



# VALUE BASED LIVING: HOW TO LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST WITH NTM

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# OVERVIEW

- What are values and why are they important?
- Getting “off course”
- Using acceptance to follow your values
- Defining (or re-defining) your values
- Value-based actions and goals

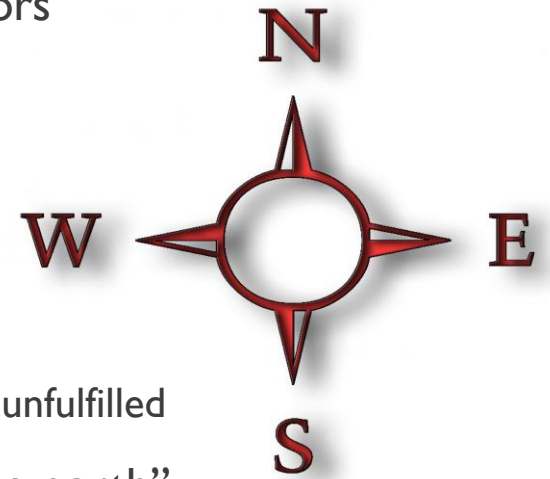
*Information in this presentation is adapted from The Mindfulness & Acceptance Workbook for Depression by Kirk D. Strosahl and Patricia J. Robinson (2008), which is based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT; developed by Steven Hayes)*

# WHAT ARE VALUES?

- Values = what we find meaningful in life
  - Personal beliefs about the way you want to live your life and what you want to stand for in your life
  - Can look very different from person to person
  - Reflect how we want to engage with the world, the people around us, and with ourselves
- Values can change over time
- Different from goals
  - Goals can be achieved
  - Values are more like the direction that we want to head in life
    - Example: “getting kids to school on time” vs. “being a good parent”

# IMPORTANCE OF VALUES

- Values can provide motivation for action even in the midst of suffering and life stressors
  - The “fuel” that propels you on the path toward living life to the fullest
- If values are fuel, living without them is like running on empty
  - Fall into patterns of living that don’t reflect what matters to you
  - Or patterns that lead to not living a FULL life
    - Can find yourself without energy and enthusiasm, feeling stressed or unfulfilled
- Values are like a compass and following this compass is like moving towards your “true north”



# LOSING SIGHT OF YOUR VALUES

- Can run on empty when doing very little that embodies personal values
  - Or spending too much time on any one value at the expense of others
  - “Just trying to get by”
- Getting off course is **NORMAL**
  - Our choices are not always consistent with our values
  - Example: someone who really values close, meaningful relationships with others and hasn't been in contact with friends or family over the past few weeks because they've been stressed
  - When down or stressed, it's hard to stay in touch with values because the effort required to make it through each day is so great
    - Making an effort to clarify your values will help you gain better focus and lessen the gap between what you care about and what you do
  - The key is redirecting when you realize you're off course

# ACCEPTANCE TO REDIRECT YOUR FOCUS

- Trying to change things that you have no control over can lead to expending energy on strategies that lead to dead ends
  - A common way we get off course from our “true north”
- Acceptance = voluntary action involving a stance of non-judgmental awareness
  - “Making room” for uncomfortable emotions or experiences that cannot be changed
  - Acceptance is an action you take on purpose
  - Willing to be present with whatever you are facing...just experiencing
  - Can be described as simple awareness of the present
- Level of acceptance can vary from moment to moment
  - Since acceptance is an action and not a result, it never remains at a constant level
  - Stance you try to adopt vs. a posture you maintain continuously

# ACCEPTING TO REDIRECT

- What acceptance is not
  - Acceptance is NOT resignation
  - Acceptance does NOT mean failure
  - Acceptance does NOT mean tolerating something
- How do you know if you're accepting something or not?
  - I just need to put this behind me vs. I'm willing to go through this
  - I need to get rid of this vs. This is my current reality even though I don't like it
  - I need to leave the past in the past vs. I am willing to live with my past
- **Overall, you can suffer or excessively suffer through your experience with a negative event or situation**
  - Suffering = original discomfort in response to the event that is distressing but is natural and healthy if not suppressed or avoided
  - Excessive suffering = pain from struggling to control, eliminate, or avoid your original suffering

## EXAMPLE

- Bill injured his back while lifting a pallet on the job about 15 years ago. He tried to return to work, but the back pain was too intense. He quit and filed for permanent disability, but his claim was denied. He continued to experience pain daily. He was offered a vocational retraining option by the state but decline because he didn't feel he could work any job with the pain.
- He underwent a spinal disk fusion that initially helped but eventually left him with even worse pain. He feels that his doctors have failed him. He was prescribed narcotic pain medication and is now dependent on them, despite still experiencing a lot of pain. His current doctor has refused to increase his dosage again and Bill is furious that his doctor isn't helping with the pain.
- Bill spends a lot of time at home lying on his sofa, as this gives him some relief from the pain. He doesn't go out much anymore because upright activity tends to be associated with pain. Bill's wife complains that he doesn't help around the house.
- He wakes up every day and thinks about his situation, which makes him feel angry because everything seems unfair. He often yells at his wife when he's frustrated. Bill doesn't see much hope that his life will turn around unless the pain is somehow eliminated. He's disappointed in himself for not being a good husband and not being able to work,.



# WHAT DOES BILL HAVE CONTROL OVER? WHAT NEEDS TO BE ACCEPTED BECAUSE IT CAN'T BE CHANGED?

1. Bill suffered an on-the-job injury.	A
2. Bill experiences back pain daily.	A
3. Bill was denied a disability pension.	A
4. Bill has thoughts that he has too much pain to work at any job.	A
5. Bill refuses to go through vocational retraining.	C
6. Bill underwent an unsuccessful back surgery that left him with more pain.	A
7. Bill takes larger and larger doses of narcotics to control his pain.	C
8. Bill spends a lot of time on his sofa to control the pain.	C
9. Bill feels angry when in pain.	A
10. Bill yells at his wife.	C
11. Bill has thoughts that life has given him a raw deal	A

# ASPECTS OF LIFE THAT CAN'T BE CONTROLLED AND REQUIRE ACCEPTANCE:

- Some physical sensations
- An objective event, act of “fate,” or external stressor
- Other people’s behavior
- Past events and personal history, including chronic health conditions

# DEFINING YOUR VALUES

- Once you accept the aspects of life that cannot be changed or controlled, you can check your values compass and recalibrate
- The first step is to define your values
- Common domains that are valued by some people (not the same for everyone)

## Family relations

*What kind of relationships do you want with your family?  
What kind of mother/father/brother/sister/uncle/aunt do you want to be?*

## Physical wellbeing

*What kind of values do you have regarding your physical wellbeing? How do you want to look after yourself?*

## Marriage / couple / intimate relations

*What kind of husband/wife/partner do you want to be?  
What quality of relationship do you want to be a part of?*

## Citizenship / community

*What kind of environment do you want to be a part of? How do you want to contribute to your community?*

## Parenting

*What sort of parent do you want to be?  
What qualities do you want your children to see in you?*

## Spirituality

*What kind of relationship do you want with God / nature / the Earth?*

## Friendships / social relationships

*What sort of friend do you want to be?  
What friendships is it important to cultivate?  
How would you like to act towards your friends?*

## Recreation

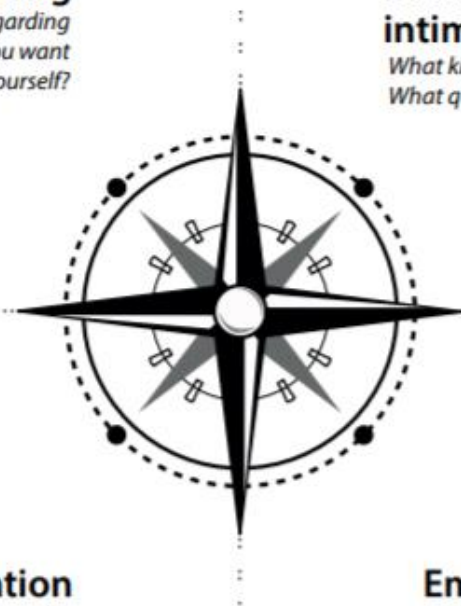
*How would you like to enjoy yourself?  
What relaxes you? When are you most playful?*

## Employment

*What kind of work is valuable to you?  
What qualities do you want to bring as an employee?  
What kind of work relationships would you like to build?*

## Education / training / personal growth


*How would you like to grow?  
What kind of skills would you like to develop?  
What would you like to know more about?*



## Values

For each of these domains write a quick summary of your values, for example "to live a healthy life and take care of my body" (physical wellbeing), or "to be a good friend to people who need me, and to enjoy my time with the people I love" (friendships). Rate each domain for how important it is to you from 0-10 (0=not important).

★ Are your actions reflecting your values? Rate how effectively you're living by these values right now (within the past month) on a 0 (not at all) to 10 (living by them fully) scale

<b>Physical wellbeing</b>	<b>Family relations</b> <i>To be caring, understanding, and Connected</i> E=3      I=9	<b>Marriage / couple / intimate relations</b>
<b>Citizenship / community</b>		<b>Parenting</b>
<b>Spirituality</b>		<b>Friendships / social relationships</b>
<b>Recreation</b>	<b>Education / training / personal growth</b>	<b>Employment</b>

# PLANNING VALUE-CONSISTENT BEHAVIORS TO LIVE LIFE FULLY

- Values = the bigger picture, the compass that guides your direction
- Goals = the details, ways to meet your values
- Take one of your values that is either rated highly on importance or has a big discrepancy and creating some specific goals for value-based actions
- Write down a series of graduated goals that are guided by your values
  1. Immediate goal (something small, simple, and easy that you can do in the next 24 hours)
  2. Short term goal (can be done over the next few days or weeks)
  3. Medium term goal (can be done over the next few months)
  4. Long term goal (can be done over the next year or more)



IN SUMMARY: TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR VALUES AND ASK  
YOURSELF IF YOU'RE LIVING LIFE TO THE FULLEST.  
IF NOT, FIND YOUR COMPASS AND RE-DIRECT!

QUESTIONS?

