Here are two basic rules of thumb for calculating your level of depression risk:

- The more problems you have that create painful feelings for you, the greater your risk.
- The longer these problems have festered in your life, the greater your risk.

INVENTORY OF AUTOMATIC LIVING

The following survey will help you identify tendencies toward automatic living in your current lifestyle. Read each item and circle an item number if it applies to you.

1. I feel bored much of the time.
2. I spend a lot of time watching TV or surfing the Internet.
3. I have trouble doing things at a slower pace than what I'm used to.
4. I'm always looking ahead and planning ahead.
5. I like to zone out when I have free time.
6. I often feel disconnected from my body's senses.
7. I often notice that I'm not paying attention to what I'm doing.
8. I often forget to stop and take relaxation breaks during the day.
9. I find it difficult to relax even when I have free time.
10. I prefer activities that distract me when I have free time.
11. I have trouble following through on tasks that require close attention.
12. I feel numb inside much of the time.
13. I feel rushed and like I'm always running behind.
14. I notice that I stop paying attention when I'm talking with someone.
15. I have trouble spending quality time with my partner or children.
16. I tend to see my day as full of duties to perform.
17. I tend to put off doing activities that I might enjoy.
18. I get irritated if my daily routine is interrupted.
19. I don't like to sit still and will try to keep myself busy.
20. I feel like I'm not cut out to relax and chill out.

Further Exploration. Now take a minute to notice the statements that you circled. These are the daily experiences that contribute to autopilot behavior and that may set you up for depression. Now that you've identified them, you can work toward creating a more mindful and meaningful lifestyle.

INVENTORY OF EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL AVOIDANCE

Pick a recent life situation, event, or interaction that didn't go well and left you feeling even more depressed. Take your time to write a few sentences about the situation. Then write down four specific actions you took in that situation. Finally, analyze what function that behavior might have had.

Situation: _____

Action 1: _____

Action 2: _____

Action 3: _____

Action 4: _____

Now, look at the function of the actions you took. Did one or more of your actions serve one of the following purposes?

- a. Avoiding the situation or interaction that might trigger emotional pain
- b. Treating unpleasant emotions, thoughts, or memories as threats to my well-being
- c. Distracting myself from negative emotions
- d. Numbing myself to negative feelings
- e. Trying to control my emotions in order to not feel worse

Further Exploration. Did you identify one or more actions that involved rule following and avoidance in an effort to control your feelings? We all do this to some extent. However, we can come to rely too much on these strategies. Once you begin to understand how rule following and avoidance work, you can anticipate and look for the situations, events, or interactions that tend to trigger those responses in you and practice “just noticing” the urge to follow the rule or avoid the situation.

IMAGINE A BETTER FUTURE

This guided exercise offers a glimpse of what you'd be doing right now if your depression was no longer a barrier to you having a better future. Sit down in a comfortable position, close your eyes, and take several long deep breaths.

See if you can focus on where your life is right now—the things in life you feel good about as well as things that are causing you to suffer. Now, imagine that your depression miraculously disappeared overnight and is no longer a factor in your life. Because this miracle happened while you were sleeping, you don't actually know what made your depression disappear. All you know is that you are now free to choose to do the things in life that really matter to you.

First, imagine what steps you would take to protect and improve your health. This might involve cutting back on your use of chemicals or improving your diet or exercising more. It can be anything that comes to mind.

Next, imagine what you would like to do to improve the number or quality of your social connections and close relationships, be it through working to grow your relationship with your life partner, children, friends, or siblings, or being more involved at the community or volunteer level. Just let whatever comes to mind show up without evaluation.

Now think about what would matter to you in your work, career, or education pursuits. Just see if there is some action that you would like to take to move yourself forward in this area of life.

Finally, think about how you would like to spend your leisure time—the time when you get to play in life. What would playing look like for you? It might involve improving yourself as a spiritual being or challenging yourself with a new hobby or pastime. Just see what shows up when you let yourself imagine a better future in this area of life.

And now, just allow yourself to savor the moment of having a better future ahead of you. Breathe into that better future. See it as a distinct possibility for you. And, when you are ready, come back into the moment and take some time to complete the written portion of this exercise.

A Better Future for Me...

For each of the areas listed below, write one important thing you would be doing if the barrier of depression evaporated while you slept.

In my pursuit of personal health (including exercise, spirituality, diet, and alcohol or drug use), I would _____.

In my relationships (partner, family members, friends), I would _____.

In my work activities (including as a homemaker, volunteer, or student), I would _____.

In my leisure life (including play, hobbies, recreation, creative pursuits), I would _____.

Further Exploration. Don't worry. We aren't going to ask you to do all of these things—just yet. For now, just pat yourself on the back for being willing to imagine! Whenever you return to this list, think about your progress and whether you're getting closer to realizing any of these visions for your life. If you start to address emotionally difficult personal issues and situations, you can radically transform your life. It takes commitment, time, practice, and accepting that you won't always feel good. But we guarantee you that this is something you can do!

BEHAVIORAL RISK AND VITALITY ASSESSMENT

Use the following four worksheets to reflect on your behavior patterns as they relate to the fundamentally important life domains of relationships, work/study, leisure/play, and health.

Read through each statement and place a checkmark next to those that ring true for you most of the time. At the end of each worksheet, count the number of checkmarks placed in both shaded and unshaded boxes, and record the totals. Note that there are no right or wrong answers. These surveys are designed to provide you with a baseline for your experience. Later, say a month from now, you can repeat this assessment and check your progress.

Today's date: _____

Relationship Behaviors	✓
I seek emotional support from friends or family, even if I worry about being a burden to them.	
I tend to avoid friends or family because I don't want them to see how depressed I am.	
I often notice that people are nice to me, and this helps a lot with what I'm going through.	
Even with the disappointments I've gone through, I still try to nourish my relationships with those around me.	
Much of the time, I find it hard to just be present with my intimate partner, children, or other people I'm close to.	
I avoid my friends because it makes me anxious to hear about how their lives are going compared with mine.	
I often snap at people and then withdraw into my shell to avoid dealing with them.	
I take pride in the fact that I have been a good friend to people in my past.	
I avoid acting on a problem if it might involve conflict with my partner, children, parents, or other people I'm close to.	
Total checkmarks (unshaded and shaded)	

Work/Study Behaviors	✓
I avoid putting myself in a position where I might fail at something at work, even if it means I won't advance in my job.	
I go to work or school, even on my bad days.	
When a peer, teacher, or supervisor criticizes my work, I get mad or worry about it a lot.	
I don't really like my work, but I do it the best I can because it pays the bills.	
I've failed to finish projects at work or school because I procrastinate too long.	
When I find myself daydreaming at work or school, I can get myself refocused on the task at hand.	
The more important a project or assignment is, the more likely I am to work on it—it's the boring stuff that slows me down.	
It seems like I'm just going through the motions at school or at work.	
When I have a conflict with a teacher or supervisor, I get really upset and often can't sleep that night.	
I might ask for a raise, promotion, or new job assignment at work, even if I thought I might not get it.	
Total checkmarks (unshaded and shaded)	

Leisure/Play Behaviors	✓	
I have things I enjoy doing alone.		
When I have free time, I feel better because I can take my time and do something I want to.		
I tend to worry about my problems when I have free time.		
I can usually make myself try something fun on the weekends, even with limited energy.		
Boredom is a big problem for me.		
When I try to do something fun or relaxing, I focus on how I'm feeling and not on what I'm doing.		
I join in enjoyable activities with other people because I may start having fun too.		
Even a little obstacle can stop me from following through on an activity that might be enjoyable for me.		
I have hobbies that I take pride in doing or talents that I try to develop.		
Total checkmarks (unshaded and shaded)		

Health Behaviors	✓
I exercise on a regular basis, even when I am not motivated and have low energy.	
I spend a lot of time trying to put negative thoughts, images, emotions, or memories out of my mind.	
I set goals for improving my health, such as getting more exercise or cutting down on smoking.	
I tend to drink alcohol or take drugs to help me control my feelings.	
I am a spiritual person and have a spiritual practice (yoga, prayer, meditation, journaling).	
I spend a lot of time watching TV, surfing the Internet, playing video games, or engaging in other types of low-energy behavior.	
I do things to help me relax and slow down (take a walk, stretch my body, watch a sunset, sit in a garden).	
I have a bedtime routine that allows me to relax and prepare for restful sleep.	
I don't eat in ways that might improve my health, even when I have the choice.	
Total checkmarks (unshaded and shaded)	

Further Exploration. Now let's look at your scores. Did you check more shaded than unshaded boxes? If so, it's probably not going to surprise you that the shaded boxes represent behaviors that might put you at an elevated risk for depression, whereas the unshaded boxes represent behaviors that could produce a sense of vitality and reduce or counterbalance your risk. As we said, there are no right or wrong answers, and we all have an assortment of coping behaviors that we apply across varying life situations.

Did you identify some vitality behaviors? If so, great—keep them going. Perhaps you found some vitality behaviors that you have done in the past—or might like to try in the future. Keep these in mind to explore later; the goal is to find workable solutions.

What did you learn about your risk behaviors? Did you endorse more risk behaviors in one life domain than in others? Did any of the risk behaviors you endorsed surprise you? Remember that the purpose of taking a fearless inventory is to get your feet on the ground and see things accurately. It is neither good nor bad. It just is. In preparing for radical change, you first have to know where you are starting from before you can form a plan for getting to where you would like to be.

A WORKABILITY MOMENT

This exercise will help you understand from firsthand experience that workability isn't so much about the absence of pain as it is about approaching pain in a way that produces a sense of showing up and living according to what matters.

Begin by recalling an emotionally challenging situation, event, or interaction when you showed up and did what you believed in, even while you were in pain. Describe the situation in the lines provided, then write down the actions you took that were workable.

Next, think a little deeper. What showed up in your body or mind that told you that your approach was working? Did you feel proud of yourself? Did you notice a more relaxed feeling in your body? Did you have the sense of growing as a person? Just look around in your memory of the situation and see what is there in a positive vein. Write this down as well.

Challenging event, situation, or interaction:

Workable actions I took:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Mental experiences of workability:

1. _____

2. _____

Bodily experiences of workability:

1. _____

2. _____

Further Exploration. What happened when you really immersed yourself in this workability moment? What kinds of feelings showed up? Was there a mixture of difficult feelings and more-gratifying feelings? That is often the case when we deal in a workable way with a challenging situation. Some of the painful emotions are there right along with the more rewarding ones.

Did you experience the workability of the moment anywhere in your body? Sometimes we carry a lot of physical tension into a painful situation. Then, when we engage in workable actions, the tension gives way to other bodily experiences like excitement or a sense of relaxation.

Hopefully you discovered that you don't have to engage in avoidance to feel better. The kind of "feeling better" derived from avoidance is just the absence of pain. The rewards that come from workable responses go far deeper than that. They often involve not just the reduction of pain but, more important, the appearance of positive emotional experience, positive self-regard, and optimism.

INVENTORY OF SHORT-TERM VERSUS LONG-TERM RESULTS

In this exercise, think back over the time since you first began to struggle with depression. In the left-hand column, describe the main strategies you've used to control your depression. Then consider the short-term and long-term results of each strategy, and describe those in the next two columns.

What I've Done to Control My Depression	Short-Term Results	Long-Term Results

Further Exploration. What did you discover in this exercise? Were you able to identify some short-term coping strategies? When you step back and look at them objectively, how did these strategies end up working in the long term? Did you determine whether any of your strategies have helped in the long run? If so, you'll want to use these strategies more often.

Depending upon your situation, you might have piled up a lot of short-term strategies that produce miserable long-term results. When your attempts to manage your depression don't work in the long run, you know it because you don't feel like you are living the life you want to live. Is your life working better than it did a month ago? A year ago? Is your life satisfaction improving or deteriorating? Are you living your life the way you want to live it? It's important that you honestly look at whether a particular coping behavior is working or whether it's hurting. If it doesn't work, try something different. And ask yourself, "Does the new behavior work better?"

MY WORKABILITY QUESTIONS

In the space provided, write down your workability questions in the four key life domains: relationships, work/study, leisure/play, and health. They might resonate with ones we've just listed, or they might be totally different. You don't need to answer these questions now—not yet. Just jot them down.

Relationships: _____

Work/study: _____

Leisure/play: _____

Health: _____

Further Exploration. Were you able to come up with some questions about workability in all of the life domains? If you did, welcome to the human race! There are few people in this world who have everything figured out in even one life domain, much less all of them. Because life is dynamic, unfolding, and challenging by nature, you can expect workability questions to surface, subside, and resurface over time. In some life arenas, you probably have an inkling of what's not working for you right now. We will go into that in greater depth in future chapters.

SELF-ASSESSMENT: FIVE-FACET MINDFULNESS INVENTORY

We want you to learn more about what each facet of mindfulness is and what it looks like in daily practice. To that end, we'd like you to complete a survey known as the Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire—Short Form (Baer et al. 2008). In the sections that follow, we briefly describe each of the five facets and then provide a format for you to complete a short self-assessment of your skills in that area. While this may sound a bit technical, the results provide crucial information for you to use in transcending depression and creating a vital, purposeful life!

Facet I: Observe

Observing skills consist of being able to “just notice” things that are happening both inside of you (physical sensations, thoughts, feelings, memories) and outside of you (sounds, sights, colors, smells, activities of others). In observing mode, you hold still mentally and focus attention in a singular way—as if you are using the zoom function of a camera lens.

The following items of the FFMQ represent the Observe facet. Using the 1–5 rating scale below, please indicate in the box to the right of each statement how frequently or infrequently you have had each experience in the last month. Please answer according to what really reflects your experience rather than what you think your experience should be. When done, add your answers to get your total Observe score.

Never or very
rarely true

Not often true

Sometimes true,
sometimes not true

Often true

Very often or
always true

1

2

3

4

5

	Your Answer
1. When I'm walking, I deliberately notice the sensation of my body moving.	
2. When I take a shower or a bath, I stay alert to the sensations of water on my body.	
3. I notice how foods and drinks affect my thoughts, bodily sensations, and emotions.	
4. I pay attention to sensations, such as the wind in my hair or sun on my face.	
5. I pay attention to sounds, such as clocks ticking, birds chirping, or cars passing.	

6. I notice the smells and aromas of things.	
7. I notice visual elements in art or nature, such as colors, shapes, textures, or patterns of light and shadow.	
8. I pay attention to how my emotions affect my thoughts and behaviors.	
Observe score	

Further Exploration. Take a moment to review your individual answers to these questions. Did your ratings tend to vary a bit? Most of us differ in our ability to observe different aspects of the internal or external world. For example, you may find it easy to tune in to bodily sensations but find it difficult to notice thoughts, feelings, or memories that are showing up. Your abilities may also change depending on the situation you are in (for example, while riding a bus to work versus lying in your bed at night). Some people may be able to pay attention to sounds and colors in their environment, while others can more easily attend to internal sensations like breathing. The good news is that you may be able to use your strengths in one area of observing to grow in your abilities in other areas.

Facet 2: Describe

Describing refers to your ability to use words to organize and convey what you are aware of either inside or outside of you at any moment in time. Some people use the phrase *being a witness*. The job of the witness is to just tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

There are several core features of being a witness. First, witnessing needs to be anchored in the present moment, as it unfolds in front of you. For example, witnessing involves being able to label strong emotions at the moment you make contact with them, such as feeling both sad and ashamed after you get into a heated argument with your partner and say some mean things.

Second, descriptions of direct experience must be as objective as possible. This involves a focus on the immediate qualities present using *descriptive words*. For example, in describing sadness a witness might say, “My eyes are tired and want to close... My body feels heavy... I’m having the thought that I don’t want to be in this relationship.” The witness does not use the mind’s interpretations or judgments of events—these would come out as *evaluative words* (“I shouldn’t be feeling sad... I’m wrong to want to leave this relationship”) The witness simply describes events to the fullest extent possible, without inserting judgments about them.

The following items of the FFMQ represent the Describe facet. Using the 1–5 rating scale, please indicate in the box to the right of each statement how frequently or infrequently you have had each experience in the last month. When done, add your answers to get your total Describe score.

Note that for questions 3, 4, and 5, you will need to subtract the number associated with your answer from 6 to obtain the adjusted score for the item. For example, if your answer to statement 3 is 4 (often true), you will subtract 4 from 6 to get an adjusted score of 2.

	Your Answer
1. I'm good at finding words to describe my feelings.	
2. I can easily put my beliefs, opinions, and expectations into words.	
3. It's hard for me to find the words to describe what I'm thinking.	6-
4. I have trouble thinking of the right words to express how I feel about things.	6-
5. When I have a sensation in my body, it's hard for me to describe it because I can't find the right words.	6-
6. Even when I'm feeling terribly upset, I can find a way to put it into words.	
7. My natural tendency is to put my experiences into words.	
8. I can usually describe how I feel at the moment in considerable detail.	
Describe score	

Further Exploration. Take a few moments to look at your answers to the individual items. Did you notice differences in some of the ratings? For example, is it harder for you to describe what you are experiencing when you are upset but much easier for you when you are just feeling normal? Think about your ability to use descriptive words that are closely tied to the direct qualities of an experience, while avoiding evaluative words that give positive or negative meaning to an experience. Whereas we want you to *attach* to descriptive words and develop your vocabulary in that area, we want you to *detach* from labels that create a positive or negative evaluative tone. Try to look at the pattern of your responses and see if there is an area of describing skills that you would like to shore up with practice.

Facet 3: Detach

To detach means that you dispassionately allow any thoughts, feelings, memories, and sensations to simply be present without becoming absorbed in mental evaluations of them. Detachment is sometimes described as *letting go*. When you can detach from a thought, feeling, or sensation, you are able to notice that private experience without getting lost in trying to analyze it. In a sense, you are willing to just let experiences be there and let it play out in your awareness. This is difficult to do, particularly when the thoughts are compelling, the feelings are painful, and the memories create the impression that we are reliving the past. We want to avoid pain and suffering, and so we have our own unique escape strategies. Detachment skills help us develop the ability to notice the appearance of an escape move and stay present with whatever it is that we want to go away.

The following items of the FFMQ represent the Detach facet. Using the 1–5 rating scale, please indicate in the box to the right of each statement how frequently or infrequently you have had each experience in the last month. When done, add your answers to get your total Detach score.

	Your Answer
1. I perceive my feelings and emotions without having to react to them.	
2. I watch my feelings without getting lost in them.	
3. In difficult situations, I can pause without immediately reacting.	
4. Usually when I have distressing thoughts or images, I am able just to notice them without reacting.	
5. Usually when I have distressing thoughts or images, I feel calm soon after.	
6. Usually when I have distressing thoughts or images, I “sit back” and am aware of the thought or image without being taken over by it.	
7. Usually when I have distressing thoughts or images, I just notice them and let them go.	
Detach score*	

Further Exploration. Take a moment to think about your strengths in this area. Do you find it easier to detach in some contexts more so than in others? For example, is it easier to detach when a coworker makes a snide remark than it is when your spouse criticizes your appearance? Do you tend to overreact to and fuse with certain types of feelings but not others? Do you have some ideas about particular methods or strategies that you can use to activate your detachment skills? Sometimes saying something as simple as “Breathe in and let go” can serve as a reminder that it is time to step back and give yourself some inner breathing room.

Facet 4: Self-Compassion

The ability to practice acceptance and kindness to yourself is a powerful tool for creating a state of wise mind. This is sometimes referred to as practicing *self-compassion*. It is an important concept in Buddhist writings about human suffering and how to relieve it. The potential benefits of treating yourself with care and kindness are garnering more and more attention in the depression-treatment literature. People caught up in depression behaviors tend to overuse self-criticism and may, at some level, believe they are unlovable and unworthy. Practicing self-compassion involves adopting exactly the opposite stance—totally accepting yourself, flaws and all.

The following items of the FFMQ represent the Love Yourself facet. Using the 1–5 rating scale, please indicate in the box to the right of each statement how frequently or infrequently you have had each experience in the last month. When done, add your answers to get your total Self-Compassion score.

Note that you will subtract the number associated with your answer from 6 to obtain the adjusted score for all items. For example, if your answer to statement 1 is 2 (not often true), your adjusted score for item 1 will be 4.

	Your Answer
1. I criticize myself for having irrational or inappropriate emotions.	6-
2. I tell myself that I shouldn't be feeling the way I'm feeling.	6-
3. I believe that some of my thoughts are abnormal or bad, and I shouldn't think that way.	6-
4. I make judgments about whether my thoughts are good or bad.	6-
5. I tell myself I shouldn't be thinking the way I'm thinking.	6-
6. I think some of my emotions are bad or inappropriate, and I shouldn't feel them.	6-
7. I disapprove of myself when I have irrational ideas.	6-
8. Usually when I have distressing thoughts or images, I judge myself as good or bad, depending on what the thought or image is about.	6-
Total Self-Compassion score	

Further Exploration. Take a few minutes to go back and review your answers to these questions. Completing this facet is usually an eye-opener for depressed people, because they tend to be their own worst critics. Did you notice that it is hard for you to accept difficult inner experiences without criticizing yourself? When you get lost in your reactive mind's judgments about how you are doing, it is very difficult to cut yourself some slack. Remember

that self-compassion is unconditional; it is an attitude of deep respect that does not depend on your performance or accomplishments, and it does not rely on approval from others. People who cultivate self-compassion show concern for their well-being; can experience failures, setbacks, or disappointments without getting lost in self-criticism or self-rejection; and are willing to walk into their pain—and they do all of this with a sense of warmth and gentleness.

Facet 5: Act Mindfully

Acting mindfully means being aware of what you are doing as you are doing it. This is sometimes called *acting with intention*. Acting with intention means being squarely located in the present moment and behaving in a way that reflects your beliefs and principles. The experience of intentional action is qualitatively different than the automatic-living mode that is characteristic of depression. Rather than going through each day in a haze, acting mindfully brings you to your senses so that you can choose each activity based upon your values.

The following items of the FFMQ represent the Act Mindfully facet. Using the 1–5 rating scale, please indicate in the box to the right of each statement how frequently or infrequently you have had each experience in the last month. When done, add your answers to get your total Act Mindfully score.

Note that you will subtract the number associated with your answer from 6 to obtain the adjusted score for all items. For example, if your answer to statement 1 is 2 (not often true), your adjusted score for item 1 will be 4.

	Your Answer
1. I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.	6-
2. It seems I am "running on automatic" without much awareness of what I'm doing.	6-
3. I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.	6-
4. I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing.	6-
5. I find myself doing things without paying attention.	6-
6. When I do things, my mind wanders off and I'm easily distracted.	6-
7. I don't pay attention to what I'm doing because I'm daydreaming, worrying, or otherwise distracted.	6-
8. I am easily distracted.	6-
Total Act Mindfully score	

Further Exploration. Take a few minutes to carefully review your answers to each item of this facet. Do you tend to go on autopilot for some activities but not others? Which activities are most likely to lull you into an automatic mode of living? Are there situations in which you are much more aware and intentional? Of all the facets of mindfulness, being intentional is where the rubber meets the road and, because of that, it is the most demanding of the five mindfulness skills. Think about ways that you could deliberately increase your daily level of intentional action.

Putting It All Together: How Mindful Are You?

Now it's time to summarize your assessment results to create a profile of your five-facet mindfulness skills. Record your scores for each facet in the table that follows. Notice that we include a column for your scores three months from now, because we would like you to complete this survey again to help gauge your progress.

Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire Summary Sheet

Facet/Skill Area	My Scores Today	My Scores in 3 Months
1. Observe		
2. Describe		
3. Detach		
4. Self-Compassion		
5. Act Mindfully		

STRANDED WORKSHEET

Based on how I'm living my life *right now*, what did I hear in the eulogy...

From my partner? _____

From my children? _____

From my closest friends? _____

From my coworkers? _____

From members of my community? _____

From people in my spiritual community? _____

If I could have lived my life any way I wanted to, what would I like to have heard...

From my partner? _____

From my children? _____

From my closest friends? _____

From my coworkers? _____

From members of my community? _____

From people in my spiritual community? _____

Further Exploration. Is there a difference between what you think you'd hear if the memorial service were held today and what you'd ideally like to hear? Any differences give you important information. First, look at what you wrote down for what you would most likely hear based on how you're living *right now*. You probably listed some things that warmed your heart, since you certainly do things that reflect your values that are noticed by loved ones. At the same time, you may have written down things you're not very proud of. This is something to pay attention to, because it might be an invitation for you to do some corrective work in that area. By the way, we *all* have those areas, so don't get down on yourself about it!

Second, comparing what you would currently hear with what you'd ideally like to hear at your memorial service highlights values that you may have placed on the back burner. These may be important values that are being undermined by your avoidance of emotionally charged life problems or that just have not been prioritized recently.

BULL'S-EYE

You're probably familiar with a bull's-eye target, whereby the goal is to hit the bull's-eye in the center. The closer you are to the bull's-eye, the more points you get; sometimes you might miss the target altogether, in which case you don't get any points. Keep the bull's-eye notion in mind as you read through the rest of this chapter, because you'll be using it to complete the following set of exercises, based on the work of psychologist Tobias Lundgren (Lundgren et al. 2012). This exercise will help you better clarify and target (pun intended) your values, building on the work you did in the Stranded exercise.

Relationship Values

In regard to values about relationships, most people are much more alike than different. Most of us value honesty, trust, dependability, the ability to laugh and to forgive, the pursuit of win-win solutions, sensitivity, strength, and so on. Relationships are played out in many areas of life. For many people, the most important relationship is with a spouse or life partner. Other important relationships are with friends and family members, including family of origin, extended family, and children. Some values, like being compassionate or respectful of others, are usually relevant to all relationships, whereas other values, such as being a role model, may be more pertinent to a particular kind of relationship, such as being a parent versus being a friend.

As you consider different kinds of relationships you have or wish to cultivate in your life, think about how you want to apply your values in each situation. In the worksheet below, describe where you'd like to be headed in your relationships. Describe the qualities that are most important to you in each type of relationship.

Relationship Values

Spouse or life partner: _____

Family: _____

Parenting: _____

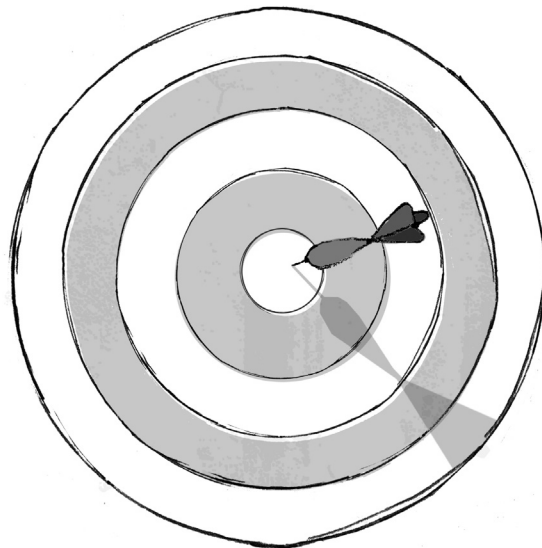
Friendships: _____

Other: _____

Further Exploration. After writing down your values about relationships, reflect on how you acted in relationships during the last couple of weeks. To what extent were your day-to-day choices consistent with your values about relationships? To what extent did your actions support the quality of relating that expresses your values? Did your interpersonal behaviors reflect a commitment to preserving and furthering relationships with those you love as well as those you're less close to? Consider these and other behaviors, and then decide how consistent your choices were with your values about relationships.

Don't worry if you find that some of your choices haven't been consistent with your values. When you're depressed, it's hard to stay in touch with values because the effort required to make it through each day is so great. It's as if you're in a fog. Making an effort to name your values will help clear this fog so that you have a better day-to-day focus and more opportunities to lessen the gap between what you care about and what you do.

On the target below, make an X to indicate how close or off the mark your activities were in relation to your bull's-eye values about relationships.



To help you focus on opportunities for positive change in the area of relationships, write down a few examples of behavioral choices that show consistency with your values and a few that show inconsistency with your values.

Examples of actions that were more consistent with my values: _____

Examples of actions that were less consistent with my values: _____

Work/Study Values

Now it's time to describe your values about work or educational pursuits. By work, we mean any regular activity that makes you feel of use on a regular basis, whether it's a meaningful job, going to school, being a homemaker or caregiver, or donating your time to community or other volunteer activities. Many types of work don't involve getting paid; the activity is done because of other values you might have. And just because you get paid to do a job doesn't mean that you are living according to your values while you work. For example, after doing this exercise you might discover that you are acting much more according to your values when you volunteer at a food bank than when you work for pay as a server at a restaurant.

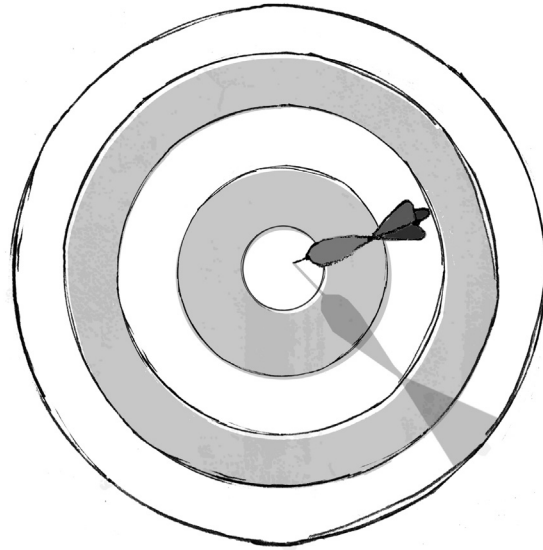
Examples of important work values might include being reliable, maintaining focus, being persistent, cooperating with others, taking a team approach, being creative, helping others, always doing your best, being on time, and promoting more lightheartedness. In the worksheet below, describe where you'd like to be headed in terms of work.

Work/Study Values

Work (includes homemaking, caregiving, volunteerism, and attending a trade school or college):

Further Exploration. After writing down your values in regard to work, reflect on your actions during the past couple of weeks. To what extent were your day-to-day choices consistent with your values about work? If you value being cooperative or creative, to what extent did your daily activities reflect this desire?

On the target below, make an X to indicate how close or off the mark your activities were in relation to your bull's-eye values about work.



To help you focus on opportunities for positive change in the area of work, write down a few examples of behavioral choices that show consistency with your values and a few that show inconsistency with your values.

Examples of actions that were more consistent with my values about work or school: _____

Examples of actions that were less consistent with my values about work or school: _____

Leisure/Play Values

Now we want you to describe your values about play activities—any recreational or leisure pursuits that you enjoy and that allow you to relax and smell the roses in life, so to speak. The ability to “recharge your batteries”

through play is essential in today's stressed-out world. As we noted, when you engage in pleasurable activities, you strengthen the reward and approach motivation circuitry in your brain. We know the task of being playful might be a struggle for you—a depressed mood doesn't leave a lot of emotional space to engage in fun, spontaneous, or relaxing hobbies or activities. But bear with us; exploring and strengthening your values related to play activities almost always pay dividends.

If you can't think of anything enjoyable that you have done recently, think back to a time when you were less depressed. What did you do for fun then? It's likely that the values you had then are still with you and are still as meaningful. Alternatively, imagine what your values would be if you were happy in your life and didn't have your current life challenges.

For this exercise, it might be helpful to picture yourself in the activity (imagine what you would be doing, and where, what you'd see and hear, and so on). In the worksheet that follows, describe where you'd like to be headed in terms of play, and make note of any relevant imagery as well.

Leisure/Play Values

Having fun: _____

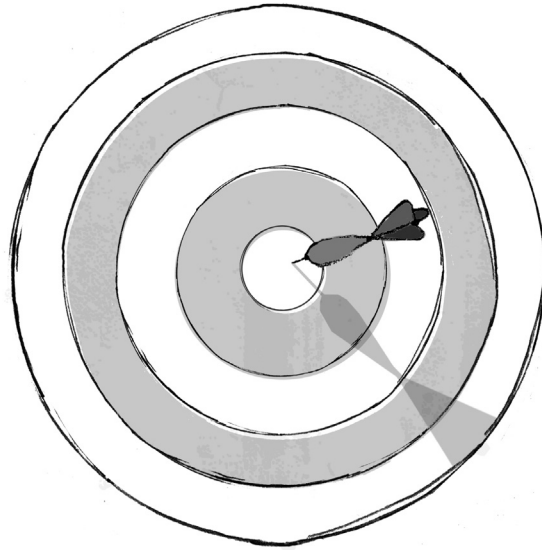
Relaxing: _____

Recreational pursuits: _____

Creative activities: _____

Further Exploration. After writing out your values in regard to play, reflect on your actions during the past couple of weeks. To what extent are your day-to-day choices consistent with your values about play? If you did engage in playful activities, to what extent were your values about play demonstrated during those activities? Did you discover that you had lots of activities in one area (relaxing) but few or none in another area (creative activities)?

On the target below, make an X to indicate how close or off the mark your activities were in relation to your values about play.



To help you focus on opportunities for positive change in the area of play, write down a few examples of behavioral choices that show consistency with your values and a few that show inconsistency with your values.

Examples of actions that were more consistent with my values about play: _____

Examples of actions that were less consistent with my values about play: _____

Health Values

Only by protecting your physical, emotional, and social health can you be in a position to perform valued actions in the realms of family, work, play, and community. Conversely, even if you have a physical impairment like chronic pain or a chronic condition like diabetes, this doesn't mean you're unhealthy. In fact, you can amplify your mental and social health while coping skillfully with a chronic disease—and greater participation in valued activities in life is critical to this outcome. Here is just a sampling of values that can contribute to success in this life area: balance, calmness, kindness, courage, harmony, fitness, faith, self-reliance, cleanliness, and compassion.

Promoting health also means you have the self-care skills to address life stresses in a way that preserves your ability to move forward in a positive direction. Core self-care skills involve engaging in healthy behaviors in terms of diet, exercise, sleep habits, spiritual practice, self-growth, and hobbies. Avoiding or minimizing negative lifestyle habits (such as using tobacco or street drugs, or overreliance on caffeine and/or alcohol) is also health protective. In the worksheet opposite, describe where you'd like to be headed in terms of promoting your health.

Health Values

Diet: _____

Exercise: _____

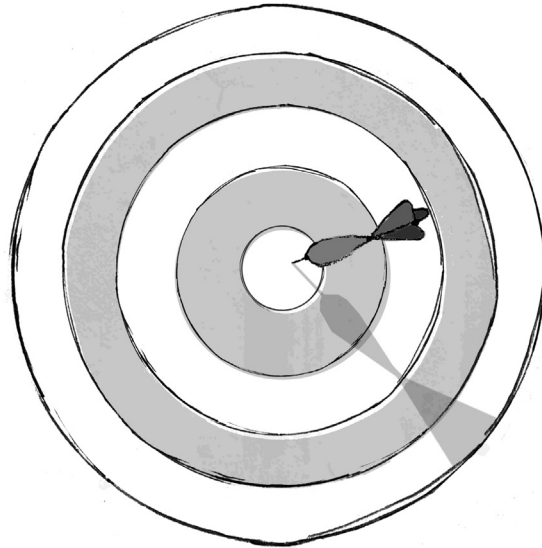
Sleep habits: _____

Lifestyle habits (including ways to reduce stress): _____

Spirituality practices (including prayer, affiliating with a spiritual community, yoga, meditation, etc.): _____

Further Exploration. After writing out your health-related values, reflect on your actions during the past couple of weeks. To what extent were your day-to-day choices consistent with your values about health? Did your eating behaviors reflect a commitment to preserving and furthering your health? To what extent did you purposefully engage in exercise and relaxation activities? How much and how well did you sleep? Did you use tobacco, alcohol, or drugs this week? If so, is this consistent with your values about promoting your health? Consider these and other behaviors, and then decide how consistent your choices were with your values about health.

On the target below, make an X to indicate how close or off the mark your activities were in relation to your values about health.



To help you focus on opportunities for positive change in the area of personal health, write down a few examples of choices that show consistency with your values and a few that show inconsistency with your values.

Examples of actions that were more consistent with my values: _____

Examples of actions that were less consistent with my values: _____

Further Exploration. In each of these life areas—health, relationships, work/study, and leisure/play—maybe you're mostly on target, maybe you're not. Whatever the results, view this exercise as an opportunity to clarify what your values are and where you're at in terms of pursuing them, at this point in time. Most of us don't hit the bull's-eye on a frequent basis, but being clear on a value provides you with a focus. With a focus and with practice in choosing activities strategically, your aim will improve!

VALUE THERMOMETER

Measuring your day in terms of how consistent your actions were with your values is a great way to keep your eyes on the prize. The value thermometer works like this: Each day, choose one of the four core life domains to focus on: relationships, work/study, leisure/play, or health. Circle the domain you will focus on at the top of the column. At the end of the day, rate how consistent your behavior was with your values in that area on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 meaning you didn't do anything that was consistent with your values and a 10 meaning you were totally consistent all day long.

Temperature	Relationships	Work	Play	Health
10				
9				
8				
7				
6				
5				
4				
3				
2				
1				

Further Exploration. As you do this over days, weeks, and months, look for day-to-day differences in your value thermometer ratings. Note circumstances that seem to support more values-consistent actions. Is there a person who seems to bring out the best in you? Are you more consistent in some areas (like work) than others (like home)?

THE FLIP SIDE OF PAIN

Are there situations in your current life that challenge your sense of personal integrity? It might be an unresolved issue that both you and your intimate partner avoid discussing, even though it is hurting your relationship. It might be not getting a job promotion that you thought you deserved, but you've never discussed being passed over with your supervisor. It might be a friend who has been gossiping about you behind your back.

Often, when we first come into contact with emotional pain produced when a value is violated or neglected, we fixate on the pain, not realizing that the flip side of this coin is the value we hold close. Thus, emotional pain may be a reflection of what matters to you. You can take any emotionally painful life situation and work backward from it to discover your values. If it didn't matter to you, you wouldn't have any feelings at all about it. Right? In this exercise, we want you to think about a hurtful life situation. In the space provided below, describe the situation, how it makes you feel, and then work backward to identify the value that seeks your attention. You can do this *any* time you run into emotional pain in daily living.

Describe the hurtful situation. _____

Describe what emotions are present. _____

What value(s) are at stake? _____

Further Exploration. What did you discover about the connection between your painful inner experiences and your values? For most people, seeing the link provides a bit of emotional relief with the knowledge that they are not suffering senselessly—and that their pain in fact honors their values. What values were present for you in this situation? Could you backtrack and see how coming up short in terms of what matters to you directly produces the painful inner experiences you recorded? Any time you run into a painful or challenging life moment, you can use this simple exercise to remind yourself that your pain is legitimate, not a sign of weakness or being abnormal.

TIMELINE

To help you learn how to get into the present moment and stay there as much as possible, let's do an exercise to find out what time zone—past, present, or future—you are inhabiting at the moment. Think of time as a continuum ranging from your most remote memories of early childhood to future projections that go all the way to the moment of your death—and possibly beyond. There is nothing good or bad about where your mind goes, so try not to think in those terms. The goal is simply to get to know your reactive mind and better understand its preferences.

Timeline				
Distant Past	Recent Past	Present Moment	Near Future	Distant Future

In the time continuum graphic, the present moment is the middle of the line. Go ahead and place your index finger there, and then read on or listen to the guided audio instructions.

The first step of this exercise is to close your eyes, take some deep cleansing breaths, and put the cares and concerns of the day to one side, as best you can. Just try to clear your mind so that you can stay in the present moment for a few minutes. If you notice your mind wandering, simply notice that it is wandering and begin to move your finger. Slide it to the left if your mind is drifting into the past. For a distant childhood memory, your finger would go all the way to the left. More recent memories would bring your finger closer to the present-moment notch on the timeline. If your mind heads way into the future—say imagining your life at a very old age—your finger would go all the way to the right; a more immediate thought of the future, like what present to buy for a friend's birthday next month, would move your finger toward just right of the center of the timeline.

Just let your mind drift in whatever direction it wants to drift, without forcing it to change course. See if you can just notice where your mind is on the timeline at any moment in time. If you suddenly realize you got pulled out of this exercise, just recall the time orientation of the last thought or memory you had. Gently put your attention back onto just noticing where your mind is traveling when you give it free reign. When you are ready to come back to your normal waking state, take some time to complete the written timeline that goes along with this experience.

How often did you find yourself in the present moment (for example, noticing the sensation of your finger on the paper, or your breathing)?

Where on the timeline did your mind tend to take you when you left the present moment?

Did particular thoughts, feelings, memories, or sensations lure you out of the present moment more than once or on an ongoing basis? If so, describe them:

Further Exploration. Did you find it hard to stay in the present moment during this exercise? For most people, this 2- or 3-minute exercise seems like ten! In modern society, we hardly ever take the time to just sit and explore the present moment. Did you have the experience of suddenly realizing you weren't in the present moment at all, almost like you woke up and found yourself somewhere else? We all do. The process of fusing with our thoughts, emotions, and memories happens automatically and often. This is why practice and intention are fundamental to shifting attention back to the present moment.

DANCING WITH THE QUIET

This exercise will give you a chance to be more tuned in to inner experiences that tend to draw you out of the observer role. There are two basic forms of inner experience that you will be concerned with: events inside of you—thoughts, memories, emotions, or certain kinds of physical sensations—and events outside of you—sounds, smells, and activities of other people, pets, and so on.

To begin, practice pranayama or the Breath of Life exercise for several minutes. Afterward catalog on the worksheet below any experiences you encountered that drew you out of observer mode.

Dancing with the Quiet Worksheet

Events Inside the Skin	Events Outside the Skin

Now take a moment to review all of these distractions. Then practice pranayama again. This time you will be vigilant for each distraction: pay soft attention to the distraction, then release your attention and put it back to simply observing your breath. The goal is not to eliminate these events but rather to learn to keep your attention under control in their presence.

OBSERVE YOUR JUDGMENTS

This exercise will help you practice making the distinction between describing things and judging things.

In this exercise you'll study an object in your environment, a person you know, and an event in your past. For each, we ask that you observe your reactive mind's tendency to be more interested in judgments than facts. When you notice this happening—for example, if you end up judging the chair you're sitting on for being too stiff to be comfortable—just say to yourself, “Thank you, mind, for giving me the evaluation that...” “Thank you, mind, for giving me the evaluation that this chair is too stiff to be comfortable.” This exercise also gives you an opportunity to see similarities and differences between your reactive mind's responses to objects, people, and events.

Select an object that you want to focus your concentration on for few minutes: a teacup, a piece of furniture, a picture, a flower arrangement, anything specific. Concentrate on this object for a few minutes, focusing only on describing—not judging—the object. Write out your description of the object in the space provided in the workbook, or on any piece of paper you have to hand.

Next, write down any judgments that may have crept in.

Finally, thank your reactive mind for handing you each of these judgments.

Now do the same for a person—describe this person, using only descriptions; no judgments.

What judgments are creeping in? Remember that with people, judgments may involve the person's state of mind, what you think the person thinks of you, or what you think is good or bad about that person. Write the judgments down.

Finally, thank your reactive mind for handing you each of these judgments.

Now, bring to mind a difficult event in your life. It could be from your childhood, teenage, or adult years. Choose something that's been a problem for you in terms of the emotional reactions it triggers. Focus your mind's eye on this event until you're sure you have the image in full detail; then write your description of the actual event.

Note any judgments that creep in as you write. These may include how the event affects you now, how it has changed your life, or evaluations of right and wrong or good and bad, such as "What I did was disgusting" or "What she said was thoughtless." Write the judgments down.

Once again, thank your reactive mind for handing you these judgments and return to the book to complete the remainder of this exercise.

Further Exploration. What did you notice as you proceeded through this exercise? Often, reactive mind tends to insert more evaluations as the emotional stakes become higher. Setting aside your judgments about a cup is very different than setting aside your judgments about a painful personal memory. You might have noticed that you remembered your painful life event primarily in terms of judgments about it. For some people, judgments are so built in that it's actually hard to get back to the original event and describe it in factual, objective terms.

WILLINGNESS, DEPRESSION, AND VITALITY DIARY

When you begin studying your willingness level in daily life, you will notice that it vacillates minute by minute. However, the realities of contemporary living make it very difficult to stay focused on such intricacies in the moment, even though doing so is an important element of vital living. Because of this, you'll need to practice some type of observation of your willingness levels on a daily basis. The daily diary form here can help you in this regard.

Complete the form later in the day, perhaps after dinner, when you can reflect on the entire day to come up with your responses. You'll assess your *willingness* in the column labeled "W," your *depression* in the column labeled "D," and your *vitality* in the column labeled "V." Assess each using a 1 to 10 scale, whereby 1 means none and 10 means extremely high.

First, rate your willingness to experience unwanted and possibly distressing experiences over the course of the entire day. In the notes column, describe any factors that may have contributed to higher or lower levels of willingness. Next, rate your depression level and, again, describe any factors that pushed your depression level up or down. The third rating is the most important. Assign whatever number best reflects the extent to which you felt your activities were purposeful and meaningful during the day and, in the notes column, describe anything that contributed to a higher or lower sense of vitality. Make particular note of any spontaneous, natural moments when your willingness or vitality levels were high. At those times, what were you doing that elevated your willingness or vitality?

My Willingness, Depression, and Vitality Diary

Day	W	Notes	D	Notes	V	Notes
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						

W = Willingness (1–10), D = Depression (1–10), V = Vitality (1–10)

Further Exploration. Did you see one or more relationships between your daily willingness level, depression level, and sense of vitality? Did your willingness and vitality ratings fluctuate day to day? That's typical when you first start experimenting with willingness. Being willing takes daily practice, focus, and persistence to master. What occurrences seemed to spark higher levels of willingness and vitality? What factors decreased your willingness level? When you notice factors that drive your willingness down, you might consider putting together a new willingness and acceptance plan to use when those factors are at play.

BUFF UP YOUR EMOTIONAL VOCABULARY

The more emotion words you have at your disposal, the better! Get ready to bone up your vocabulary with the list of emotion words that follows. The goal for the next three weeks is to learn and use *three* of these words each day. To reach your goal, we recommend that you use each word at least one time to describe some type of direct experience you are having.

For example, you could pick the words “frustrated,” “curious,” and “shy” as the emotion words of the day. During the day, you will try to use those words either together or separately to describe some type of experience you are having at work, at home, at school, or when you are on your own. If you follow this simple exercise, at the end of three weeks you will have used *over sixty* different words to describe and deal with stress-related emotions. This will make a huge difference in how you experience stress. You will notice a difference in how you understand and relate to emotions. This doesn’t mean you won’t have stress; it just means that you will be able to describe emotions more accurately and control urges to engage in escape or avoidance behaviors.

Emotion Words

Abandoned	Dejected	Mistrustful
Accepting	Demoralized	Passionate
Afraid	Detached	Peaceful
Agitated	Disappointed	Prejudiced
Amicable	Empathic	Restful
Angry	Frustrated	Righteous
Anxious	Guilty	Sad
Apprehensive	Harmonious	Safer
Ashamed	Hostile	Satisfied
Benevolent	Laid Back	Serene
Blaming	Let Down	Skeptical
Blissful	Impatient	Suspicious
Blue	Irritable	Tranquil
Bored	Kind	Transcendent
Calm	Lonely	Unconcerned
Caring	Loving	Vengeful
Compassionate	Melancholy	Victimized
Connected	Mellow	Warmhearted

TESTING YOUR EMOTIONAL WATERS

This exercise will allow you to better differentiate your emotions in response to everyday events that trigger them. You might think of these triggering situations as daily hassles. When you have a powerful emotional experience during the day, take time to dissect the situation, your emotions, your feeling tone appraisal, and your action tendencies. Note that this exercise can be used to dissect any situation that triggers an emotional experience, be it positive, negative, or neutral. We certainly have “helping” moments in our daily experience, and they may trigger positive emotional experience, just as “hassle” moments trigger negative emotions.

To start, first describe the triggering situation using the witness perspective. Next, check for your feeling tone appraisal. Notice cues in your body along with various mental experiences in your mind. Record the feeling tone: Pleasant, Unpleasant, or Neutral. Continue to notice your mind and body, and detect your action tendency: Approach, Ignore, Avoid. Record this and then move on to categorize your emotional experience: Are you Sad, Mad, Anxious, Fearful, Guilty, Happy, Excited, or another emotion?

IDENTIFY YOUR STICKY THOUGHTS

Take some time to think about past and present situations in which your reactive mind may have tricked you into attaching to a sticky thought. Write down each of these destructive messages as accurately as you can. Leave the nickname column blank for now; we'll return to it later in a few moments.

My Sticky Thoughts Worksheet

My negative personal qualities and shortcomings: <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/>	Nickname:
What I should be thinking, feeling, or remembering: <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/>	Nickname:
What will happen if I try to address a painful personal problem: <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/>	Nickname:
Comparing how I'm feeling right now to how I should be feeling: <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/>	Nickname:

<p>How other people are doing in their lives compared with how I'm doing:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Nickname:</p>
<p>Personal mistakes I've made and how they'll affect my future:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Nickname:</p>
<p>What other people think about me and my issues:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Nickname:</p>
<p>Seeking help for my problems from a spouse, partner, or friends:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Nickname:</p>

Further Exploration. What did you discover as you worked through this exercise? Did certain themes reappear in various categories? Did you sometimes argue with yourself that certain sticky thoughts might represent the truth? This is what sticky thoughts do; they get you to swallow them, and then you're forced to struggle with them once you've been hooked. The more you struggle, the deeper the hook sets.

REASON GIVING IN YOUR LIFE

This exercise invites you to identify reasons that impact your mood and your behavior. Read through the following statements, which are often used to explain our behavior when we are depressed. Which ones have you used to explain your actions (or lack of action)? Put a checkmark beside reasons you tend to use to explain or justify your behavior. Most of us tend to fall back on using the same few reasons over and over again because they fit many different situations. We call these *go-to* reasons. If you run into a *go-to* reason, write “*go-to*” beside it.

___ I was too tired to go walking.

___ I didn't go to work because I was so depressed.

___ I can't deal with my kids because I'm too depressed.

___ I have no motivation at all, so I just sit around.

___ I stay by myself a lot because I would just feel worse if I were around people.

___ I would eat better if my mood wasn't so bad all the time.

___ I can't stop smoking because my mood just goes down the toilet.

___ I don't date because I'm still trying to get over my depression.

___ I drink alcohol because I'm depressed.

___ I won't argue with my partner because I just get more depressed.

___ I didn't get together with my friends because I felt so lousy.

___ I didn't go to church because people there don't understand what it's like to be depressed.

Further Exploration. Do any of these statements ring a bell for you? You probably recognized several statements similar to those you've used to explain your depressed behavior. Did you run into *go-to* reasons—the ones you tend to use repeatedly in different situations? Don't beat yourself up if you endorsed quite a few of these reasons. This is a natural part of depression—and you can do something about it! With patience and practice, you will get better and better at recognizing and detaching from reason giving when it serves no useful purpose in your life.

PLAY WITH REASONS

Remember that, for the most part, reasons aren't accurate explanations of events and why they occur; they're just mental events. This means that none of what you write in this exercise is actually true, scientifically speaking; it will not be an accurate cause-and-effect analysis that includes all possible factors. However, you will learn something about the workability of different types of reasons. Since all reasons are arbitrarily constructed, those that produce unworkable outcomes in your life are poor reasons. Conversely, those that produce positive results are workable reasons!

This exercise gives you the chance to entertain the possibility that you're falling prey to the depressive skew of your reactive mind during important moments in your life. The first step is to choose three life situations that are bothering you right now—anything you've done that needs a reason, such as missing work, avoiding intimacy, avoiding a social opportunity, or harming your health by eating, drinking, or smoking too much. Briefly describe each situation in the left-hand column.

Now, in the middle column describe the most depressive reasons possible to account for why each problem is in your life right now. Then go to the right-hand column and describe the least depressive, most extremely positive perspective. The idea here is not to be accurate. Instead, it is to challenge your mind to be more flexible and creative in generating reasons.

Play with Reasons Worksheet

Situation	Most Depressed Perspective	Extremely Positive Perspective
<p>Example: I am diagnosed with high blood pressure.</p>	<p><i>Now my physical health is failing too. And it's all my fault—I should have quit smoking years ago. I guess I'll just wait for the other shoe to drop.</i></p>	<p><i>Everyone gets old, and this is a part of my aging. At the same time, I can improve my diet and exercise more—and I will, starting right now!</i></p>

Further Exploration. What did you notice as you went through this exercise? Was it easier to come up with and write out the self-blaming reasons? How did you do with generating extremely positive reasons? Did you notice that you felt differently when you went the depressive route versus the positive route? This is one way to play with reasons. When you notice the depressive skew showing up, go for a crazy-positive alternative. Push the positivity level to the point where you have to smile. This will help you strengthen the neural circuitry that both detects and counteracts memory and processing biases in the brain.

POISON PILLS

In this exercise, you'll identify a couple of your hot-button situations. You'll look at how these may be fueled by moral reasoning that might lead you into an unworkable stance. Before you start, take a look at the example from Kevin's record in the first row of the table.

Then, in the left-hand column, describe one of your target situations—an event or interaction that really sets you off emotionally. Pause, take a moment to step back, and watch your mind begin evaluating the situation. Just watch, and then decide which of the poison pills might be at play in your response to this situation: right versus wrong, good versus bad, fair versus unfair, or responsibility versus blame. Then, write the poison pill that applies in the middle column (do not swallow it). In the right-hand column, write out whatever moral reasoning your reactive mind hands you as you hang out with the poison pill. Then pause and smile at yourself. Go ahead and do another hot-button situation now if you like.

Poison Pills Worksheet

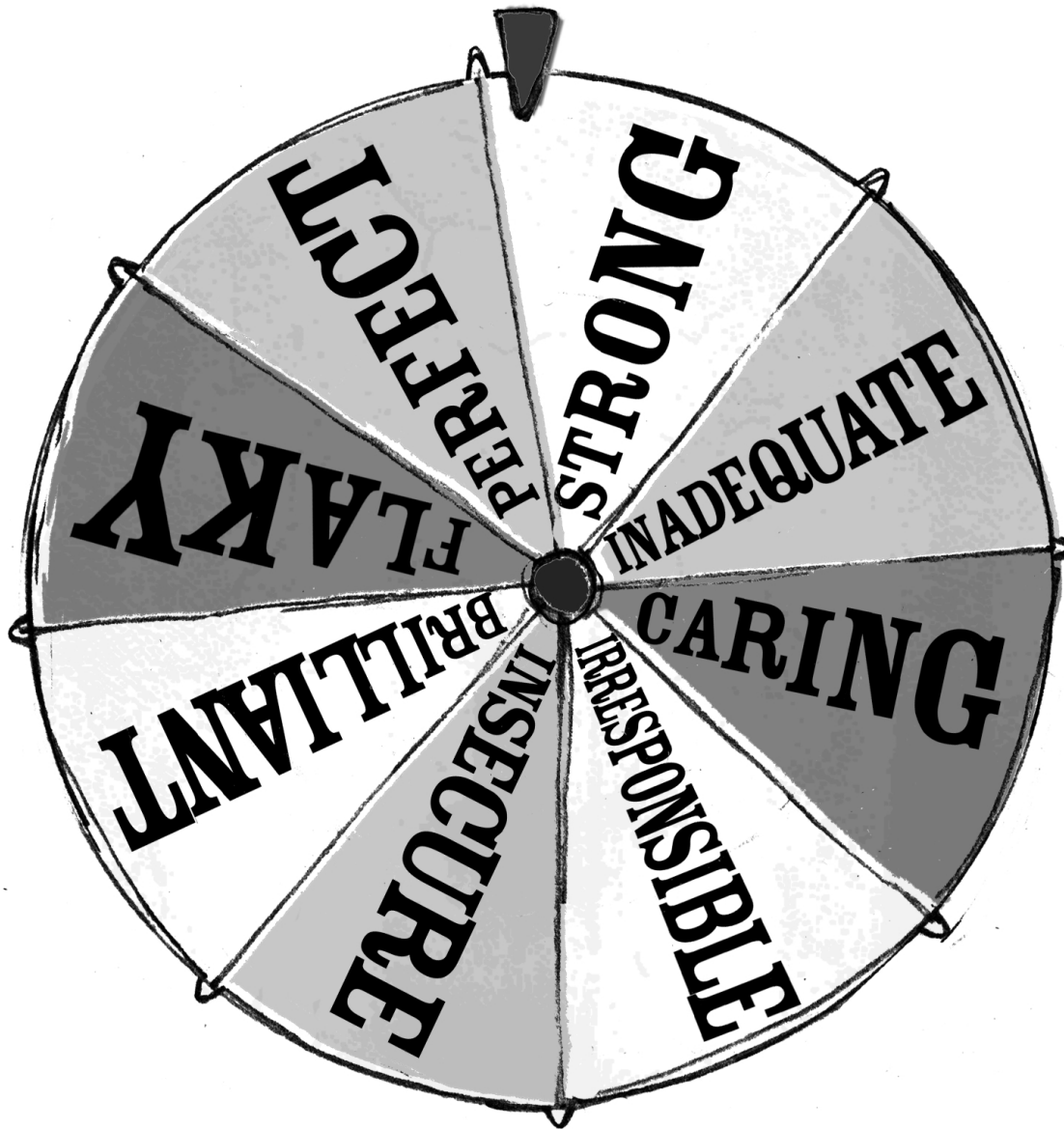
Hot-Button Situation	Poison Pills	Moral Reasoning
<p>Example from Kevin: <i>I go to campus to pick up a schedule of classes and see ex-girlfriend</i></p>	<p><i>Good versus bad</i></p>	<p><i>She's such a smart person, and I'm a jerk. I was wrong to drop out of school; I don't know if I'll ever go back. I'd have to measure up to all of these other people who are better than me.</i></p>

Further Exploration. How did you do at detecting poison pills in your life? Most of us have been walking around with these moral reasons at the ready for many years. If you keep on the lookout and repeat this exercise regularly, you can become a poison pill cop. Pull that poison pill over and cite it for speeding. Use this approach when hot-button situations come up in your day-to-day life. Remember the steps: notice reasons (cause and effect), name them, and, above all, continue to act in ways that are consistent with your values, not with your reactive mind's biased reasons (and your depression). Push yourself to come up with ridiculously positive reasons from time to time!

THE LIFE STORY WHEEL

At the end of the popular game show *Wheel of Fortune*, contestants spin the wheel to see what kind of prize they'll win. This is a random encounter with luck that significantly heightens the excitement of the game. In this exercise, we have a similar game in mind, but the prize is a little different. In this game, you get to construct a new self-story based on a random word choice. The life story wheel is loaded with evaluative words that are likely to move your mind into spinning a yarn right away.

One way to start the game is to close your eyes, put your finger on the story wheel, and start with the word closest to your finger. Alternatively, you might roll a penny onto the page, see where it lands, and start from there.



Once you have spun the wheel, so to speak, and have a word, begin your story: “I am [whatever word you landed on]” and then let your mind go to work adding details. You’re likely to get the best results if you write your story quickly. If your hand stops writing, write the first sentence again (“I am _____”) and continue on. Write at least one paragraph—you’ll refer to it in the next worksheet. Repeat this process for four or five words. If your penny drops on the same word twice, pick it up and drop it again! Your penny isn’t trying to tell you something, or is it?

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

I am _____

Now, move on to the next worksheet. When you answer the questions, you may simply write yes or no, or you can elaborate.

WRITE AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The best way to access your whole story is to take some time and write a condensed version of your story line. Since a complete autobiography would be too big a challenge, we want you to write a smaller version. Don't do this halfheartedly. Take some time to think about everything that has happened in your life and how you feel these events have shaped you; then take a half hour or so and write a one- or two-page autobiography. You may find it helpful to first write out specific events before you go on to construct your autobiography. Here's a list of the types of things you might include:

- Formative events in your life and how they've affected you
- Things that stand out as high points in your life
- Things that stand out as low points in your life
- Relationships with parents, siblings, and other family members
- Important intimate relationships and friendships and what they've meant to you
- Specific traumas or negative life events that had an impact on you

DECONSTRUCT YOUR AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Now it's your turn to break down your self-story into its basic elements. Just as we did with Ruth's story, divide the statements you wrote in your Autobiography exercise into two categories: descriptions and cause-and-effect impacts.

In the left-hand column, record statements that are factual descriptions of occurrences—things you did or that happened to you. This might include such things as, “My brother died in an automobile accident when I was twelve,” “My parents divorced when I was two,” “I was bullied for two years in middle school,” or “I graduated from college with honors when I was twenty-two.”

In the right-hand column, record statements that address the impacts of the events contained in your descriptions. These are the cause-and-effect explanations you give for the objective events of your life, such as, “After my brother died, my parents argued a lot, and they stopped paying attention to me or my choice of friends,” “I was the oldest and took the role of parenting my brothers and sister when I was nine and my dad left,” or “Once I became overweight, I felt anxious around most of the kids at school and just preferred to stay at home and read or watch movies rather than be around them outside of school.”

Worksheet for Deconstructing My Autobiography

Description	Cause-and-Effect Impact

Further Exploration. Take a look at your descriptions and consider ways to work with those descriptions other than or in addition to the statements written in the corresponding cause-and-effect boxes. Are there other descriptions or cause-and-effect statements that you want to add in? Chances are you will see two or three main themes in your story. Self-stories are like that: light on objective facts and heavy on a limited number of simple but powerful (and often self-limiting) messages.

WRITE A NEW AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The themes of your self-story are usually contained in cause-and-effect impact statements within the story. But what if the impact statements of your self-story are limited by selective memory bias or your sheer inability to integrate the millions of other possibly influential experiences you've had by now?

Let's try an experiment that will involve consciously stepping outside of your existing self-story for a few minutes. You'll use the copy you made of the previous worksheet. Without changing the descriptions of actual occurrences, write out new cause-and-effect impacts of each event. We don't care what type of new impacts you ascribe to it. Your new version can increase the negative impact of an event, decrease it, or offer a different meaning altogether.

For example, Ruth's statement that the experience of sexual abuse "Made it difficult to trust others. Also, made me feel ashamed and different from others" could be revised to "made me more sensitive to others who have been victimized in some way and contributed to my interest in social work" or "made me appreciate how courageous it is to make yourself vulnerable" or "made me a feminist." Before you start, take a look at Ruth's Revised Deconstruction of My Autobiography.

Ruth's Revised Deconstruction of My Autobiography

Description	Cause-and-Effect Impact
<i>I was the only child in my family.</i>	<i>I had a very close relationship with my mother.</i>
<i>My family moved a lot.</i>	<i>I learned to pack up, travel light, and keep things tidy.</i>
<i>I was teased a lot in school because I was the new kid.</i>	<i>I don't wear my heart on my sleeve.</i>
<i>Lived with my mother, who worked two jobs to support us.</i>	<i>Came to think of women as strong and self-reliant.</i>
<i>Molested by my babysitter.</i>	<i>Made me concerned about how to identify children at risk for abuse by adults and by other children too.</i>
<i>Date-raped at a party in college.</i>	<i>Made me concerned about how to prevent alcohol misuse and sexual violence.</i>
<i>Left my relationship with Dave.</i>	<i>Lead to a great job opportunity.</i>
<i>Keep to myself at work and decline invitations to group social events.</i>	<i>I'm never troubled by office drama, and I think I'm probably more respected for this.</i>

As you see, Ruth came up with lots of new material for the cause-and-effect column. She felt empowered by this exercise. Now, rewrite your new autobiography, and then continue reading.

Worksheet for Revised Deconstruction of My Autobiography

Description	Cause-and-Effect Impact

Further Exploration. Were you able to come up with a different set of meanings for the same set of facts? Most people find that this is relatively easy to do, but if you struggled with it, just notice that you might have attached to your self-story so completely that it eliminated any access to a different set of meanings. Did you find yourself saying something like, “Yeah, I can write these other meanings, but they aren’t really true. My original story is the true one!” If you went that route, here’s a question to ask yourself: “How do I know that my first story is the most accurate and true?” It’s probably the one you’ve been reciting for a long time, but that doesn’t mean it’s the most accurate. This fickle feature of self-stories is what we alluded to when we talked a little earlier about “truthiness errors” in self-stories. Just because a story is familiar, well practiced, and might even seem plausible doesn’t mean it’s true!

Is it possible that your reactive mind is similarly arbitrary in constructing your story, rather than entirely accurate? If your story is full of being exploited or abused by others, might your reactive mind filter out an event where a person respected you and gave generously to you? If your story contains one failure after another, could it be that your reactive mind has screened out the times you have succeeded?

TELL ME A STORY

Imagine that you are in three distinctly different types of social situations, and in each of these situations a person is going to ask you a question: "Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?"

First situation: You are at a social gathering and you are interested in getting to know a specific person better. This person might become just a friend, or you might develop a deeper relationship over time.

Write what you would say: _____

Second situation: You are applying for a job you really want and are at an interview that will likely determine whether you get the job or not.

Write what you would say: _____

Third situation: You are new to a church or spiritual group, after being invited to attend by one of your friends. After a brief round of introductions, the group leader asks you to tell the group a little about yourself.

Write what you would say: _____

Further Exploration. What did you discover as you did this exercise? Did you notice that you tailored the story of yourself to fit the social demands of each situation? Is there any aspect of any of your stories that is *not* true? Which one of these stories is the "true" one? Most people are surprised at how pliable their stories are; they can change from situation to situation. That's exactly what you want: tailor your story to the context, hold it lightly, and notice how well it works. Stories that produce the outcomes you want *are* the true ones.

NARRATIVE JOURNAL

To further explore your self-story, you might want to keep a daily self-story journal. The instructions are simple: Each time you find yourself in a new, distinctive social situation where you are required to disclose personal information about yourself, write that situation down in the left-hand column. Then, write down the contents of your new self-story in that situation in the right-hand column.

As an example, in the Storytelling Situation column you might write: "Went to the grocery store to buy some stuff, and the checker started talking about how hard it is to live with someone who is hardheaded. The clerk said, 'You know what I mean?'" In the Self-Narrative column you might write: "I said, 'Yeah, I'm one of those hardheaded types. I figure that I'm needed to balance my partner's easygoing manner. Wouldn't want too much easygoing energy in the house now, would we?' The checker laughed."

Just keep a running tab of all of the new self-stories that you generate over time. You will be mightily impressed by your storytelling abilities!

Narrative Journal Worksheet

Storytelling Situation	My Self-Narrative

Further Exploration. Remember what we said about truth earlier in this chapter? None of your stories are true in the pure sense. Truth in storyland is based in how well the story serves your best interests in each new situation. A story can be a complete success in one situation and a complete failure when applied to a different one. If you can look at your stories this way, you will be able to flexibly shift between stories depending upon your needs in each situation.

ASSESS YOUR SELF-COMPASSION SKILLS

Now it's time to take a look at your self-compassion skills. Fortunately, there have been substantial advances made in both defining what self-compassion is (and isn't) and developing ways to measure it (Neff 2016). In this section, you will complete a shortened version of the Self-Compassion Scale originally developed by Neff (2003) and revised by her and colleagues (Raes et al. 2011).

First of all, before your reactive mind gets on its high horse, remember that this is not a test. There are no good or bad scores on this scale. The assessment is meant to give you a baseline of where you are now. As we mentioned, low levels of self-compassion tend to be associated with higher levels of depression, so if you discover some low spots in your self-compassion profile, don't be surprised—and don't beat yourself up for it. With practice, you will notice that your score improves and, even more important, that it is easier and easier to be gentle with yourself.

How I Typically Act Toward Myself in Difficult Times

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the right of each statement, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

Almost never 2 3 4 5 Almost always
 1

For the six items with a “6-”: subtract the score associated with your answer from 6. The result will be your score for that item. For example, if your answer to item 1 using the scale is 4, then subtracting that from 6 would equal 2 as your adjusted score for item 1. You do not need to record anything in boxes that are shaded, as higher numbered responses indicate increased levels of self-compassion in those cases.

	Your Rating	Your Score
1. When I fail at something important to me, I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.	6-	
2. I try to be understanding and patient toward those aspects of my personality I don't like.		
3. When something painful happens, I try to take a balanced view of the situation.		

4. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are happier than I am.	6-	
5. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.		
6. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.		
7. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.		
8. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.	6-	
9. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.	6-	
10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.		
11. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.	6-	
12. I'm intolerant and impatient toward those aspects of my personality I don't like.	6-	
Total score (add items 1–12)		

Total scores range from 12 to 60, and higher scores indicate greater skill in self-compassion. Make a note of today's score on your smartphone or daily planner. If you can, set a reminder for you to repeat this assessment in two or three weeks to see if your score has improved. Yes, that's right—you can change your level of self-compassion in a very short period of time with regular practice! That's how the brain works; if you ask it to do something over and over again, it will get better and better at doing what you ask it to do.

SELF-KINDNESS SKILL BUILDING

The following two-part exercise will help you develop strength in self-kindness. It involves learning to be intentionally kind to yourself when you are suffering, to be tolerant of your shortcomings, and to be patient with parts of yourself that you do not like.

To build skill in these areas, stay mindful of your day-to-day painful inner experiences. The goal is to identify specific events and times when you are self-critical. Use the form below to track your results. We recommend that you keep a copy of this worksheet with you and review it three to four times per day so that you can catch the contexts where you could really use self-kindness but usually don't provide it.

Kindness and Criticism: When and What

When do you feel the most kindness for yourself? What is the target of your kindness? When are you most critical of yourself and for what?

Time of Day	Context Most Kind	Context Most Critical

Further Exploration. After doing this for a few days, can you identify patterns in the time of day when you are triggered to be either kind to or critical of yourself? Do you see patterns in various social contexts, like being at work, at home with your partner, or during interactions with friends, people at church, and so on? Do you notice whether the triggering events for kindness or criticism center around a theme? You may be able to identify daily behaviors that function as a pathway for self-criticism or self-kindness. For example, you might realize that you actually experience feelings of kindness toward yourself at night when you apply lotion to your feet. Alternatively, you might notice that you are highly critical of yourself every Thursday afternoon before a weekly meeting at work. Your goal is to build on your kindness and let it spill over to the moments when you need more love and patience.

BUILDING MORE MOMENTS OF KINDNESS

Another way to create more moments of kindness involves developing a plan to practice specific self-compassion actions. To do this, start with identifying one or more contexts where you want to practice more kindness, and then develop a cue to prompt you. The cue could be a written note, a photograph, or even a special alert on your phone—anything that will serve as a signal to be kind to yourself. Place the cue in situational contexts that might trigger self-criticism *and* be an opportunity to practice self-kindness instead. It's fine to also target a moment when you already show kindness toward yourself, with a plan of embellishing the kindness or spending a little more time savoring the moment.

It's important that your new plan involves a behavior that you or someone else could observe. This doesn't mean someone has to observe it—the action just needs to be something you do in the world, as opposed to something you think in your head. The rationale for this is that we exert *far more* influence on our thinking and emotions when we vary our behavior.

Kindness Behavior Plan

Take a moment to think about a few situations in which you will practice self-kindness, and describe them in the first column. You may use examples listed in the Kindness and Criticism worksheet. Next, describe what cue you will use as a reminder to behave differently when you want to show more kindness to yourself. Finally, list what your new kindness behavior will be.

Context	Cue	New Kindness Behavior

SOFTEN SELF-JUDGMENT

This exercise will help you formulate a plan for treating yourself with kindness in the face of a future triggering situation. The objective is to come up with a *soft statement* that you can say to yourself in place of a judgment.

In the space provided, first describe a situation in which you are likely to start judging yourself. Include the key features of the situation that are likely to provoke self-criticism. Second, check in on how you are feeling. To do this, it is important to get in the present moment. Imagine the feelings you might start with, then write them down. Third, imagine what behaviors would help you to soften and treat yourself with kindness. Write down what you could say to yourself; this is your soft statement. Next, write down how your feelings might change with this new self-compassionate approach.

Once you have formed your plan, take a few minutes to mentally rehearse the entire sequence as if you are actually in the situation. Think about the intentions you have as you enter into this situation. Now that you are free of the need to judge yourself, what values are going to guide your actions? What do you want to do differently, if your behavior is not being controlled by fear and self-judgment?

As you go through this mental simulation, can you think of other behaviors that might promote an even greater posture of self-kindness? Write down your answers, and don't hesitate to modify your plan if you discover something new that tickles your fancy.

Soften Self-Judgment: Skill Practice Plan

1. Describe a situation that is likely to trigger a self-judgment.

2. What would my immediate feelings be?

3. What could I do differently that would promote self-kindness? What would my soft statement be?

4. How might my feelings change after softening self-judgment?

5. Would my behaviors be consistent with my intentions and values?

6. What behaviors might promote greater self-compassion?

Further Exploration. Were you able to work through this exercise in a way that might prepare you to act with self-compassion in an upcoming risk situation? The more you mentally prepare yourself to be self-compassionate, the easier it will be to get into that mode if the difficult situation materializes in your life. Stay with this practice, as you can add in one soft statement after another, building up your kindness reservoir for tricky situations. Of course, the next step is to enter into tricky situations and practice soft statements in the heat of the moment. In time, your softening self-judgment plan will help you love yourself even when you are making mistakes.

COMMON HUMANITY SKILL BUILDING

The worksheet below invites you to explore your suffering in a broader context than might be familiar for you. The objective is to identify ways to connect your suffering with others and to see it as purposeful and temporary as well. If you tend to minimize your connection with humanity and have a difficult time seeing suffering as a part of life, we recommend that you use this form daily or several times a week to develop stronger skills for accepting pain as part of the human condition.

First, describe a life event, situation, or interaction that causes you to suffer. Then, broaden your perspective on this situation by trying to imagine all of the people in the world who, at this very moment in time, are struggling and suffering in this same type of situation. If your suffering is not an aberration and actually serves a purpose in your life, try to describe what that purpose is. Finally, instead of seeing suffering as unending, try to think of it as occurring at a fixed point in your life journey. See if you can put yourself in the mindset of “This too shall pass.” Describe how that mindset might alter how you currently react to this difficult or challenging life issue.

Common Humanity: Skill Practice Plan

Develop a plan to behave differently when you are hurting and not feeling connected to your common humanity. Ask yourself, “What is it that I am suffering with?”

1. Describe the painful event, situation, or interaction.

2. Do other people in the world suffer in this way?

3. Can my suffering teach me something?

4. Will this suffering pass?

Further Exploration. How did you do with this exercise? The idea that you are part of humanity can be a little hard to get your arms around at first. It is challenging to imagine that others are suffering from the same types of flaws, disappointments, life setbacks, or failures that you are, but it's true. And once you realize that everyone has a burden to bear, you can bear yours in the context of being a part of humanity.

MIDDLE-PATH SKILL BUILDING

This exercise invites you to identify an activity that you believe will support you in developing less reactivity and more balance in your day-to-day perspectives on life.

First, describe a recent emotionally triggering situation or event. Then imagine what an overreaction to that event would look like. Next, report from the perspective of the middle path—describe just the facts in a nonreactive way without injecting or attaching to your judgments. Finally, think about a lifestyle activity that would act as a regular cue for you to practice taking the middle path. These types of activities may include becoming a part of a spiritual community, such as a church; joining a yoga or meditation group; or participating in a sports activity involving self-discipline and mental focus.

Middle Path: Skill Practice Plan

Develop a plan to take the middle path when you are triggered to overreact, whether toward yourself or others.

1. Describe the challenging event, situation, or interaction.

2. What would it look like if I overreacted?

3. What would it look like if I took the middle path?

4. What would promote better middle-path perspective taking in my life?

Further Exploration. What happened when you tried to imagine taking the middle path, instead of being emotionally reactive and judgmental? Did you feel the burden of suffering lift a little bit? Did you feel a sense that it might be easier to roll in this situation if you stayed focused on the middle path? After all, if it is all “small stuff,” then you can conserve a lot of your mental energy by going to the middle!

YOU ARE FLAWSOME!

This exercise requires you to practice self-compassion for your personal flaws, both real and imagined. There are two basic types of flaws that figure prominently in our negative self-stories that we tend to beat ourselves up about. The first is some attribute we have that we find unacceptable, be it a receding hairline, stuttering under stress, or not being as interesting as other people. The second type of flaw is something we believe we lack, like good looks, confidence in social situations, or public speaking ability.

Take a few minutes now to identify the flaws you most dislike about yourself in both areas. Try to clearly describe the flaw and what you don't like about it.

My Flaws:	Why It Bothers Me:

Now that you have identified your flaws, it is time to practice being flawsome! Read each of your flaws out loud, and at the end of each statement add in “and I love this part of me too!” As you recite this statement, put yourself into it.

Further Exploration. Were you able to genuinely extend loving energy toward those things you dislike about yourself? If your reactive mind tells you that your flaw can't be accepted, practice detachment and gently redirect your attention to loving yourself. You could even take what your reactive mind told you and write *that* down as a flaw and make that part of your flawsomeness! The fact that you have a reactive mind that is unwilling to stop judging you is also a part of your flawsomeness. How cool is that? During this practice, try to create a mental space in which you relax, let go of attachment to self-rejection, and truly love what you dislike about yourself.

VISION PLATEAU

This exercise invites you to use your imagination to clarify your life vision at this point in your life and to generate information that will help you make plans that support that vision. Before starting, find a comfortable place to either sit or lie down, like a quiet place at home, or at a local park. We want you to be in a state of mental quiet, so you can stay focused on this guided meditation, which will take 15 minutes or so.

At this moment in time, you are going to take a journey to Vision Plateau. Inhale deeply and allow yourself to relax as you exhale slowly. As you breathe, prepare yourself to receive something important. Breathe in the air you need to sustain you, and breathe out any reservations. Feel your body as it warms and becomes heavy and soft. This is the nature of relaxing and a helpful way to prepare to receive something you need. Breathe in and out, and know the breath for what it is—a bridge between your body and mind. Walk that bridge and strengthen the connection. Be here and be now.

As you are ready, begin to imagine that you're walking on a path. Everything is new on this path, yet it seems familiar. It is as if you've been here before, but you have no conscious memory of it. The path goes through the woods and comes out at a river. The river is wide and the current swift. You sit down to watch the water. You wait and watch and breathe. The sun is high in the sky and it warms you. The sunlight plays on the water, and the current takes the light, and together they create shapes. While you don't understand this, you sense that the sun and the water are working together to give you something, something to take with you. It may be a shape, a texture, a sound, or a color. You will know it when you see it. Name it and take it, because it is for you.

When you're ready, you can leave the river. It will be time to move on. Now you're going to Vision Plateau, where someone is waiting for you—a special person who has known you all your life. This person has heard every affirmative statement made to you. This person knows your strengths, your vulnerabilities, and your values. Breathe in and out, and know that you will soon shake hands with a person who understands and loves you.

The plateau is only a few hundred yards ahead. Take your time. There's no need to rush as you climb to your final destination. When you reach the top, you sense the presence of another being. You sit down on the plateau. It feels good, solid, and warmed by sunlight. This is a good place to rest and wait. Your back is straight, and you feel relaxed, almost like you're floating. You can see a long way in every direction from Vision Plateau. You stand up so that you can turn in all directions to appreciate this extensive view. You look to the east, to the south, to the west, and then to the north.

Having taken in so much, you are satisfied, and you sit down again, now facing north. You close your eyes, and you can easily see moments from your life, from the beginning of your consciousness to this very moment. Some are pleasant, some less so. They are all just moments, memories, and images. Take them in and let them go. Breathe in and breathe out. Walk the bridge of the breath, connecting mind and body.

As you watch the picture show of your life and breathe, someone approaches you. You sense the presence of a friend and feel no need to open your eyes or stand. You wait for this friend's touch, and you know that it will be a loving, gentle touch. You feel soft, warm fingertips on your forehead, and you know that this person is here to help you see your life vision clearly.

Remember the gift the sun and river gave you, and tell your wise friend about it. This will strengthen the work you do together now. Talk it over. Breathe in and out. Allow silence. Pay attention closely. What does your friend do with the shape, sound, or image you were given? Does your friend change it or simply mirror it back for you to see? How does this relate to a vision for your life? Accept anything your mind says about your vision—good or bad, desired or not desired. Accept it as mental activity; then accept your evaluation of mental activity and return to the moment and your friend and your work together on Vision Plateau.

When your friend is ready to leave, stand and express your gratitude. After your friend departs, look to the east and imagine a future that includes your past. Then look to the south and imagine a future that includes the present and the courage to pursue your life vision. Then look to the west and imagine a future that includes the present and the ability to plan activities that fulfill that vision, even when there is no specific reward for doing so, and perhaps no end to the suffering of pursuing your vision. Finally, turn to the north and see that wise people are there to help you now and always with your life vision. Look into their eyes and thank them.

You can now prepare to leave Vision Plateau. This is a place you can return to. Your experiences will differ each time you go. Say good-bye and take the path down and around, back into the forest, past the river, and back to the place where you live day to day and where you are resting and using your powers of imagination to create a vision for planning a vital life. Breathe in and breathe out, walk the bridge between your body and mind, and when you are ready, open your eyes. You are seeing a new world now—seeing a new world with new eyes.

As soon as you complete the Vision Plateau visualization, answer the following questions.

Vision Plateau Worksheet

What did the river and sunlight offer you? Was it a shape, an image, a group of words, or something else?

What does the gift mean to you?

What do you recall seeing from your past as you waited on Vision Plateau?

What did you feel when your friend touched your forehead on Vision Plateau?

What happened to your life vision as you talked with your friend about your gift from the river and the sun?

What did you say in expressing gratitude to your friend?

What did you see when you looked to the south and saw courage to pursue your life vision?

What did you see when you looked to the west and saw the ability to plan activities consistent with your life vision?

Who did you see when you looked to the north and saw wise people ready to support your life vision?

Further Exploration. How did you fare during this exercise? Were you able to put yourself into the images that were created? Were you able to stay present with the guided journey? Did you profit in some unexpected way from just allowing yourself to roll along with the exercise? For many people, this is a very powerful experience that produces a wide range of emotional reactions. So if you experienced a mixture of sadness, curiosity, regret, or anticipation along the way, that is pretty commonplace. If you found this exercise emotionally meaningful, you'll want to save your responses and review them from time to time. You may find that you understand your answers differently as you go further with planning directions and changes in key areas of your life.

CREATING YOUR LIFE VISION

This exercise builds on the previous exercise, Vision Plateau, and asks you to connect your visualization with your values. Life vision (the destination) and values (the direction to be followed) are highly personal, reflecting your unique life experiences and knowledge up to this moment in time.

1. To begin, in the “Life Vision Gift” column describe what you saw or received on Vision Plateau that gave breadth or depth to your vision for your life. Do this for each life domain.
2. In the “Life Vision Statement” column write one sentence that describes your vision for your life. Do this for each domain.
3. In the “Values” column describe your values in each of the life domains at this point in time. Each description need not be comprehensive; just write a concise statement that’s representative of your current perspective on what’s important in each domain.
4. In the “Vision and Values Statement” column integrate your vision and values into one statement of purpose and intention. Do this for each of the four life domains.

Life Vision and Values Statements Worksheet

Life Domain	Life Vision Gift	Life Vision Statement	Values	Vision and Values Statement
Relationships				
Work/Study				
Leisure/Play				
Health				

Further Exploration. How did you do with this exercise? Was it hard to come up with a combined vision and values statement in some areas but not others? This might suggest you have more clarity about your life mission in one life domain over another. You can sometimes use the confidence created by having clarity in one life area to try some new and bold statement in an area where you are not necessarily clear. It's important to avoid rushing through this exercise; if it takes you more than one sitting to get it fleshed out, that's preferable. In particular, the vision and values statements can be quite challenging to put into words.

KEEPING THE BEST OF INTENTIONS

This exercise will help you form the intention to do something that's consistent with the vision and values statements you came up with in the preceding exercise. You will go through the entire sequence of steps involved in forming an intention:

- Linking vision and intention
- Mentally rehearsing acting according to your vision
- Mentally evaluating possible outcomes
- Imagining barriers to intentional action
- Imagining your responses to barriers when they show up

The goal is to stay present and keep your intention flexible but unwavering.

1. To start, copy your vision and values statements into the first blank column of the provided worksheet.
2. Now think about something you can do this week that supports your vision and values statement in each life domain. Write it in the "Intention" column.
3. Now take a minute to imagine that you're implementing the plan and things are going well. However, something negative and unsupportive happens as you implement your plan, and you feel discouraged. Visualize the details of what's happening and watch what your mind has to say about them. Write that down in the "Negative Barrier" column.
4. Now, and this may be the most difficult part of the exercise, imagine that you react to barriers in a way that is positive and supportive of your vision and values statement. It may be that you use one of your mindfulness skills to undermine the barrier, or you enlist the support of someone else if it is an external barrier, or you find a creative way to overcome that barrier on your own. Write down whatever your imagination gives you in the far right-hand column.

Good Intentions Worksheet

Life Domain	Vision and Values Statement	Intention	Negative Barrier	Positive Outcome
Relationships				
Work/Study				
Leisure/Play				
Health				

Further Exploration. What was your experience with creating an intention? Was one kind of intention easier to visualize than another? Were you able to watch your reactive mind come up with barriers? Did you let your wise mind intervene with some kind of positive or reassuring image of an alternative response to overcome barriers? Did your intention remain solid throughout the exercise or did it waver at certain points? We encourage you to use this exercise on a regular basis, as it can help you develop deeper and more “wind resistant” intentions to carry into your future.

DELIBERANCE

Deliberance is a funky derivative of the word “deliverance” that a depressed client once used to describe his daily habit of singling out seemingly mundane tasks and doing them very slowly and mindfully. In this exercise, you will mindfully engage in routines that you don’t pay much attention to...but perhaps should!

Targets for deliberance training include routine daily tasks like getting out of bed in the morning, chewing the first bite of a meal slowly, washing dishes, doing laundry, taking breaks at work, gardening and yard work, fixing stuff around the house, and so forth. To do things deliberately requires you to show up, get into the moment, and then pay attention to what you are doing as you do it. Listed next are some possible areas in your daily routine that might need the deliberance fix applied to them. Using the Deliberance Planning worksheet below, pick at least one or two routine daily tasks that you will do deliberately and mindfully.

Deliberance Planning Worksheet

Deliberance Activity	Practice Plan (What will I do differently, when, how often, and for how long?)
Getting out of bed in the morning	
Taking the first bite of a meal	
Taking a shower	
Washing breakfast dishes	
Starting a load of laundry	
Taking a 5-minute break at work	
Drinking a cup of tea after lunch	
Tending a houseplant	
Weeding a small area in a garden	
Sweeping the floor in the kitchen	
Changing a lightbulb	
Taking 10 relaxation breaths while sitting up in bed before going to sleep	

IDENTIFY YOUR POSITIVE EMOTION TARGETS

In the worksheet below, we have grouped positive emotion activities into several savoring categories for you to consider. You might naturally gravitate toward one or two categories and be less interested in the others. Or you might be interested in trying all of them! Whatever the case, use the List of Positive Emotion Activities to identify some positive behaviors you are interested in experimenting with on a regular basis, just to see how they impact your mood. Identifying positive emotion targets in different areas of life will let you diversify the ways that you induce positive emotions in your daily routine. Keep in mind that you don't have to choose something that will be done every day at the same time. You can vary the time, frequency, and type of activity as you like.

Positive Emotion Worksheet

Area of Positive Emotion	Savoring Target	When, Where, with Whom, and How Often?
<p>Awakening Senses (for example, smelling a rose, eating an orange slowly, watching the sunset mindfully, belly breathing for 5 minutes)</p>		
<p>Gratitude (for example, thanking someone for doing something nice, spending some time with mental images of things you are grateful for in your life)</p>		
<p>Generosity (for example, opening a door for someone, buying a coworker a latte just to be nice)</p>		
<p>Connectedness (for example, going to church or a spiritual meeting, going to lunch with a friend, holding hands with your spouse while walking together)</p>		

<p>Compassion (for example, doing a 5-minute compassion meditation, helping someone who needs help, forgiving yourself for a recent mistake you made—however small—and savoring it)</p>		
<p>Play (for example, taking kids to a playground or running around with them, going to a movie with your partner, getting into a tickling game with your partner or children)</p>		
<p>Valuing (for example, sitting down with your partner and sharing how you've been doing today, exercising 20–30 minutes, preparing a healthy meal for everyone in the family)</p>		

Further Exploration. How did you do at identifying positive emotion–generating actions that you could savor? When you imagined doing them, did you notice a feeling of positivity inside? If so, that's a good indicator that you're likely to experience positivity if you select that behavior. Were you able to figure out when would be the most convenient time to engage in an action? It's okay to fit these things in around your existing lifestyle. Sometimes though, you have to prioritize between something you are *used* to doing and something you would *like* to be doing in your daily routine. Often, we are taught that it is only after we complete everything on our to-do list that we get to do something fun, relaxing, or enjoyable. Try not to get drawn into that trap; it's just reactive mind giving you more rules to follow!

YOUR POSITIVITY LIFESTYLE PLAN

On the worksheet below, identify your positive emotion goals in the four major life domains: relationships, work/study, leisure/play, and health. Then rate the intensity of the positive emotion you are likely to experience if you achieved your positivity goal. Obviously, activities that are likely to produce higher positivity scores are to be desired. If your projected positivity rating is only a 1 or 2, consider looking for another positivity goal in that life area.

Next, list the steps you intend to take that will produce a positive emotional experience. Be as concrete and specific as possible when outlining your plan so that you can follow through on your positive emotion target behavior. For example, if your positive emotion target is to exercise three times a week, your action plan might include joining a local gym, hiring a personal health trainer, finding a friend to go to the club with you, and so forth. As another example, a plan to “eat mindfully at eight o’clock each morning” is specific, whereas a general statement that you plan to “eat better” isn’t. The more specific you are, the better you can assess whether you’re acting as planned—and the better you can evaluate how your actions are affecting your sense of vitality.

Positivity Lifestyle Plan

RELATIONSHIPS

Positivity goal: _____

Positive emotion rating (1 = weak; 5 = strong)

Action plan

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

WORK/STUDY

Positivity goal: _____

Positive emotion rating (1 = weak; 5 = strong)

Action plan

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

LEISURE/PLAY

Positivity goal: _____

Positive emotion rating (1 = weak; 5 = strong)

Action plan

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

HEALTH

Positivity goal: _____

Positive emotion rating (1 = weak; 5 = strong)

Action plan

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Further Exploration. Any time you set out to change your lifestyle, your new behaviors will take time, practice, and some troubleshooting to take hold. One good way to see if your changes are moving you toward your goals is to conduct a lifestyle review. How? Simply repeat the Positivity Lifestyle Plan a few times. You might do this monthly for the first six months as you are sorting out the mindfulness strategies and positive emotion targets that work best for you. Once you have a handle on the situation, you could lengthen the test period to quarterly or every six months.

Use the results of these periodic self-assessments to make course corrections so you can continue traveling toward your true north. If you ever feel overwhelmed, select just one or two life areas to focus your work on, based on your priorities. You will likely notice that the type of life activities that produces positive emotions will shift over time; this is to be expected when you live life intentionally and according to your values. Different activities that float your boat will suddenly appear on the horizon and, when they do, go for them! However, we do recommend that you address all four life domains at least once a year, as each usually has an important role to play in generating the positive emotion reserves needed to weather the hard times that life will surely offer.

Compare your scores across time. Is your positive emotion score going up, even slightly? If so, your plan is bringing you closer to the goal of positive, values-based living. If your score is staying the same or getting lower, consider whether you need to change the plan. You can't always be sure how a plan will work out when you're creating it, but you can have an open mind and change the plan when your experience tells you it isn't working. This review is important, so record it on your calendar, just as you would any important activity. If you've chosen a particularly challenging area to work on, you may want to review your plan more often at first—perhaps once a week.

The simplest way to see if your Positivity Lifestyle Plan is working is to look at each of the statements below and check off any that are true of you at this moment in time.

- In most ways, my life right now is close to my ideal.
- The conditions of my life right now are excellent.
- I am satisfied with my life just the way it is right now.
- I am getting the important things I want in my life right now.
- If I could do anything in my life over right now, I would change almost nothing.

If several of these items describe your life right now, way to go! Keep it up! If none of the statements describes your life right now, go back and review your current Positivity Lifestyle Plan to see if there might be a new positive emotion target that would work better for you.

IDENTIFY YOUR RISK SITUATIONS

One easy way to forecast depression-triggering situations is to look back on your depression history and identify events, situations, or interactions that have triggered past depressions. An *event* is a specific occurrence, like being fired from a job. A *situation* is an ongoing process that poses emotional challenges, such as having a child with severe behavior problems. An *interaction* is an emotionally challenging relationship between you and one or more people, such as a spouse, several family members, or friends. Take a moment now to reflect on this, and then write down potential depression risks in each category.

Risky Situations

Risky life events: _____

Risky life situations: _____

Risky interactions: _____

Further Exploration. What did you come up with in the way of depression risks? Were these primarily specific life events that could set you off, or are you more prone to being triggered by difficult interactions with people? Did you identify some life situations that would pose an ongoing risk to you? The key to staying on top of your situation is to make sure you anticipate the setbacks that life is going to offer you.

MONITOR DEPRESSIVE BEHAVIORS

Although being laid off was the triggering event for Andy's slide back into depression, he didn't become depressed again overnight. It took weeks for Andy's depressive behaviors to take hold, and this made it difficult for him to see what was happening. He didn't stop going out with his wife and children all at once; he started by begging off a few outings and slowly ended up stopping altogether. This is a key characteristic of a developing depression spiral: Each depressive response increases the intensity and downward force of the spiral a little bit. You can get stuck in this trap little by little without realizing what's going on.

In the first row of the worksheet that follows, write today's date and record how you scored today in each category. Since the greatest risk for becoming depressed again occurs in the first year, we ask that you do this inventory once each month for the next year and record your scores on the worksheet. Post this worksheet in your home to serve as a reminder to do the inventory each month.

DEPRESSIVE BEHAVIORS MONITORING WORKSHEET

Date Inventoried	Relationships Score	Work/Study Score	Leisure/Play Score	Health Score
Today:				
Month 1:				
Month 2:				
Month 3:				
Month 4:				
Month 5:				
Month 6:				
Month 7:				
Month 8:				
Month 9:				
Month 10:				
Month 11:				
Month 12:				

Further Exploration. If you notice at any point in time that your scores in any area are going in the wrong direction, it's crucial that you spring into action. As the old saying goes: "A stitch in time saves nine." Ask yourself the following questions:

Has anything happened in my life recently that might be responsible for this higher score?

How have I been feeling during the last several weeks?

Is there anything that I'm avoiding dealing with in my life right now?

What might be out of balance in my life that I need to fix or address?

What does my wise mind have to say about the situation I'm in right now?

Am I drifting away from my positivity lifestyle? If so, what is missing and how can I restore it?

CREATE A DEPRESSION PREVENTION PLAN

It's essential that you develop a depression prevention plan. This is a written description of the actions you'll take if you sense your depression is increasing, or if you score more than 3 points higher than your baseline score in any life domain during your monthly inventory. In the following worksheet, describe specific mindfulness strategies you will use in each area of life if you're getting more depressed. Ideally, the behaviors you come up with should produce positivity in you when you engage in them.

MY DEPRESSION PREVENTION PLAN

Life Domain	Specific Positivity or Mindfulness Strategies I Will Use
Relationships	
Work/Study	
Leisure/Play	
Health	

Further Exploration. Were you able to think of at least one specific positive emotion or mindfulness strategy that you could apply in each area of living? If you came up empty in one or more life areas, think about it some more, and then come back and try this exercise again. If you feel like you have a pretty well-developed prevention plan, post it in a conspicuous location in your home, perhaps on your refrigerator, on a mirror in the bedroom, by your computer, or on a toilet seat. Choose a place where you'll make visual contact with your plan daily. This will help you be vigilant for high-risk situations and prepare you to use mindfulness and positive emotion strategies in those situations. And, just as when you first acted on your depression, you need to follow through on these strategies regardless of your energy level or how you feel. If you keep at it, your prevention plan can quickly reverse a downward depression spiral.

MY VITALITY PARTNER

I intend to meet with _____ [potential vitality partner]

on _____ [date], at _____ [location]. I intend to ask my vitality partner

if he or she would be willing to help me by engaging in the following support behaviors [for example, check in with me weekly about my goal to be more self-compassionate and less self-critical; send me regular text messages

encouraging me to keep pursuing my goals]: _____
