

## Valued Living for Cancer Survivors Intervention Manual

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### Citation & Use Notice:

This intervention manual was developed as part of the Valued Living for Cancer Survivors research study. It is made publicly available for educational and research purposes. If you use or adapt this manual in your own work, please cite the relevant protocol or methods papers listed below.

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**Valued Living for Cancer Survivors:  
An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy  
(ACT) Group Intervention**

**Leaders Guide**

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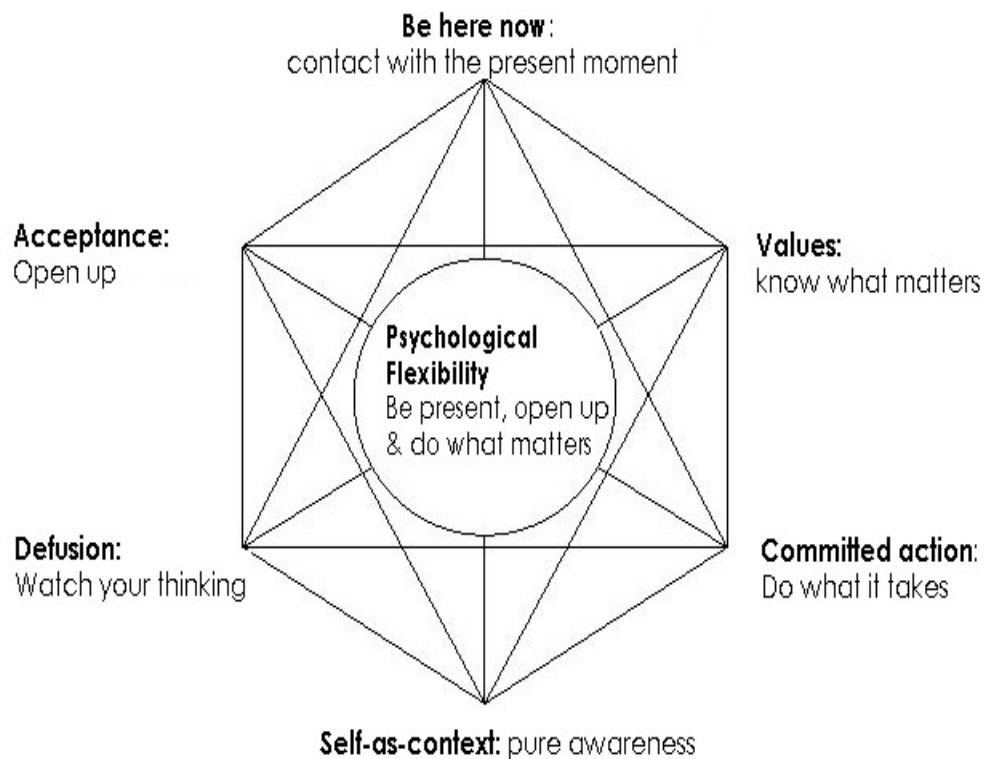
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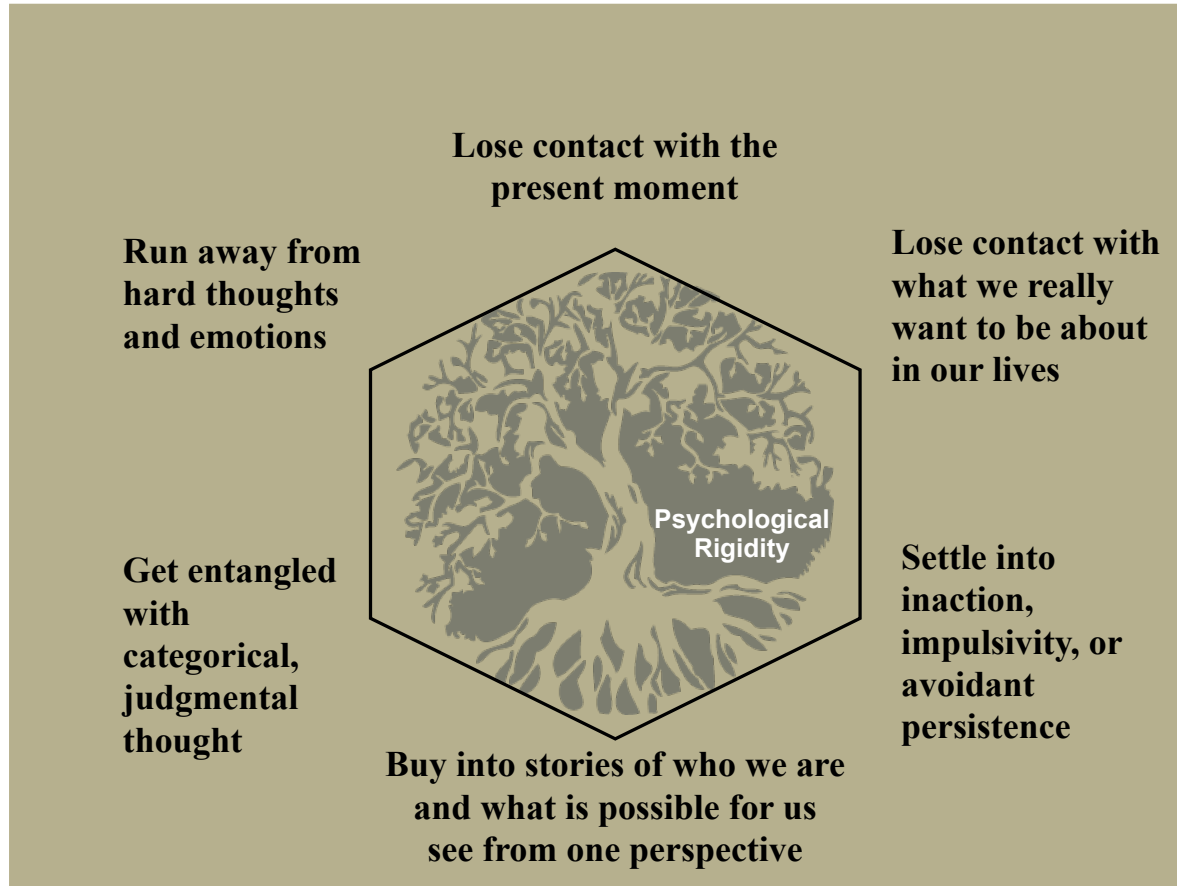
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# Introduction for Group Leaders

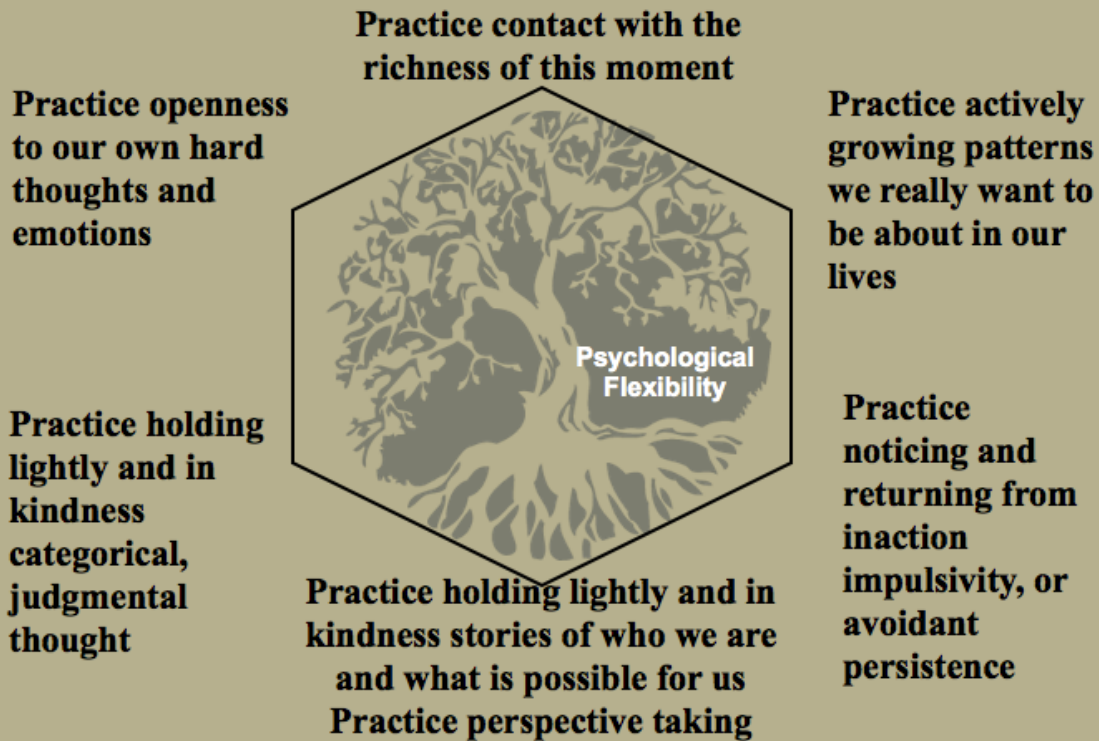
**ACT (pronounced as the verb “act” NOT as the individual letters  
A.C.T.) =  
Acceptance and Commitment Therapy**

**The ACT Hexaflex or Psychological Flexibility Model:**





# A formula for day-by-day liberation.



## Embodying the ACT model

As the therapist and group facilitator, we encourage you to embody the psychological flexibility model in the way you lead and manage the group.

*What is our stance?* The perspective we want to take is behavioral. That is, the most important aim of ACT is to help people *do* more of what they care about. Or otherwise stated, ACT aims to **help people align their behavior with their personal values**. This is why we call this group a “course in valued living”.

*The major assumption* of the ACT model is that **thoughts do not have to cause behavior**. People often respond to them as if they do, and yet we teach otherwise. We work to build, through mindful attention, some **space between thoughts and overt behavior, between feelings and overt behavior**. Regardless of what shows up inside of us (thoughts, feelings, memories), we hope to empower people to CHOOSE to behave in line with what matters to them. We aim to help people have compassion for the human tendency to judge ourselves and our experience in ways that restrict our behaviors. We also aim to practice living a meaningful life in increasingly bigger ways.

The success of this group depends on the facilitators / therapists modeling the ACT approach. Modeling, particularly from a respected authority figure, represents a powerful form of teaching and opportunity for others’ learning.

What does this mean? What does this look like? We offer a few examples:

### 1. Modeling validation not reassurance.

In ACT, we model complete validation of people’s experience, without offering reassurance. Validation at its core is about affirming and reflecting the client's experience without commenting on it's usefulness or correctness (“You are mourning what you lost. I can see how much this pains you, how it feels unbearable.”). The participant feels seen and heard as she is. You know you have validated successfully when a participant stops racing through her narrative and contacts her feelings. Validation also can involve normalizing (“I hear how enraged you sound. I can imagine feeling enraged if that happened to me.”)

The function of reassurance is completely different. The function of reassurance is to take away or invalidate a person’s experience in an attempt to make them feel better. For example, in response to a participant worrying about cancer recurrence, imagine an innocuous statement such as, “It will be OK now, cancer's gone and you have your life back!” The implicit message is that certain experiences (such as worry or sadness) are bad or harmful and should be changed in order to live a meaningful life – and that the participant’s feelings are somehow not ok and should be fixed. It sends a message to participants that the goal of the group is to feel *better* or *good* in the moment (rather than to live a fuller life).

Instead, work towards radical validation: "I see that this brings up some intense emotions, it seems like it's been quite a scary journey so far. I also see that this really matters to you – living a life that is about something important to you, not one that is about cancer."

**2. Focus on lived experience rather than didactics or simple praise.** In many skills-based groups, the focus is on teaching skills and having participants practice using these skills for the group leaders' (social workers') approval. If a group member reports that s/he tried using a new skill that we taught in group, we often respond with "good job!" or "nicely done" or "excellent!" and leave it at that. In ACT, our orientation is to return patients to their own lived experience and to help them to understand what works and doesn't work based on their own lived experience. If a group member reports using a newly taught skill, it's fine to offer a word of praise or encouragement ("wow!") but it's very important to follow up by helping participants to reflect on their own experience: "How did that work for you?" "What did you notice?" "What happened next?". That is, we encourage you to help patients reflect on their own experience and hone their own discrimination skills regarding what they are doing in a particular situation that allows them to live more flexibly and with greater connection to sources of meaning (and its reverse: what prevents flexibility and blocks meaning for them in that situation).

**3. Embodying the model in the way you respond to others.** That is, *flexibility* and respectively embodying the model according to what circumstances arise.

- a. For example, If a group member starts to cry while sharing her feelings about her cancer recurring, explore in detail what sensations, thoughts, feelings, and action tendencies (escape, withdrawal, lashing out, eating junk food, drinking alcohol) are arising for her in that moment, modeling mindfulness and acceptance towards her experience. If she feels shame upon admitting her anger about having to live with the possibility of cancer recurrence: "Shame often arises when we acknowledge anger. Let's make space for your experience of shame. (pause) Where do you feel it in your body right now?" In summary, if strong emotion is present, it is usually more helpful and respectful to explore diffusion processes *after* a client feels validated and fully accepted in her present moment experience.
- b. You can walk the group through how to approach strong feelings, "When strong feelings arise, we can say to ourselves 'Whoa! There's a strong feeling here. Let me make space for that. What does this feeling feel like in my body? What thoughts are my mind producing? What do I feel like doing right now?' We can imagine embracing the strong feeling – and ourselves – completely, like we would hold a small child, or a favorite

small animal. Usually only after we have made space for and accepted discomfort can we fruitfully explore ways we might defuse or distance from unhelpful content that our minds are producing during that experience (such as “I don’t deserve to whine – I’m just lucky to be alive. I’m an idiot and that’s why I got cancer to begin with, etc.”)

**4. Maintaining the group’s commitment to its own goals and values:** Groups often stray in focus. Often, straying or exploring a new pathway can lead to new insights and opportunities for meaningful, relevant experience. But sometimes, a single group member or a particular topic (“advice on how to tell if a surgeon will be good”) can serve to derail the group’s sense of shared learning and goals. To the extent that you can respectfully hold the group accountable to its values, you will do the group a great service. ACT’s focus on values can provide a nice framework for responding effectively when this happens.

- a. If one member completely dominates to the extent that others shut down, you can say something like: “I’m noticing that we seem to have lost our sense of balance among the many voices in the room. One of our commitments as a group is to explore new ways of thinking and relating to ourselves and others that move us in the direction of growth and meaning. It seems that some of us are more comfortable talking and others feel quieted or are more comfortable listening. With your permission, can we all commit to practicing new ways of being present together? (Secure permission.) If you’re sharing, please practice listening and if you’re listening, please practice sharing.”
- b. If the topic strays, you could offer: “I am noticing that we began exploring the many ways that our minds trip us up and now we are talking about which reconstructive surgeons are best. If this topic feels like it will help us open up and move in new directions in our life, great. If not, I’m wondering whether it might make sense to discuss this after the group and return to where we left off with John’s experience of getting stuck in anxious thinking...”

**5. Judiciously sharing our own experience of living within the model:**

According to the psychological flexibility model, suffering is a universal phenomenon. The process of becoming psychologically ‘stuck’ represents repeated enactments of unhelpful psychological processes that most of us are familiar with. As facilitators, if we become stuck in judgments about our abilities, saying something we did not intend, struggling with leading an exercise, etc., it is okay to judiciously share one’s experience.



- c. For example: “There goes my mind again, saying something it didn’t mean to say. I take full responsibility for that habit of my mind, which I don’t enjoy but have learned that that’s what it does sometimes. I apologize as I did not intend to hurt you when I said that. What was your experience of what I said? How did *your* mind respond? (explore, make space for group member’s experience)....What I intended to say was.....”.
- d. Another example: “Thank you for your compliment about how I led the exercise. It’s funny, but every time I do that exercise my mind says: “You are so bad at this! How do you expect that anyone will get anything out of your poor facilitating?” So I respond “Hello thought, old friend” and then move ahead and lead the exercise....Does anyone else have recurring thoughts about your own inabilities that show up for you?....That might be showing up right now?”

**6. When in doubt, return to the present:** If the group seems to be having a theoretical conversation about distant experiences, your job is to model bringing everyone’s experience back to the here and now. You might say something like, “This topic feels important but the way we’re talking about it seems distant from our actual experience. Is anyone experiencing \_\_\_\_\_ (the topic – e.g., shame, unworthiness, anger, gratitude, etc.) right now, during this conversation? What’s coming up for you?”

## **Topics by Week**

**Week 1** – Reorienting: Meaning and Purpose Beyond Cancer

**Week 2** – Where Do I Stand?

**Week 3** – Getting Unstuck from Thoughts

**Week 4** – Shifting Our Relationship to Fear and Worry

**Week 5** – Coping with Uncertainty and Fear of Recurrence

**Week 6** – Valued Living in the Moment

**Week 7** – Living Your Legacy

**Leader Notes:**

1. Please distribute participant workbooks in Session 1, and ask participants to bring them to group EACH week.
2. Yet also bring several extra worksheets to class from that week's topic for participants who forget to bring their workbooks.

# Time Management

- These groups are designed to run 2 hours each week, including study-related questionnaires at the beginning and feedback forms at the end
- To help the leaders manage time, which is almost always a challenging issue in groups, we have put in approximate times for each section of each weekly module.
- [Insert more here]

## **Week 1**

### **Reorienting: Meaning and Purpose Beyond Cancer**

Session intention: Facilitate group cohesion and intimacy. Introduce the entire ACT model simply and briefly with the aim of establishing a safe, intimate space for sharing, and helping patients to shift from being internally stuck and suffering to moving in valued living directions. Emphasizes the core ACT principles of creative hopelessness and workability.

Avoid traps of: Having participants feel burdened by their personal values or rigid in adhering to them (“I must enact my values 24/7”), imposing our own values or conventional values on participants (“I value personal growth and thus our participants must too”) or having them impose others’ values on themselves (“Everyone values family and therefore so must I”), or making participants feel bad because they don’t know what they value (or because they aren’t suffering as much as other participants).

Bring: Participant workbooks, blank paper for writing/ reflecting, pens, dry erase markers or giant stickie pad and markers to create the Compass.  
Briefly something of great value to us that we wish we were doing more of  
Type(s) of cancer we’ve dealt with

Arrange the Room: In a circle of chairs, preferably without a table in the middle if it’s possible to move it. This is the preferred chair arrangement for the start of each group session.

### **Leaders’ Welcome and Introduction to the Group / Study (15 minutes)**

1. Have leaders introduce ourselves, why we’re here, what it means to be here. Discuss our professional training and what we’d like to be called. Here is a place for the leaders to show some vulnerability, presence, and really slow down and show up to the meaning of being useful in here
2. We will be taking a particular approach in this group...Our approach is based on a well-studied intervention model known as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT; said as the one word “act” as in “to act”) - we call it valued living. It’s about drawing on our own wisdom and learning new skills, and with both, practicing new ways of responding to difficult experiences that give us more choice and freedom, and more space to pursue what’s important

to us. Does that sound of interest to anyone here? (acknowledge responses)  
We will explore this more today and in the coming weeks.

3. Our goal together is to learn a set of perspectives and skills that we will practice together and practice flexibly applying to our lives so that we can maximize our sense of freedom and choice, particularly in the face of difficult moments.
4. This is a structured group. We have somewhat limited flexibility in terms of what we do each week because it's a research group. However, the structure of this group has been refined over the past several years in response to dozens of cancer survivors at RMCC who have participated in it.
5. That means we invite all of us – us social workers included – to cultivate a sense of openness towards trying out new skills, and allowing ourselves to be 'coached' in developing and applying these skills to our lives. We're excited to do this work with you and will never ask you to do anything that we won't also do ourselves.
6. This means we will work to respect ourselves and each other in here by:
  - a. **Maintaining the group's confidentiality** (not sharing other group member's identity and not sharing the content of what other group members share or experience outside of the group) but being able to speak outside of the group about your own experience in the group if that is something you value. We do that because we want it to be safe for new behaviors to happen, and the process we use to get there can be bumpy at times! ACT is an unconventional intervention in part because it is experiential. We will sometimes get out of our seat and try things around the room, be silly, serious, and everything in between.
  - b. **Open yourself to practicing new ways of thinking and relating to yourself (both in class and in between classes).**
    - i. This expectation is about flexibility and being open to trying to NOTICE judging thoughts & making room for them.
    - ii. Our minds love to judge our experience and to make quick judgments about whether something will work or not, 'am I doing this right or not?' Does anyone here have a mind like that? (I do!) That's totally fine & normal – most minds behave that way.
    - iii. We ask that in this group, you NOTICE judging thoughts and make room for them.
    - iv. Some of strategies that we will be exploring in the coming weeks may feel a little counterintuitive to you. For example we may encourage you to talk about, and really explore fears or thoughts that you may prefer to avoid & that can feel uncomfortable to say the least. We're going to ask you to play with different ways of using and responding to your mind or to thoughts and feelings &

this may feel awkward. & You may therefore find that your mind starts judging this approach or judging how well you're doing things.

- v. So we're going to ask you, when those judging thoughts show up. Just notice them, and suspend 'buying into' the judgment. Invite yourself to continue exploring these new ways of thinking and acting, despite the judgment.

**c. Be respectful of yourselves and others' boundaries**

- i. Sharing with the group what helps you to grow or move forward, while also respecting your own boundaries for self-care with regard to sharing
  - ii. Trying to avoid unsolicited advice, allowing others to find their way or asking questions that help them find their way
  - iii. Taking responsibility to ask for what you need
- I guarantee that your mind will produce some thoughts about this approach, some of which might be negative especially at first. Our minds love to judge our experience and to make quick judgments about whether something will work or not. Does anyone here have a mind like that? (I do!) That's totally fine and normal – most minds behave that way. We ask that in this group, you notice judging thoughts and make room for them. And yet try not to take them too seriously, and instead allow yourself to try new things, even if they seem strange or weird or counterintuitive at first. By noticing and suspending 'buying into' judgment, we'll all get the most out of this group and learn to expand our ways of being with ourselves and with one another in exciting ways. Does that make sense? Can everyone agree that getting the most out of this group is an important value?
- If you notice specifically that your mind is judging this approach, judging yourself or others, or that your mind has concerns about what will or will not be possible here, we welcome you and your mind's concerns back next week.
- **If there is time ask** "Take a moment to think about what would get in the way of you coming back – feeling tired, thoughts that it isn't worth it, being uncertain if it can help, feeling like you have no time, being in pain, forgetting about the group... . We, the facilitators, have a commitment to make space for those thoughts and feelings.... Would you be willing to make a commitment to trying this group out – giving it a shot – to see if something really meaningful to you is possible? Even with thoughts that this is silly, stupid, scary, or uncertain?"

- Discuss video camera use and group purpose. Say something like “As you know, this group is part of a research project that studies how helpful this group is for cancer survivors. Part of contributing to the study is making sure that we, the group facilitators, do as good a job as we can. To help achieve this aim, we videotape the sessions for supervision purposes. The videos are completely confidential and will be accessed exclusively by the research team. Does anyone have any questions at this point?”

Note: Group members should already know about the videotaping from the consent form.

- Finally, we request that you make a strong effort to arrive ON TIME or even 5-10 minutes early (if you can) because we will have brief questionnaires to complete at the very beginning of each group for research purposes, and we need to begin the group ON TIME to get the most out of it!

### Introducing Group Members (25-30 minutes)

1. Ask group members to think about (or jot down?) one thing that they would like to get out of the group that would be meaningful. Perhaps say "You may have a lot of hopes or expectations – we ask you to choose one or two you would like to share. Or it may be hard to think about what would make coming here worthwhile. In that case, maybe there is one even small thing that would make the trek here worth it to you."
2. Group introductions: “So now we’re going to give each person a minute to briefly introduce yourself by name, and (A) share a little bit about what brings you here (and feel free to share the type of cancer you’ve dealt with, if you want). That is, what brings you here or what would make coming here worthwhile for you. (B) And then, please share: what is one or two things that you hope to get out of the group?”
3. We [the group leaders] will start...”. Group leaders model a **brief and to-the-point but meaningful** introduction of themselves.

**Leader Note:** Have one of the leaders write the two introduction questions (A and B) on the board or write them ahead of time and cover with a projector screen or giant sticky note once the introductions begin...

4. Then invite group members to introduce themselves by name and share, if they feel comfortable, this one thing. No need to shape these, validate whatever it is and thank each person for sharing.



5. Have one group leader take brief notes on what each participant says, to refer back to later.
6. At the end, it may be helpful to transition with something like “Wow, there are so many powerful experiences and important yearnings that were shared just now. Next we’re going to introduce the model on which

## What do we care about?

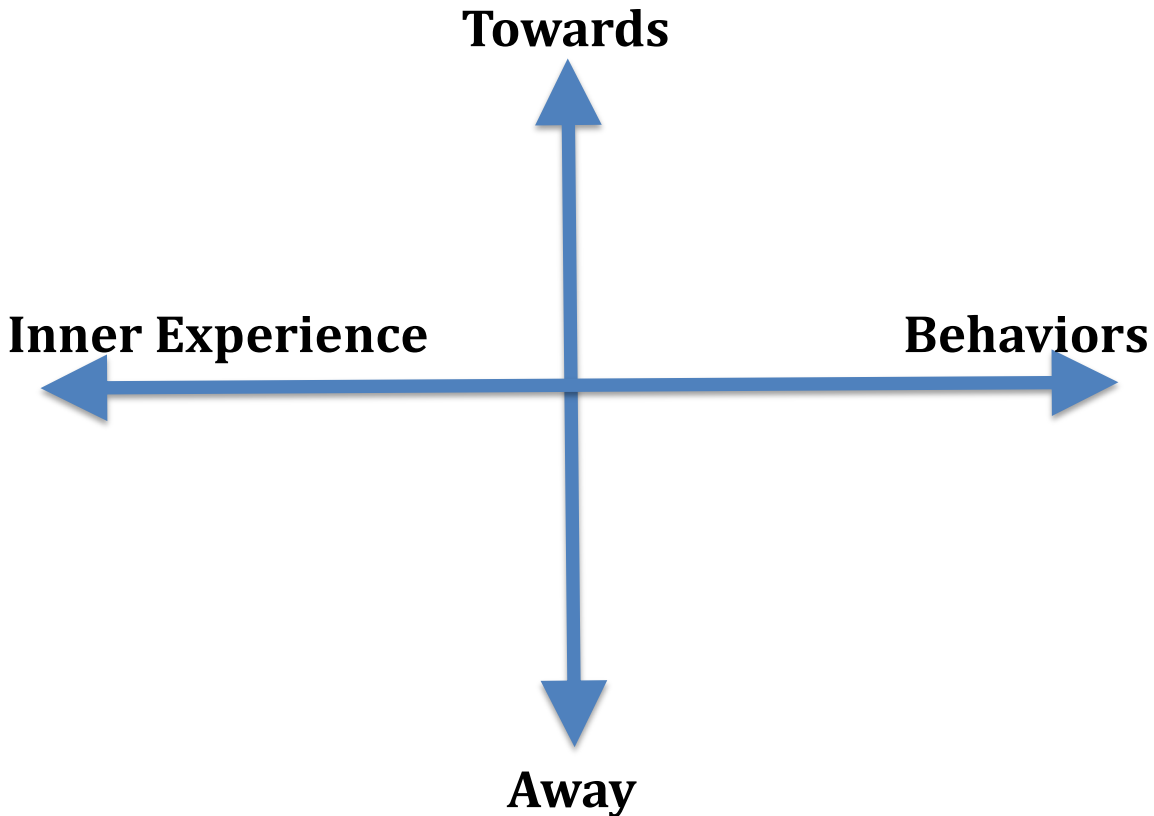
### Introducing the Compass (40 minutes)

#### **Introduce the Compass:**

1. So now we’re going to explore these ideas right now – what matters to you and what gets in the way of doing what matters to you. To do so, we’re going to introduce a tool called the Compass that outlines the direction we’ll take in this group, and the broader model that we’re working within.
2. Using the white board or a giant stickie sheet and marker, launch into teaching the Compass following what was laid out earlier (following instructions immediately to follow).
3. Note: It often helps to have 1 group facilitator lead the Compass discussion and the other group facilitator writing all of the responses on the board.
4. Spend some time explaining the compass and coming up with a **group compass** that contains contributions from everyone in the group. By doing a compass together, participants can get to know each other, and possibly see how similar their difficulties and/or goals can be.
5. Leave plenty of space for questions.

#### **Dr. Kevin Polk’s Compass (officially called the Matrix, but we renamed it the Compass)**

1. 1. Start by asking the group to distinguish between **what we do that others can see on the outside** (behaviors) and **what’s going on inside of us** (thoughts, feelings, sensations) that others usually can’t see. Then draw the horizontal line/ axis.
2. Then distinguish between moving **towards** things that make us feel most alive and fulfilled, versus struggling against difficult stuff and suffering (moving **away** from vitality/ values). Then draw the towards/ away vertical line/ axis to illustrate this:



Then facilitate having the group fill out the compass one quadrant at a time in response to the following question prompts.

1. Start with **Internal Obstacles** (lower left, because Inner Experience that is Away from what we care about represents internal obstacles), because it's often easiest for people to list them.

For **Internal Obstacles** or "Challenging Thoughts and Feelings" (lower left), ask: What are the internal obstacles to moving towards values? What shows up that gets in the way of moving forward in our lives? I'll start with a few of mine to illustrate:

- a. List 1-2 such as: I'll start with...list 1-2 such as: fear, anger, being self-critical, self-doubting, etc.
- b. Ask participants to share, if they are willing, and record their responses in each quadrant. This allows you as a facilitator to shape what participants are doing with the compass, helping them to work through stuck points. It also makes this exercise interactive.
- c. Validate and acknowledge participant responses ("Thanks for sharing...Sadness and anger show up, is that right?") and fill in this quadrant with their responses, in bullet points

**Note for facilitators:** Participants may state values such as “I want to be a good Mom/Dad” or “I want to be a good friend (worker, community member, etc.). This may seem vague or nonspecific. At this point we just want to reinforce people putting ideas of what matters to them on paper.

- Ultimately, we will want to explore participants' values in a deeper way, so you may choose to deepen this process, if there is time, with *one or two examples* just to illustrate the process.
  - IF THERE IS TIME: Help the participant to explore further, with questions such as: “So what are the qualities of a good Mom/Dad/friend? If you want to earn that title, how would you behave towards the people involved?”
2. Then brainstorm **Away Moves** / Behaviors (lower right, because Away Moves or Behaviors are things we do that move us away from what we care about or away from who we want to be in the world).

For **Away Behaviors** (lower right), ask: When you are caught up in your internal obstacles, struggling against or trying to ignore, hang on to, or get rid of internal discomfort (emotions, physical pain, etc.), what are you *doing*? (things that other people could actually see or observe you doing with your hands, feet, face, or speech, from the outside) I'll start with a few of mine:

- a. List 1-2 personal examples such as: read stuff on the internet, isolate from others, drink alcohol, eat junk food, blame others
- b. Validate, acknowledge and clarify participant responses (“Thanks for sharing...So do you isolate from friends, from family, or from both?”) and fill in this quadrant with their responses, in bullet points

3. Then brainstorm **Values** (upper left, because Inner Experience that is Towards what we care about can reflect our Values),

For **Values** (upper left), ask: What's important to you? What feels most central in your life? What do you want to stand for, embody, or be about, in the world? I'll start with a few of mine

- a. For Examples, list 1-2 such as: being a loving and accepting parent, being helpful to others, doing creative and meaningful work, etc.
- b. Have participants generate anything that is meaningful to them

that *they* can be about (“I want to be loving” as opposed to something they want *done to them*, e.g., “I want my husband to love me more”) to fill in the upper left.

- c. Acknowledge participant responses (“So family sounds really important to you”) and fill in this quadrant with their responses, in bullet point
  - d. Really worked to use language of “what makes you feel most vital and alive, what fills your life with vitality, fulfillment, and meaning” as opposed to always sticking with “values” language
4. Then brainstorm Moving Towards Values or **Valued Behaviors** (upper right, because “Towards Behaviors” are Valued Behaviors)

For **Valued Behaviors** (upper right), ask: When you are engaged with your values, what are you *doing*? (things that other people could actually see or observe you doing with your hands, feet, face, or speech, from the outside). I’ll start with an example from my own life:

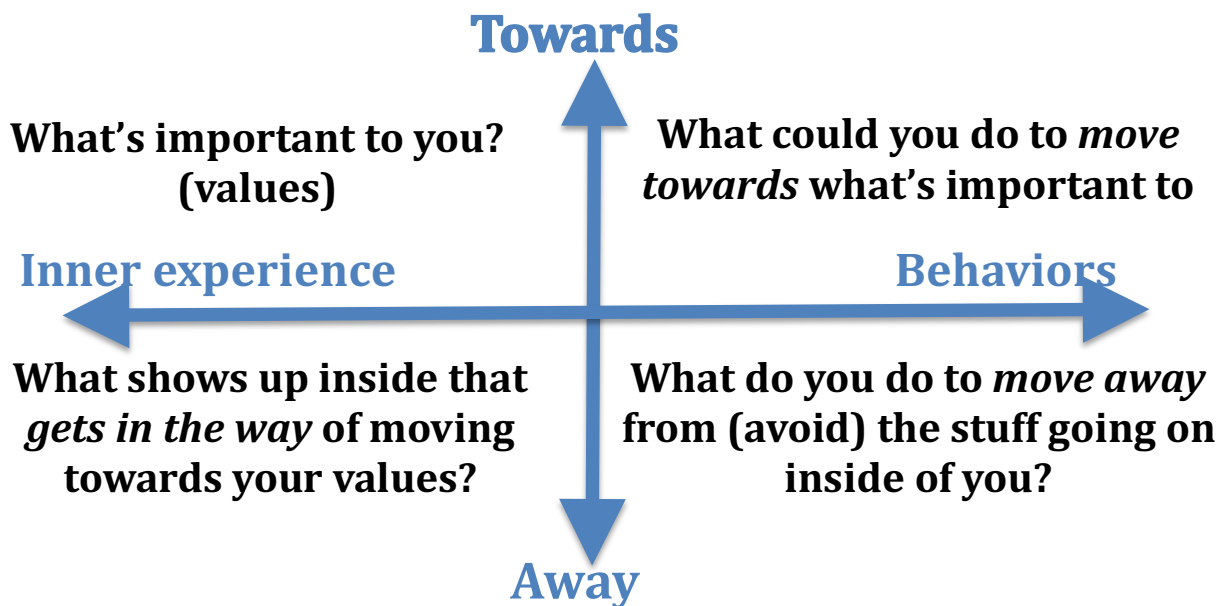
- a. List 1-2 personal examples such as: “getting together with friends”, “gardening”, “catch and appropriately express emotions early”
- b. Validate and acknowledge participant responses (“So you’re saying that when you want to show that you’re loving, you give real compliments to members of your family?”) and fill in this quadrant with their responses, in bullet points
- c. Try to help participants link their values to valued behaviors. You can even draw a line linking values on the upper left to behaviors that participants say reflect those values, on the upper right – which really drives this point home visually.
- d. The flip side of struggle is values: If participants have difficulty thinking of things, you can discuss how “the flip side of pain is values (and the flip side of values is pain)” which means that if you look at where you’re struggling, it points towards what you value, because the flip side of what we struggle with is usually something we value. For example, if you’re struggling with worry and anxiety, for example, perhaps you value being fully present and enjoying life right here and now (instead of worrying about the future), and cultivating a sense of inner peace...or perhaps you value your family, and thus you worry about something bad happening to those you love

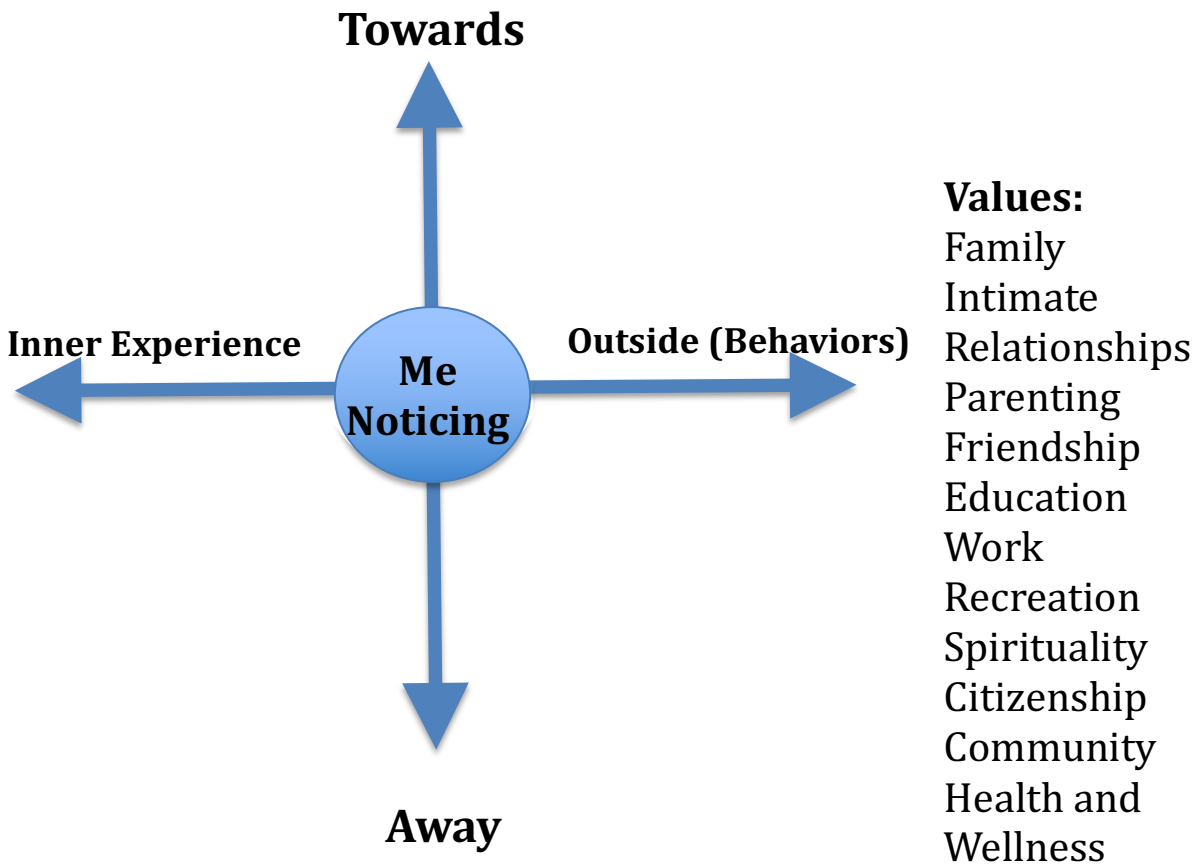
**Note:** Some group leaders find it easier to start with Values and Valued Behaviors then Internal Barriers, then Struggle Actions. We encourage you to

practice ahead of the group and see what works best for you...and allow for some flexibility group to group.

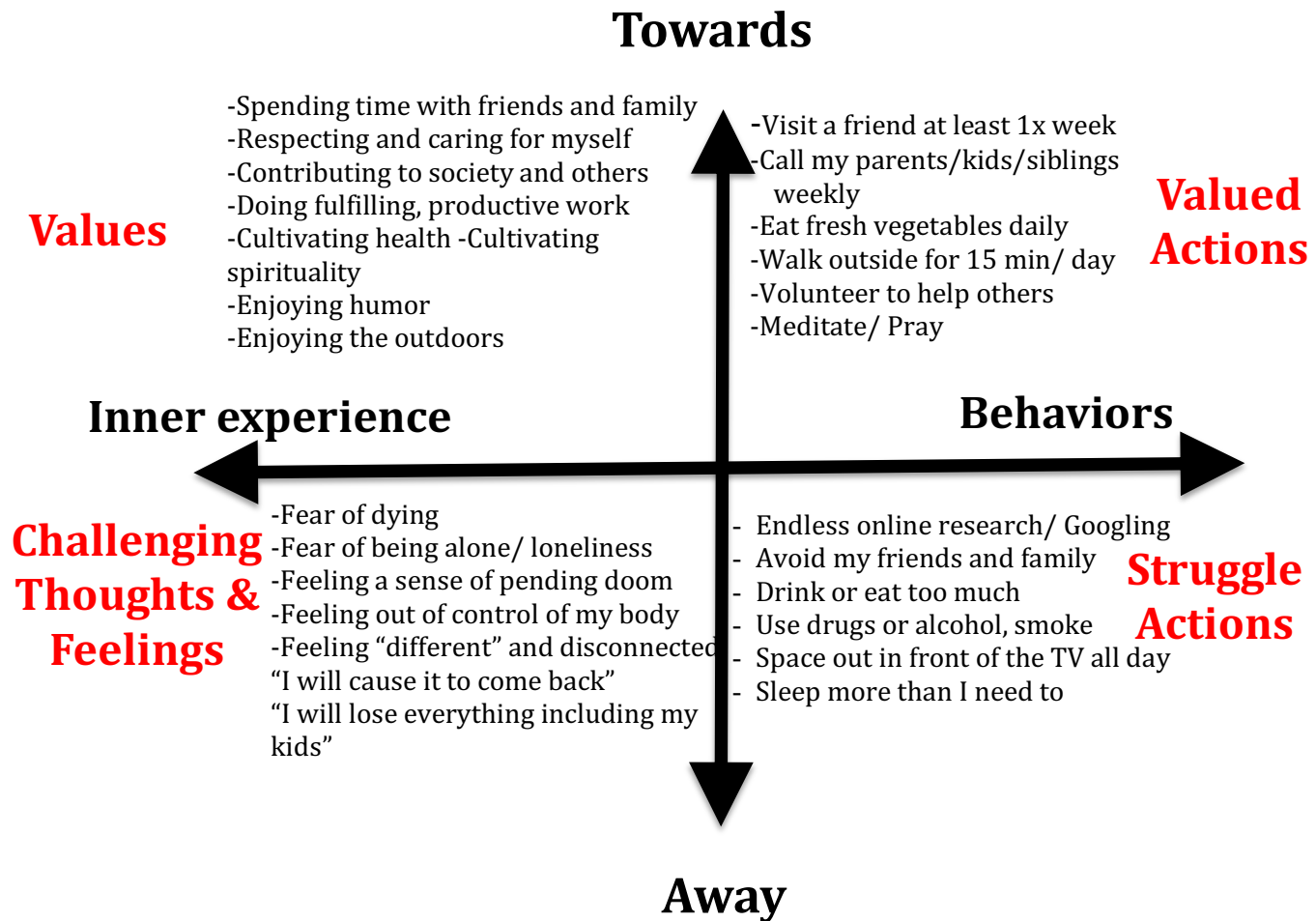
5. Help participants to notice: “What does it feel like to **move towards something versus away from something?**” Look for examples that people put up on both sides of the compass, like EATING. We can eat because we’re hungry or want to be healthy (towards) OR we can eat because we’re stressed (away). Or we might eat because of both – like eating in one moment might represent mostly a towards move towards health but also an away move because we’re running away from an uncomfortable feeling...So behaviors can be motivated by both towards and away moves...Does that make sense?

6. Practice in group today is to notice when we’re moving towards and when we’re moving away from values and what each of these feels and looks like. Or we can simply notice that we didn’t do the practice. So you are guaranteed to successfully complete this in-group practice! Is everyone on board with that?





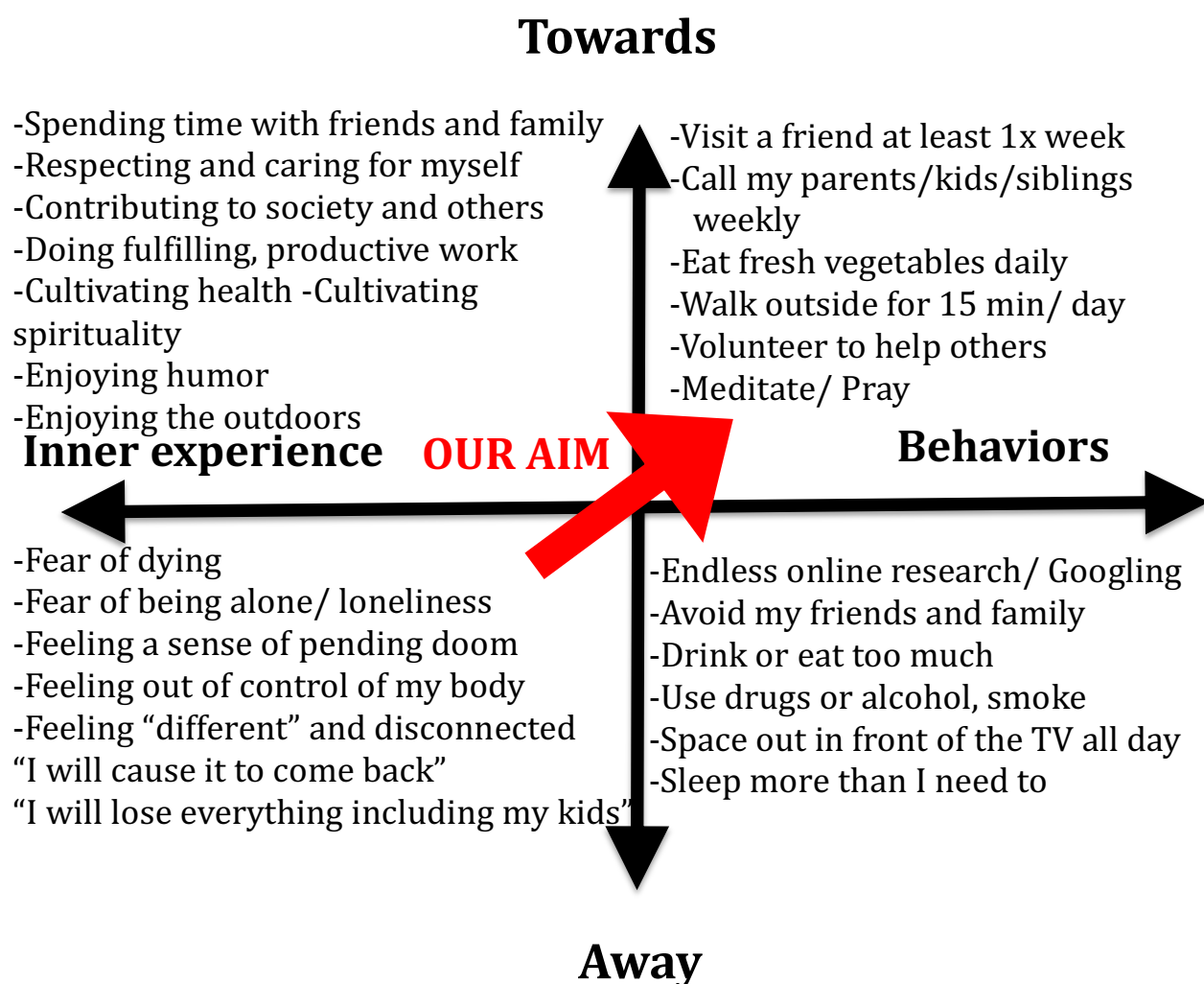
- Then fill up the compass together in class, having group members' contribute their own experiences.
- Here is an example of what the filled compass might look like after the discussion:



## Then discuss what we aim for in our work together.

- Our goal together is to learn a set of perspectives and skills that we will practice together and practice flexibly applying to our lives so that we can maximize our sense of freedom and choice, particularly in the face of difficult moments.
- Our goal isn't to NOT feel tough stuff – after all, you guys are a smart group, and most of the things you've thought of yourselves doesn't work very well – an alternative approach is to learn how to have more choices and flexibility even when you feel bad...

**“In our work together we aim you to move from here (start of arrow, internal away experiences) to here (end of arrow, external towards experiences)...Is everyone on board with that goal?”**





6. **Is anyone having difficulty imagining what they might care about? Or feel like you don't know?** Or don't care about anything right now? If so, you can use this as an opportunity to 'Shop in the values store' –Values can change and be built, taken down, and rebuilt over time. They shift as we shift priorities in our lives. Don't worry about committing rigidly to your values – they are flexible, breathing things that can be tried on and put back on the rack if they don't work for us. What I'm concerned about is: what values feel most important to you RIGHT NOW, like today or in the past month or two? Or what values do you want to "try on" if you feel you don't value anything?

### **Your Personal Compass (15 minutes)**

1. After completing the group compass, say something like, "Now that we've created a group compass, let's start on our own **personal compass**. We're going to **pass out participant workbooks and pens**. Please turn to page X in the workbook and you'll see a compass for you to fill out about your own towards and away moves."
2. "Please go ahead and get started filling in your own compass. We will circulate in the room to help you."
3. "Before we begin – **is anyone stuck** or having trouble coming up with what you value? [if this is true for multiple people] – Are you willing to do a brief **eyes-closed exercise** that might help with this?"
4. If yes, do the valuing ourselves exercise, below.
5. Then, walk around the room and troubleshoot / assist participants in completing their matrices.
6. Reassure: "Don't worry if you didn't have time to finish your compass right now – it's one of the main things we'll do at home between sessions this week."

### **Optional: Valuing Ourselves Exercise**

If you are willing, there is another exercise we can do to help us get to know ourselves and what we value – who we want to be. Please know that sometimes exercises bring up wonderful feelings and sometimes they bring up difficult feelings. Please pay attention to what comes up, and we will practice making space for whatever shows up in here.

*Valuing Ourselves and Others Exercise (5 mins)*: Please gently close your eyes. Now imagine someone you love with all of your heart, for whom your mere presence delights or fulfills them. (If you're having trouble, you can also imagine a favorite

pet.) Imagine you could see yourself from that person's perspective: what do they see? Can you see and appreciate that in yourself?

If you can't think of anyone like that, or are having trouble with this, try this: Imagine someone who you really respect, admire, or love. It could be someone you know or a public figure. What do you admire and appreciate about that person? Is there anything there you value for yourself? That you want to emulate?

-- Gently open your eyes and jot down what came up. [Give a few minutes to write]

Would anyone be willing to share what they wrote about with the group?

- When you have a lion chasing you (like cancer), it's hard to slow down. We have a little space right here to slow down and listen to one another.
- Therapists model stopping, slowing down, noticing: "did you hear the quality of her voice when she said that? Did you see the smile on her face? Everyone listen."

### **Optional: Small Gift Exercise**

Sometimes we need some practice getting in touch with what we care about. Are you willing to explore values a bit further with a brief exercise? (secure permission). Okay, let's begin by closing your eyes. Know that sometimes there exercises bring up wonderful feelings and sometimes they bring up difficult feelings. Please pay attention to what comes up and whatever comes up is okay, is completely acceptable.

**Small Gift Exercise (5-10 mins):** Please gently close your eyes. Now, imagine that in the next month, you could give yourself a gift of one of the things you care about... something that would bring a smile to your face... bring some light to your day...warm your soul in some small way... make you feel cared for... Imagine it were possible for you to give yourself a gift that is within reach. It can be anything that feels fulfilling to you in any way, no matter how small. It could be an activity that reflects something you care about, a brief email or phone call to someone you love or enjoy, a slow walk on a trail, going to a single yoga class, buying a small houseplant, buying and reading a favorite magazine or book – it could be anything but it should be small and doable. A small gift that is within reach. What might that gift be? What would it look like?

- Now gently, gently open your eyes, and on the paper in front of you, please take a few moments to jot down what it is that you would give yourself as a gift.

- What would it look like to give yourself that small gift? Is anyone here willing to commit to giving themselves that gift? Whether you do or don't give it to yourself, we will honor your intention to commit and your practice, no matter how small. When would you want to do that? Can you make it smaller? Easier? More easily doable??
  - Is this small gift something you can aim for on the upper right of the compass?
7. Now work on the upper right portion of the Compass. Common pitfalls for this section include listing very vague goals (e.g., "Be a better person") or goals that are large, multi-stepped, and potentially overwhelming (e.g., "I want to go back to school"). If you see these things happening, it may be helpful to practice breaking behavior down into smaller, noticeable pieces and into different timelines.
    - a. Think of a goal for the next year that you could DO (must be a behavior you can SEE like walking, talking, eating, exercising, sleeping, studying, etc.) that reflects one of your values.
    - b. Now have participants think of a goal for the next 6 months, 1 month, 1 week, today, next few hours that fulfills this value.
    - c. Notice as time gets shorter, goal setting gets harder for most of us!
    - d. Ask the group to share their goals and fill in the top right of the compass
  8. Help participants to notice "hooks" that take them away from what they value, and get them caught up in struggling and the left side of the compass.
    - a. Give examples of hearing a news story about cancer, and getting "hooked" into worrying all day and not sleeping all night. Or having a driver cut you off and complaining about it all day, getting really worked up about it
    - b. Challenge for all of us in life: **Can we choose to let what we care about in life mean more than our anxieties and hooks?**

<h2 style="margin: 0;">Summary of Today's Session and Choice about the Group</h2> <h3 style="margin: 0;">(5 minutes)</h3>
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- So this is what we're here for...to facilitate these things that are most important to us...in the midst of coping with the anxiety and worry and distress that often accompanies cancer, ironically, often especially at the end of primary treatment when we begin worrying about our cancer returning or a new cancer coming back or how we're going to manage the side effects or enduring physical pain associated with our treatment, and so on
- In worrying, we can lose track of what really makes our heart sing and how to do more of that even in the midst of surviving cancer

- In future weeks we'll also learn skills for what to do when our worry, anxiety, or distress feels out of control, or when we feel disconnected and out of touch with others and the world around us

### **Choice about the group:**

Share the following (obviously, you can use your own words!):

- Now you have a sense of the path for the work we will do together. This work has been helpful for many people and for ourselves. However, we don't claim this to be the only path.
- You may be sitting there thinking "I love this! This is the best thing since sliced bread!!!" In that case, great! We look forward to spend the next six weeks with you
- If you're sitting there thinking 'this is really not the path for me, and this really doesn't speak to me', or 'I am not ready for this', then that's completely okay too. And we encourage you to honor what feels true to you and the path which you wish to follow, even if that means not continuing this group.
- Many of you may feel something in-between & you may be sitting there thinking 'this is weird or uncomfortable (to think about moving forward along with my fears, for example), but I have a feeling there might be something of value here for me', then we invite you to hold that discomfort so that you can do this work. & We want you to know that it is perfectly normal to feel a little a little uneasy, questioning, judging, or hesitant about exploring new ways of thinking about the world. & We welcome you and your feelings of exploration as we play with these concepts for the next six weeks!
- In sum, please, if you have any questions or concerns about continuing feel free to discuss with us after the class today.

<h2><b>Home Practice (5 minutes)</b></h2>
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We are only together for a short time each week and home practice is a way to ensure that what we learn here generalizes to the rest of your life.

For this reason, home practice is extremely important to commit to – even if something gets in the way and you won't complete it, please recommit to doing it the next week.

It's also VERY IMPORTANT to BRING YOUR WORKBOOK to group each week. If you forget, please absolutely come anyway! We'll have extras each week. It's just more meaningful to work from your own workbook.

**This week:**

1. Complete personal compass
2. Practice NOTICING what makes us feel truly alive and connected to others or to the world in some way.

Practice asking yourself and noticing each day:

- What things that I do (on the inside or outside) move me towards or further away from feeling fully alive?
  - Towards or away from what I value and find meaning from?
  - We call these **'towards' and 'away' moves**.
  - 'Towards moves' are things we do that move us towards vitality and values and 'away moves' are things we do that move us away from vitality and what we value. Of course, we often do things that have bits of both 'towards' and 'away moves' in them – that's important to notice too.
  - What questions do you have about that distinction between towards and away moves?
3. To help you practice this new way of thinking, please complete the "Towards or away" worksheet in your workbook as a tool for this. Please note a few "towards" behaviors as well as "away" behaviors.
  4. Please bring A LOT of self-compassion to this exercise because sometimes we want to beat ourselves up when we notice our away moves...just gently notice if this happens and remind yourself that you're doing the best you can in any given moment...We'll talk about this more next session!

<b>Bridging Sheets (Final 5 to 7 minutes)</b>
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We really value your feedback and want to create opportunities for you to reflect. That's why we'll have you complete what we call 'bridging sheets' at the end of each session, to reflect on your experience in here in ways that help you to reflect and that help us to know what's working or not working for you in this group.

Please take a moment to complete these and turn them in before you leave today.

Thanks in advance! We look forward to seeing you next week

## Week 1: Brief Session Outline

**Valued Living Week 1 basic outline with approximate timing, using examples of how you might divide the responsibilities between two group leaders**

0:00-0:20

- Introductions (Jill & Joanna)
- Introduce group agreements (Jill)
- Discuss camera for video (Joanna)
- Discuss group purpose (Joanna)

0:20-0:50

Group Introductions (Jill; ~3 min/ person; put these questions prompts on board)

- Name
- A little bit about what brings you here (feel free to include info about cancer if you want)
- Given what we've discussed, what do you hope to get out of the group?
- (Jill & Joanna Model)

0:50-1:30

The "Compass": Do together on board

- Joanna introduces & leads discussion, including towards and away
- Jill at the board
- Take a video image of the Compass after everyone leaves the group

SHORT BREAK (3-5 minutes)

1:35-1:50

Work on individual compass (Joanna)

- Closed eyes lead in (if needed) – what do you value in others?
- 10 minutes to begin working on individual compass
- Jill & Joanna circulate and troubleshoot questions

1:50-1:55

Introduce Home Practice (Jill)

Homework (Joanna)

1:55-2:00 Participants complete & turn-in Bridging Sheet (Joanna)

## **Week 2**

### **Where Do You Stand?**

Session intention: increase group intimacy, increase people's capacity to skillfully observe their own minds and behavior, with compassion

Avoid traps of: XXXX

Bring to class: Bring to group: extra participant workbook handouts, session-by-session measures and envelope, Reflections sheets, nametags and markers, sign-in sheet, Large stickie of week 1 group Compass to hang up as a reminder (if you have one)

As participants arrive: Have them complete session-by-session measure and place in designated envelope

### **Welcome and Mindfulness of 3's (5-7 mins)**

Welcome people back

Briefly review group agreements regarding:

- 1) Confidentiality
- 2) Openness to trying new ways of thinking and being, including allowing space for a judging mind
- 3) Respecting your own and others' boundaries, including taking responsibility for your own experience and asking for help when it's needed

Introduce Mindfulness of 3's:

SAY the following (or your own version of the following):

"One of the things the Compass helps us to do is to increase our awareness to observe our own minds and behavior. To support this process, now we're going to learn a very simple practice of noticing things in 3...that is, 3s of anything: 3 breaths, 3 people or objects in the room, 3 seconds of what it feels like physically to sit in this chair, and so on

This practice increases our present moment awareness of where we are RIGHT NOW so we know where we are on the compass and can make a choice about to how we'd like to navigate

So if you're willing, I invite you to notice 3 breaths at whatever speed you're breathing right now. Go ahead and close your eyes for a moment. Just notice the sensations of breath moving through the body...[pause 5 seconds]...There's no need

to change the breath or slow it down...just notice sensations in the body...[pause 5-10 seconds]...notice where you are right now...[pause 5-10 seconds]...if you're past 3 breaths, just keep on going"

After 30 seconds or so (not sooner), SAY: "Now whenever you're ready, please gently open your eyes."

Note: Wait until everyone's eyes are open before moving on to the next exercise. If participants do not open their eyes after a reasonable amount of time, just remind them to "Please gently open your eyes".

### **Brief Group Check In (5-10 mins)**

Note to Group Leaders: Starting in this group session and every week thereafter, we're going to go around the circle (or have volunteers go in popcorn style in the group). The important thing is to limit the amount of time that each group member has to check in, otherwise the check in can take the entire 2 hours (in our experience). One way to do this is through modeling – having one of the group leaders model (very briefly) responding to the check in questions at the start of each group.

SAY the following (or your own version of the following):

- "Now we're going to go around the group and check in, giving a few words about how you're doing right now...We'll have time to share more in a moment...So for now, after that mindfulness exercise, to notice and share 'What are you feeling right now, in this moment?' "
- Start with one group leader modeling this by offering a phrase or a sentence or two. Afterwards, as each group member offers their check in, actively facilitate to thank each person after they go and to keep it brief for everyone.

### **Review Home Practice and Compass (35-40 minutes)**

This part of the group consists of smaller group work followed by a full group discussion.

So please SAY: "Now we're going to divide into smaller groups to give everyone a chance to reflect on the Compass and on the home practice related to the Compass."

**SMALLER GROUPS (15-20 minutes)**

Divide into 2 groups (count off by twos), have each group move into a separate part of the room and have each leader facilitate one group.



Wrote the following questions on the board:

- 1) What was the most striking, memorable, or meaningful part of completing your own Compass?
- 2) What towards and away moves did you notice yourself doing this week?

In the smaller groups, start with SAYING (in your own words): “Let’s take a few minutes to connect with yourself and what you wrote, or to jot down ideas if you didn’t get to do this, and to notice where you are on your compass right now, or where you spent most of your week.”

Give the group 2-3 minutes to do this.

Then invite everyone to check in on questions 1 and 2 written on the board. Be aware of the time so that everyone has the opportunity to share their responses to the questions.

Then raise the following points, as relevant, as part of facilitating the discussion:

- 1) If people didn’t do the homework you can say something like, “First, I’m so glad you showed up today even though you didn’t do your home practice. Sometimes the best we can do is just getting out of bed in the morning...So I’m so glad you’re here! Now in this next week, if you’d like to recommit to engaging in the home practice, let’s look at what got in the way for you this week so we can make it easier for you next week...”
- 2) Discuss the presence of **judgment** in our minds – how normal and universal it is, and invite the possibility of simply noticing the judgment with curiosity and gentleness, and returning to our present (current, ongoing) experience. Acknowledge how challenging it can be to do this.
- 3) Introduce the possibility of self-compassion, particularly in the face of noticing our ‘away moves’ which can be painful. Self-compassion for our ‘away moves’ - for our many perceived failings - can look like: We are all in this together, we are doing the best we can in any given moment, to struggle is the very essence of being human, all the more so after going through cancer treatment, we are okay as we are.

COME BACK TOGETHER AS LARGER GROUP (20 minutes)

**Highlight Towards & Away and Discuss How They Show up in the Group**

Highlight Towards and Away: 5-7 minutes (of the 20 minutes)

What is towards and away – let’s review what we mean by towards?

Does this behavior serve you? Can it be part of a vital, fulfilling, workable life for you? (evaluate workability)

By away?

Does this behavior move you *away from* vitality and fulfillment, away from a workable life for you?

By the fact that the same behavior can represent towards or away, depending on our motivation to do the behavior?

For example, we might take a walk because we enjoy being outdoors and it cultivates our health and vitality – a TOWARDS move for us.

Or, we might take a walk because we're avoiding or running away from something we really need and want to do, but are afraid to do– like a difficult but much-needed conversation with a loved one. This might represent more of an AWAY move for us.

Or maybe the same behavior of taking a walk is MIXED – it represents both a TOWARDS move in part as well as an AWAY move in part.

How many behaviors, such as taking a walk, can both make us feel healthy and alive and in line with our values (TOWARDS), *and* might occasionally also serve to avoid valued things that we don't enjoy doing, like a difficult conversation or cleaning our house or paying bills (AWAY)?

AND by the sense that we can use Values to act in AWAY ways by overdoing 'health' and overexhausting ourselves in the gym or forbidding ourselves from ever enjoying sweets, for example, instead of approaching health in more balanced ways that reflect our full range of needs

Clarify that it's NOT about moving 'away' from difficult FEELINGS – those we can't often control. It's about noticing when we BEHAVE in avoidant or escapist ways that move us further from what we want to be about VERSUS when our behavior reflects moving TOWARDS who and what we want to be about. It's about moving towards moments like the one we will reflect on in a moment...

Emphasize compassion!

Group Discussion (13-15 minutes of the 20 minutes): Invite everyone to note what a towards and away move looks like in the context of the group (group leaders share too)

- a. SAY: Towards and Away moves also apply to our approach to this group, including for us leaders. So we invite all of us to reflect on: In the context of this group, what would be a towards move be for you? What would that look like for you, if we were watching the group?
- b. 1 group leader starts with an example, go around, and then end with the other leader

Examples of what we shared as group leaders, to give you a sense of what this is about:

- a. Towards (Joanna) – A 'towards move' in the group for me, is trusting my knowledge and experience to help shape behavior in the group.

This looks like: actively helping people to reflect on 'towards' moves, actively preserve boundaries and everyone's chance to share.

- b. Away (Joanna) – An 'away move' for me in the group is needing there to be too much closure. This looks like: overexplaining.
- c. Towards (Jill) – A 'towards move' on the group for me is allow for some discomfort and for people to sit with some discomfort. This looks like: Jill being more silence, allowing for more silence in the group.
- d. Away (Jill) – overly controlling or didactic. Looks like: oversummarizing, not asking follow up questions.

### Short Break (5 minutes)

Make sure group members know where the water fountain and bathroom is, and, if possible, the location of alternative bathrooms is those are busy

### Sweet Spot (15-20 minutes)

#### Introduce the second half

In this second half, we're going to be focusing on values, that is, what we care about and makes our lives feel vital, alive, and connected. We'll start with a brief eyes closed exercise called the "Mini Sweet Spot Exercise" and then we'll share with a partner.

3:35-3:45 What do we care about? The Mini Sweet Spot exercise

**Note:** Only do this next time if you have time for the partner sharing afterwards. Be sure to follow the script and go through thru each of the 5 senses early on and leave enough time to imagine them.

I'm going to invite you close your eyes for the next several minutes and focus inward  
...

"Think of a moment when nothing was missing...it might be a moment you shared with a loved child, family member or friend, it might be a moment alone in the woods or on a drive...it might be a moment of laughter shared with a stranger...maybe not a momentous moment, just a moment in which there was nothing to be changed, everything was just right as it was. Just remember what that moment looked like...imagine where you were and who you were with...what your senses are taking in, what you're seeing...<long pause, ~20 seconds>...hearing...<long pause, 15-20 seconds>...feeling...<long pause, 15-20 seconds>...tasting or smelling...<long pause, ~10 seconds>...and so on. Just imagine it with all of your senses...As if you are fully there living that moment...<long pause, ~20 seconds>...

“When you are ready, please gently open your eyes.”

NOTE: SAY, as needed: If you happen to feel sad or a sense of loss in doing this exercise that it simply points towards a value that we might feel we have not been connecting with or fully realizing more recently in our lives...So just notice that if it's present for you.”

SAY, as needed: Some people have an easier time imaging moments like these using their senses than other people, and that's totally normal. It's fine if you are anywhere on this spectrum.

***Discuss with person next to you for five minutes. . . What did you imagine and experience?***

## **Moving Values into Action (30 minutes)**

Introduce: *Now let's talk about how might we make our lives more about moving towards and opening up to these kinds of moments?* Now we're going to turn to a few pages in our workbook that aim to do just that.

So go ahead and turn to the first page in your workbook under “Week 2: Where do I Stand” section (share page number). Here, we're going to ask you to list 4 of your top values, either from your Compass or otherwise, and then right below, you'll have an opportunity to reflect on how consistent your life has been with those values.

Then after that, please continue to page 9, Valued Behavior Commitment

Goal: Helps us to notice ‘towards and away’ moves in the context of real-life commitments to valued living, and to translate Compass into an action plan

1. On your own, in the next 10 minutes, please complete the worksheets in the Session 2 section in your workbook (pgs. 6-7) titled: “Valued Living” “Values Reflection” and the TOP ONLY of “Valued Behavior Commitment” (p. 8).

Show them where in the workbook these pages are located. Have extra copies of these pages for anyone who forgot to bring their workbook.

2. For the next 10 minutes – find a partner and share with them what you came up with -- identifying the small, doable behavior and how to work with barriers that are likely to arise (group leaders do this themselves and also be available to circulate to address questions as they arise). Be certain to listen carefully to your partner because you will present what they commit to, to the group afterwards.

(if there are an odd number of group participants, have a leader partner with the remaining participant, so that everyone can work in 2's)

3. For the last 10 minutes – Let's come back as a group. We will go around and share our behavior commitment with group (group leaders participate in this too & coach). **Have each person BREIFLY** Share/ Present their partner's commitments to the group instead of having people present their own.
  - a. Have the group leaders (or group leader and participant pair) start and introduce the other leader's commitment and vice versa. Model brevity.

### **Home Practice (3-5 minutes)**

**For home practice:** Complete the Valued Behavior Commitment Worksheet REGARDLESS of whether you DO your committed behavior or not...it's more about NOTICING what comes up. NOBODY can fail this!!! Just NOTICE the towards and away moves you do around this commitment and the barriers that arise around the commitment, notice how you respond to the barriers, what allows you to move forward, etc. We will celebrate if you do it, and celebrate what you notice if you don't.

#### **General Session Note for Group Leaders:**

- Sometimes participants raise the idea of conflicting values in this session, ie the values of being a parent and the value of doing meaningful (outside) work, being productive, etc.
- If this arises, it can be helpful to have participants reflect:
  - What do you care about as a parent (or partner)...is that so different from what you care about as a professional? (i.e. emphasize values in common instead of values conflict)
  - Where you want to put your energy may conflict but values themselves usually don't conflict that much...core values...can transcend roles at times (not always)...Other times, you may prioritize one value over another as needed.

### **Reflections Form (5 minutes)**

- Have everyone complete a sessions Reflections form and turn in to the group leaders.
- Group leaders re: this and all subsequent sessions: After reading the reflections, please place them in the sealed envelope and send to the study (or give to the study coordinate, if s/he is present).



## Week 2: Brief Session Outline

**Valued Living Week 2 basic outline with approximate timing, using examples of how you might divide the responsibilities between two group leaders**

0:00-0:05 (wait for first week stragglers & do session-by-session measure)

0:05-0:20

- Welcome everyone back (Joanna)
- Briefly review group agreements (Jill)
- Mindfulness of 3's (Joanna)
- 1-word check-in (Joanna)

0:20-0:55

- Review home practice and Compass (Jill & Joanna)
- Smaller groups: 15-20 minutes
- Whole group discussion: 15-20 minutes

0:55-1:00 SHORT BREAK (4-5 minutes)

1:00-1:20 Sweet Spot Exercise

Work on individual compass (Joanna)

- Closed eyes lead in (if needed) – what do you value in others?
- 10 minutes to begin working on individual compass
- Jill & Joanna circulate and troubleshoot questions

1:20-1:50 Moving Values in Action

- Valued Living Worksheet (Jill)
- Reflections in Pairs (Jill & Joanna)

1:50-1:55 Introduce Home Practice (Joanna)

1:55-2:00

- Participants complete & turn-in Reflections sheet (Joanna)
-

## **Week 3: Getting Unstuck from Thoughts**

Session intention: Introduce mindfulness and cognitive defusion to help people cope with cancer-related (and more general) fears such as: How can I live knowing my cancer may return? I worry constantly about cancer and the side effects of treatment! What will become of my family if I die?

Avoid traps of: arguing with group members about whether or not their thoughts are true, dismissing painful thought content and trying to defuse before validating and expressing compassion

Avoid buying into: having participants believe that the goal of defusion is to feel better or to get rid of unwanted thoughts instead of to reduce the influence of unhelpful cognitive processes and to facilitate being present and engaged in present moment experience. If thoughts disappear that's pleasant but don't expect it because it usually doesn't happen

Bring to group: extra participant workbook handouts, session-by-session measures and Reflections sheets, nametags and markers, sign-in sheet, Compass from Week 1

As participants arrive: Have them complete session-by-session measure and place in designated envelope

### **Welcome and Brief Centering Exercise (10-15 mins)**

- Welcome everyone back
- brief review of 3 agreements
- brief mindfulness
- 1-2 word check-in

### **Introduce the Session and Home Practice Check-In (20 minutes)**

1. Today we're going to explore dealing with a really common barrier (that some of you have mentioned) - the barrier of fear, worry, and unhelpful thoughts more generally.

-Summarize last week's group:



- Last week we spent most of our time distinguishing our towards and away moves (when do we engage in things that move us closer to our values and what gives us vitality, and when do we engage in ways that moves us away from vitality, values, and fulfillment).
- We also spent a little time asking you to share what would a towards or away move look like within the context of this group, so we encourage you to continue being mindful of that as you try on new behaviors and explore these concepts
- Then we spent some time focusing in on the upper left side of our compass—our values—and increasing our awareness of how consistently we live our life with regard to our values.
- For home practice we asked everyone to think of one, small doable action or behavior that is consistent with your values & that you wanted to commit to doing this past week.

## 2. Introduce Home Practice Check In:

- So in a moment we are going to go around and ask you how that commitment went by asking you to reflect on (Have the other leader WRITE THE QUESTIONS BELOW ON THE BOARD)
- If you didn't keep to your valued behavior commitment -- not to worry! The primary goal for this practice is to help increase our AWARENESS of what comes up. If we choose, we can always RECOMMIT.
- We just ask you to notice:
  - What gets in the way when we try to live our life in a way that we value.
  - What helps us to engage in actions that support what we value
  - And inviting compassion for ourselves, and re-inviting ourselves to engage with our values when we do not meet our own expectations
- What did you notice? Specifically:
  - What happened for you?
  - What helped? What worked for you?
  - What got in the way?

## 3. Facilitating the discussion:

- If you kept to it – ask folks: what facilitated your doing that? What worked for you? (reinforcing: “I hear that X really works for you.” Or “Okay!” Trying to stay away from “Good” because it reinforces the good/ bad dichotomy we’re trying to get away from)
- Go around circle & ask participants (who were there last week) to share their experience in brief. Facilitators lead off with their own examples, modeling being brief.
- (Focus here is on AWARENESS & COMPASSION with regard to shared experience, imperfections, challenges, common humanity)

## Things that Hook Us (20 minutes)

So with this as background we are going to spend more time today exploring . . .

- Those things that get in the way of living our life in a way that we value. Those things that might show up in the bottom left hand corner of your compass...that seem to take our energy away or limit our ability to engage with what we value.
- We are also going to brainstorm and explore some different approaches to responding to challenging things or apparent obstacles when they emerge
  
- To explore these worries more on our own and then again as a group, are you willing to reflect a bit more?

### **Introduce Words that Hook You worksheet**

- Now please turn to the worksheet called “Words, Memories, and Images that Hook Us” in your workbooks.
- This worksheet builds on the work you’ve already begun by reflecting on the top left of our collective and individual Compasses, and allows us to go a bit deeper with that work
- Does anyone here experience memories, thoughts, images, urges, feelings, or physical sensations, that feel like they hook you? That you can easily become stuck on or really upset or reactive to? This is a common experience – I certainly have these experiences too.
- So let’s start just with the TOP of the worksheet, Questions 1-6, by taking some time to reflect on the words and images that specifically hook us (especially with regard to cancer are some of the biggest fears, words, images, urges, memories, physical sensations, etc that hook you or haunt you with being a survivor of cancer? (this may be similar to what you already put on your compass, or you may have thought of new things)
- Please take a moment to reflect on this by filling out the worksheet. Or if you simply want to brainstorm a list of words or images that hook you, that’s OK too. (Allow 3-5 mins)
- Now, select a word or image from your worksheet that holds some power for you – it doesn’t have to be the most powerful word or image there, just one that evokes a response in you.
- Now let’s turn to the bottom of the worksheet and reflect on what we do to prove that this word or image does or does not apply to us. (Allow 3-5 mins)
- Out of curiosity, how many of you chose cancer-related words (patient, cancer, survivor, pink ribbon, etc.)? (invite a show of hands) Non-cancer-related words? (invite a show of hands)

Group discussion: (~10 minutes, with one leader at board, writing down shared points, and the other facilitating the discussion)

- *Discuss what* are some of the most common/shared experiences that showed up were
- Note how so much of what we struggle with, even perhaps in the aftermath of being treated for cancer, is linked to our histories of what we learned growing up was a good/ acceptable versus bad/ unacceptable way to be or way to feel
- Ask: is there anyone else who experiences that? Are there others that experience that? After most of them
- One thing to consider trying, particularly if short on time: have everyone jot down their answers to the first two questions on an index card (without their name), pass them into the group facilitators, and with the group's permission, read them aloud, then discuss them/ point out commonalities/ ask if others can relate

### **Short Break (3-5 minutes)**

### **Shifting Our Relationship to Hooks (15-20 minutes)**

*Introduce: When the things that hook us show up inside of us – those fears and memories about cancer and otherwise – often we feel a need to respond to them in some way. So now we're going to take a moment to reflect on how we respond to a few of the most common hooks that we identified in the first half of the group when discussing your responses to the worksheet.*

*We invite you to choose most common 1 or 2 themes identified in the cards exercise or discussion before break, ask everyone how they respond internally and behaviorally when this experience/ thought/ fear / image shows up for them (or they can imagine how they would respond if this isn't a fear they experience themselves)*

Then we're going we're going to draw on the wisdom of the entire group as we reflect together on what you've done that you find helpful in dealing with these thoughts, beliefs, and images that "hook" us. We also will offer some wisdom from the world of what psychology scientists have shown is helpful for most people in dealing with such hooks.

- Group discussion:
- Start with one of the most popular fears/concerns and open up to the group for suggestions as to what they do when those fears come up?
- Examples . . .

- Distract myself
- Avoid it / tell myself to ignore it
- Jot down ideas on the board
- Validate that these approaches **all work, at least in the short-term** (otherwise we wouldn't do them)
- Acknowledge that some of these actions may actually be consistent with what we value, a towards move, & how does it feel if we recognize the seed of value in those actions, such as the value of self-care or giving ourselves a little bit of ease when we veg. out in front of the TV – there may be other motivations there too (needing to avoid, suppress, run away) but sometimes vegging out or wandering around the house doing nothing is the BEST WE CAN DO IN THAT MOMENT.
- Even though we might long for something to disappear or to do a magical and dramatic towards move that will make it all better, Sometimes the best we can do is not make something worse, to hold our ground and not get worse.
- “I was at my wit's end and that was the best I had and I gave myself my best at that moment” ...see, by offering ourselves compassion we're keeping moving towards.... we don't have to feel ashamed, we're doing the best we can
- If needed (if members don't come to this conclusion on their own): Also explore that some of the things we do (avoid or distracting) – how does that work for us in the long-term?

### Introducing Cognitive Defusion (20 minutes)

- After exhausting the group's own ideas -- Offer some other strategies (defusion skills) for people to begin to play with (give list and go through the list & exemplify)
- Introduce by saying: Psychology researchers have also come up and examined some strategies for shifting our relationship to troubling thoughts and images so that they do not have to haunt us so much or get in the way of what we want to do.
- These strategies can be particularly useful when what we do DOESN'T WORK – the thought, image, memory continues to haunt you or get in the way of living your life, no matter what you try
- If we can't get rid of them, what can we do with them? Maybe we can relate to them differently so that we don't have to spend as much energy trying to get rid of them/they have less power over us
  - What if we couldn't get rid of our fears but could move forward in our lives and do more of the things that mean the most to us (point to upper right of compass) anyway, and not be as affected by them? Would that interest anyone here? (acknowledge responses)

- VERY IMPORTANT: Thus, these are NOT strategies for getting rid of such thoughts or images because what is our experience – can we permanently rid ourselves of such thoughts and images? (Look for group response). For most of us, no...
- *Illustrate strategies using a single appropriate example of a core fear/ image/ thought that was commonly shared among the group participants, perhaps even one of the ones that were most common that were discussed in terms of how people respond to them*
  - Use the White Bear example in class??
  - Use the “Milk” example & demo in class? (Maybe sick sick sick)

Would you all be willing to try an exercise with me that helps us explore this possibility?

**Milk exercise** (from Hayes, Strosahl and Wilson, 1999) **(5 mins)**

1. Sit comfortably in your chair.
  2. Imagine a glass of milk. Imagine its color and taste. Imagine the smooth glass. Notice if there are any sensations in your mouth as you think about milk.
  3. Begin saying the word “milk” out loud over and over again. Don’t be shy. We’re all in this together.
  4. Let’s say it faster and faster, louder and louder.
  5. Continue for 60 seconds.
- What happened to the glass of milk as you were saying it? Did its taste, color, smoothness, disappear?
  - Many of us have spent a long time running away from words. Words such as cancer, diseased, fate, loss, illness, relapse, death....or even words from childhood or other parts of our life that still haunt us now...words such as lazy, ugly, loser, selfish, stupid, coward, worthless, unlovable...

**Introduce your personalized Milk exercise (5 mins):**

- Note to leaders: cultivate a strong sense of humor and playfulness here, don’t be afraid to laugh at yourself, to take turns cheering the group on, etc.
- Now we’re going to do the Milk, milk, milk exercise again, but with the powerful word from our worksheet rather than “milk”.

- We all have different words, but it doesn't matter. Together we can create a chorus of different voices singing a powerful chant. Are we willing to give this a try all together?

1. Let's begin by saying our word out loud, in a moderately loud voice, slowly, over and over. Ready? Please begin. (continue for 30-60 seconds)
2. Okay, stop. What did saying this word evoke or bring up for you? Any memories, feelings, associations, or images?
3. Now we're going to repeat our word again. We'll start out slowly like last time and then when I say "speed up and be loud!" we'll say the word faster and faster – as fast as we can – and louder and louder – as loud as we can. Ready? Let's start slowly....please begin.
4. (after 15 seconds or so), "Okay, now let's speed up! Be loud!" continue fast and loud, offering coaching as needed, for 45-60 seconds. "Okay, stop!"
5. Notice your reaction to saying the word fast and loud...notice the difference between saying the word fast and saying it slowly. What's the difference?
6. The intention here is not to get rid of the word or the feelings we have in response to it. The intention is to create some helpful distance between ourselves and the word, so that it doesn't hold so much power over us, and so that we have more freedom to live as we choose rather than be governed by words.
7. You can repeat words quickly and loudly (in a private place) for a minute or so, whenever you notice yourself feeling hooked by a word.

8. **Debrief (5 mins):** How was that? Briefly go around in group, letting each group member use a phrase to describe his/ her experience of the exercise.

9. **Follow up 1 (10 mins):** Ways to Defuse List

- Now I'd like you to turn to your "Ways to Defuse" list in your workbooks. For home practice, I'd like you to go over these and pick a few to try this week. But first, let me highlight a few of the "ways to defuse", to give you a sense of what these are.
- These are deceptively simple. They seem easy and sometimes silly and maybe even dumb, because they have to be *used* and practiced to have any effect in helping to wedge a bit of distance between ourselves and thoughts that keep us stuck

Offer examples from the worksheet :

- a. As a leader, pick a challenging thought, perhaps one of your own.
- b. Read over 1-2 exemplars from each category of defusion strategies on the list, allowing participants to follow along with you by sharing which number you're on.

- c. After reading over and explaining each strategy, use the example of your challenging thought and demonstrate how you would apply that particular defusion strategy to the thought.

TIP: if participants laugh or smile that's a sign that defusion is taking place. If they say "this is dumb/ stupid", "this is so silly", etc., it's a sign that judgment is taking place. You can then defuse the judging thoughts.

- **Optional follow up:** If participants are really taking to defusion, you can have participants write the word in colored marker on a nametag sticker and wear the nametag for the rest of the group.

### Home Practice (5 minutes)

- Please complete the 'valued behavior commitment' worksheet in your workbook (IF THERE'S TIME: do together in class)
- Please read the "Ways to Defuse" from your Workbook and try them out this week.
- Please complete the "Practicing Getting 'Unstuck' in Our Thinking" exercise in our workbook.
  - Go over this worksheet together, making sure everyone understands it, and answering any questions they have.

### Reflections Sheet (5 minutes)

- Pass out Session 2 reflections sheets to all participants, and collect in research envelope afterwards

## **Week 3: Brief Session Outline**

**Valued Living Week 3 basic outline with approximate timing, using examples of how you might divide the responsibilities between two group leaders**

0:00-0:05 (wait for first week stragglers & do session-by-session measure)

0:05-0:20

- Welcome everyone back (Leader 1)
- Briefly review group agreements (Leader 2)
- Mindfulness of 3's (Leader 1 or 2)
- 1-word check-in (Leader 1 or 2)

0:20-0:40 Review and Home Practice Check In (Both)

- Review last session
- Do Home Practice Check in re: Valued Commitment with 3 questions
- In facilitating discussion, emphasize awareness and self-compassion

0:40-1:05 Things that Hook Us (Leader 2)

- Introduce idea of things that hook us (get in the way of valued living)
- Complete in workbook "Words, Memories, and Images that Hook Us"
- Discussion of what showed up

1:05-1:10 Break

1:10-1:30 Shifting our Relationship to Hooks (Leader 1)

1:30-1:50 Introduce Cognitive Defusion (Leader 1)

- Do "White Bear" and "Milk" brief exercises
- Read 1-2 key strategies from each category of the "Ways to Defuse" list
- Use one meaningful example of a challenging thought to model each of the discussed strategies

1:50-1:55 Introduce Home Practice (Leader 2)

- Practicing getting unstuck from our thinking worksheets?
- Play with noticing the challenging thoughts, words, images, feelings etc that come up & playing with some of the defusion skills

1:55-2:00 Participants complete & turn-in Reflections sheet (Leader 2)



## **Week 4:**

### **Shifting Our Relationship to Fear and Worry**

Session intention: Create a safe space to share feelings and experiences of compromised or loss of control with regard to cancer and its consequences. Compassionately introduce notion of acceptance and barriers to acceptance. Help participants to cultivate acceptance and valued behavior (control of behavior) as an alternative to physical and emotional control.

Avoid traps of: preaching to or persuading others with regard to why acceptance is better than control, not acknowledging anger or rage that can emerge (and needs validation) in response to considering acceptance, not appreciating barriers to acceptance

MOST OF ALL: be on the alert for “pseudoacceptance” which occurs when participants use acceptance to feel better or get rid of undesirable feelings instead of being willing to have feelings regardless of whether they increase or decrease.

Bring to group: Stack of blank index cards and pens, serenity prayer handouts, Compass from Session 1, reflection sheets, extra participant workbook sheets

As participants arrive: Have them complete session-by-session measure and place in designated envelope

### **Introduction (10 minutes)**

1) Welcome everyone back! (Start on time, as long as half of the group is present). Introduce this week’s focus by SAYING:

- Last week we delved a little deeper into the words and feelings and images that “hook” us and we explored a range of strategies for what to do when those thoughts or feelings show up and get in the way of what we really want our lives to be about.
- But the real challenge here is not just what *to do*, but rather being able to engage with our thoughts and feelings in a way that allows us greater freedom and flexibility and choice when we are actually feeling distressed. So that maybe we can continue moving in a valued, vital life direction even when difficult experiences show up inside of us.
- We are going to spend some time today playing with, practicing through, acting through, strategies that might help us to continue moving toward what we value in life. Jill will tell you little more about that later on.

- But first, we're going to spend a little time discussing the home practice from this past week. This week we asked you to focus your awareness on your "hooks" and to play with some different strategies, maybe even some of the defusion strategies we talked about last week to see if it was helpful in shifting your experience.
- 2) Very briefly restate group agreements
- SAY: Before we jump in, we will very briefly restate the group agreements of:
    - Confidentiality
    - Cultivating openness to new ways of thinking, experiencing, and being, including inviting awareness and compassion when experiencing judgment of yourself or others
    - Respecting your own and others' boundaries
  - Also, please keep in mind what your **towards and away moves** are in the **context of being a member of this group**. For example, if it's a towards move to listen or share more, we invite you to keep that in mind.
- 3) Offer 45 seconds of a silent inward check in:
- SAY: "Now we're going to sit quietly with our eyes closed or mostly closed, focus on our breathing, checking in with ourselves and gathering our presence"
  - Don't facilitate during the 45 seconds.

### Home Practice Check-In (25 minutes)

- 1) Write questions on board:
- What was the action you committed to doing this week?
  - How did that go? What helped? What got in the way? (Where were you on your Compass?)
  - Did you try out any of the defusion skills this week or other ways of responding when hooks show up? How did that go? What helped or got in the way?
- 2) Go around in group in order and have everyone respond to these questions
- 3) Just acknowledge with "thanks" or practice asking contextualizing questions such as "What happened next?", "How does that feel?"
- 4) Clarify that experiencing difficult emotions (fear, crying) does NOT usually represent an 'away move'. Rather, it's what we do next and how we treat ourselves when we're experiencing pain that matters for "towards" and "away".

### Passengers on the Bus Metaphor (50 minutes, including a 3-5 minute break in the middle)

## **1. FIRST, BEFORE sharing the metaphor:**

- From the “Words, Memories, and Images that Hook Us” page in the workbook, have participants circle or list central difficult feelings, thoughts, images, and memories they have about cancer that capture the **core of their experience, particularly those that trigger or haunt them.** (2-3 minutes)
- Have participants write each core feeling/ thought/image/ memory on a notecard. Have each participant **write on 3-5 cards (before** developing the character). Have more cards available if they want more. (5 minutes)
- Leaders do this too, as well as be available to answer questions
- SAY: I want us to imagine something. What if the things you wrote on your cards were people or creatures? Caricatures with personalities? What would their name be? What would they look like? Say? What would their voice sound like? How would they behave? (5-10 minutes)
- Give examples: Miss Doom. Ms. Ugly or Ms. Worst Case Scenario, Ms. Unlovable or Unworthy (they don’t just have to be about cancer). The Grim Reaper.
- Elaborate on how to imagine these personalities. If they haven’t already, have people assign a caricatured passenger or personality to each central difficulty you wrote on their cards...you can draw them out (5-10 minutes)

## **2. Introduce the Passengers on the Bus metaphor. Take the time to really develop it! No need to rush it.**

- I’m going to share a metaphor that has grown out of several decades of this work and that many find helpful. However, if there’s another metaphor that you prefer- go for it! We offer this lightly.
- What if the feelings, thoughts, memories, and fears that you wrote about in your reflection and on your cards are like passengers on a bus we’re driving. A bus that represents your life. (or if there’s some other vehicle or metaphor – go for it!)
- We’re driving your bus down the road, heading in a valued, vital direction that we want to travel in our lives – directed by the upper left of our Compass
- Just as you start to head down the main road in the direction you want to go, we realize that there are some scary looking passengers on our bus, from the lower left of our Compass.
- They start to yell at you, “you’re going in the wrong direction! Turn left. Turn right! Don’t go there!” And making threats... Trying to control our every move.
- We get scared – who wouldn’t? We think: What if the passengers are right about bad things happening if I stay on route? And we start to imagine all kinds of terrible things that could happen if we continue moving in this

valued direction. (imagine a few here). You're also a bit embarrassed or ashamed: What if other people knew that I spent time with passengers like this, or thought I picked them up on purpose or that it's my fault that there on the bus?

- So we stop traveling down our main road, we give up on our route, and just slow down and drive aimlessly around for a while, which seems to quiet your passengers. They no longer bother you so much.
- But as soon as we start moving in a direction we really care about – making lots of towards moves and traveling on a meaningful route in our life – the passengers start getting rowdy again and threatening us. We grow so used to them that all they have to do is pop their head up and we feel scared and veer off course. We might even park your bus for a while and try to deal with them.
- What we may not realize is that the passengers on our bus that represent our thoughts, feelings, memories, fears –they can't actually do anything to us. They can say things and threaten things like "you can't do it", "bad things will happen if you stay on this main road" and "your cancer will return if you eat that junk food", yell and scream at you, but they **can't actually drive the bus or harm you.**
- We could stop the bus and order them to get off, but the thing is – they live here. This is their home. They cannot leave the bus.

### 3. Act out the Bus Metaphor in the Group

- So how do we deal with them? What happens if we argue with them or yell back or spend a lot of time responding to them? Let's see what happens...Are you willing to give this a try? It can be uncomfortable at times, even for me, and I ask that we make room for that in the name of practicing having more freedom when our passengers show up.
  - I give everyone permission to sit it out. I'll even volunteer to be the driver and show up if you'd like
  - Can we have a volunteer who is willing to drive their bus and share their cards with the group and act out this metaphor? Would doing that be a 'towards move' for anyone here?
  - Can I have 3 volunteers who are willing to act out this person's passengers?
  - Can the rest of you please open up your 'defusion skills' page in your workbooks – we'll need them to help coach our driver in a moment.
4. Model the exercise with a willing volunteer:
- a. First, help volunteer choose a life direction she *wants* to travel in but finds it *difficult* to move towards, and name a few behaviors that enact that value. Now name a few passengers that show up when you move in this direction, and that you have trouble dealing with.

- b. Then have the volunteer choose her top 3 cards and give one to each of the 3 'passenger' actor volunteers
5. Explain: "This is how this will work. Our driver \_\_(name)\_\_ is going to drive her bus towards \_\_ (solicit her valued life direction). As she drives, I want one of the passengers to come up and our driver will tell her exactly what this passenger says and *how* to say it. The passenger will then say those things, and try to get in our driver's way on her valued path, butt up right in front of her and try to distract and bully her. The driver will try to respond, and can ask for help from the group in responding at any time. Any questions?
  - a. By the way, if you're feeling a little uncomfortable or anxious about doing this – that's a good thing. Do you know why? When do you most need some of these strategies? – when you're feeling distress or anxious, right? – so it's valuable to practice these strategies in a similar state.
  - b. For you to say these harsh things to your group mate can be hard, but this is an opportunity to help your group mate work through something that they've been trying to work through for a long time.
6. Have the volunteer bus driver stand up in the center of the group and pretend to drive a bus forward, saying out loud the valued life direction she's driving towards that her passengers interfere with (e.g., "towards giving to others", "towards connecting with others", "towards being healthy and healing", "towards being a great parent to my kids", etc.).
7. SAY: "So you are driving towards \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in their chosen value). Now, as you drive merrily along, you notice that some scary passengers are riding on your bus."
8. Have the first 'passenger' volunteer approach the driver and ask the driver to tell her what to say and in what tone/ voice. Have her say that in that tone/ voice and try to distract her from driving. Allow the driver to react.

SAY to everyone: Notice what happens when the driver gets distracted by her passengers: Where is our bus headed? (veering off course, into a dangerous ravine, etc.) Who's driving? Who's in control of your bus when we stop driving to fight with the passengers? Where is our focus?

- Ask driver first: What do we need to do to continue driving forward? What would an alternative way of dealing with this passengers be?
  - Ask group second: What can she do? Is there anything on your open defusion page that you want to offer? Is there a wise old woman (or man) passenger on your bus that has some wisdom to share here? Can someone act her out?
- If person wants to fight or strongly react to the passengers: "You can fight if you choose to fight. I just ask you to notice how much time, energy, and

resources it takes to fight the passengers...what the price of fighting them is...Is there another way?"

- If wise voice/ passenger comes up: stand alongside driver and look forward down valued road together.
- Do any of you try to shove your smiling old lady off the bus too? (when she smiles, you see and feel how tired you are and you just want someone to hold you and sometimes there isn't)
- What would it be like if you could *move with* this voice?
- If continuing down this road is what matters to you, are you willing to allow the passengers to speak and yell, in service of driving your bus forward? Are you willing to keep your hands on the steering wheel and just allow the passengers to remain on the bus and do what they do? Can you cultivate a sense of compassion for yourself that these passengers exist, that we sometimes hate them (and our wise ones too) that it's totally okay to have them, to embrace them even as a part of your experience – in the name of moving your bus forward?

Continue with second and then third bus driver volunteers (and accompanying passenger volunteers), using the same process.

Note: **Overall, the goal** of the passengers is to get the driver to let go of the steering wheel and being to talk back or argue with one or more of them. The driver is then asked to experience what it's like to drive while allowing the chatter and with their attention on the road instead of on fighting the chatter.

**Afterwards**, invite the non-drivers (the rest of the group) to imagine what it might be like to allow their passengers to chatter while we drive forward in valued life directions.

- Optional: What would happen if you (the driver) put a hand on each passenger's shoulder in turn, heard what they had to say, and invited each one on your bus as an expression of willingness to accept your own history, the contents of your own mind, and to lay down the struggle with them. Are you willing to do that? Let's do it and see what happens.
- If time: Have folks continue elaborating on their cards what their passengers are called (name them), look like, sound like, and share their cards with a partner (if they desire, if not they can just practice the next part) and practice pushing away from and then accepting their 'passenger' cards by

compassionately placing them in their lap. Encourage defusion moves. Emphasize compassion. (10 min)

- **FOR ALL GROUPS: Discuss/ Debrief.** (10 min). What was that like? What did you learn, if anything? How did you learn it?

### Home Practice (5-10 minutes)

- 1) Go over “Accepting your Passengers” example worksheet and assign for home practice.
- 2) Take cards with us – put them in our wallet, on our dresser, in our pocket, in our purse...practice noticing and making room for them as a part of us and moving forward anyway, WITH them.
- 3) Valued Behavior worksheet: We invite you to do this now or when you get home – something Small and Doable. Because when we related to our passengers differently, we free up energy and space in our lives to do more things we care about...
- 4) Mindfulness practice – just notice what arises as you aim to move forward or as you watch yourself moving away from doing what you care about.
- 5) GIVE SERENITY PRAYER AS HANDOUT – simply ask them to read it and notice their response, positive or negative; see if it speaks to them or their experience.

### Closing Circle (5 minutes)

- Go around in the circle and ask each person to state what their valued behavior commitment will be for the week while holding (in their hand or on their lap) their ‘passengers’, i.e., their index cards (accepting them while committing to move forward with them)
- Leaders model by going first and last

### Reflections Form (5 minutes)

- Complete the Session 4 Reflections Forms and put in envelopes
- Also inform them they will receive an emailed survey this week and to please complete it before the next group session

## **Week 4: Brief Session Outline**

**Valued Living Week 4 basic outline with approximate timing, using examples of how you might divide the responsibilities between two group leaders**

As participants arrive: have them sign in and complete session-by-session measure

0:00-0:10 Introduction

- Welcome everyone back and introduce this week's session (Leader 1)
- Briefly review group agreements (Leader 1)
- Brief silent, eyes closed period (Leader 1 or 2)

0:10-0:35 Home Practice Group Check in (Both)

- Write reflection questions on board
- Go around the circle and have each participant respond in turn

0:35-1:40 Passengers on the Bus Metaphor (Both)

- Circle feelings, thoughts, words, images, memories that trigger or haunt
- Introduce Passengers on the Bus metaphor
- Act it out in the group

1:00-1:05 Break (in middle of Bus Metaphor work)

1:40-1:50 Introduce Home Practice (Leader 2)

- Practicing "Accepting Your Passengers" worksheet
- Taking cards with us
- Write down a (doable) valued behavior commitment on worksheet

1:50-1:55 Closing Circle (Leader 1)

- Each person states their valued behavior commitment for the week while holding (in hands or lap) their 'passengers' (index cards)
- Leaders model by going first and last

1:55-2:00 Participants complete & turn-in Reflections sheet (Leader 2)

- Also inform them they will receive an emailed survey this week and to please complete it before the next group session



## **Week 5**

### **TITLE: TBA**

Session intention: Allow for additional time to experience the Bus metaphor and to allow participants to cultivate their own wisdom and compassion for themselves

Avoid traps of: belittling serious fears or jumping straight into defusion without modeling acceptance first; not being prepared as the group facilitator for the intensity of personal feelings about one's passengers, viewing the wise passenger as a force to pit against the other passengers in a battle or struggle

Bring to group: a stack of notecards and pens, extra participant workbook handouts, reflection sheets, S1 compass

As participants arrive: Have them complete session-by-session measure and place in designated envelope; Have study coordinator give out payment for completed online surveys

### **Introduction (10-15 minutes)**

1. Welcome back and briefly note the focus/plan for today
  - a. Thank everyone for completing their online surveys!
2. Mindfulness of 3s (see Session 2 for detailed instructions)
3. Review basics of Passengers on the Bus Metaphor for those who were not present last week
4. Remind people about how the metaphor relates back to the Compass:
  - a. Passengers often embody the lower left of our Compass (inner struggles and uncomfortable experiences),
  - b. Driving our bus forward = moving towards our values and making towards moves

### **Home Practice Check-In**

- Introduce: Now we're going to take a bit of time to discuss our home practice together in group and to reflect on what we've observed or learned this week.

Discuss in the full group or in two smaller groups:

- What was your commitment this week and what did you notice helping you or getting in your way?
- What did you notice about working with your passengers this week?

- Share about one of your most significant or interesting passengers?
- How/when did it/they show up?
- How did you respond? or How would you like to try responding in the future?

## **Acting Out the Passengers on the Bus: Round 2 (30 minutes)**

Do another round of **acting out Passengers on the Bus** with a new set of driver volunteers, to give other participants a chance to do it if they'd like

Introduce, SAY: Now we're going to return to the Bus metaphor so that others in the group have an opportunity to act out driving their bus. For whom here would it be a towards move to do so?

- Make sure every has their defusion strategies sheets (in the workbooks) in front of them, and review by themselves briefly, before starting.
- Encourage audience to coach the driver as needed, and draw from defusion strategies and passenger's own inner wisdom – or whatever works! (over the long term)

## **Break (5 minutes)**

## **Wise and Kind Passenger Exercise (15 minutes)**

### **1. Introduce the idea:**

- (Refer back to defusion strategies sheet.) As a few of you mentioned last week (or in previous groups) sometimes you can have or may want to invite a "wise & kind" passenger onto your bus -- perhaps a loved one you know, or someone you simply imagine in your mind . . . Perhaps this is even your wise and kind inner self, or your playful, hopeful self.
- This wise and kind passenger could offer you wisdom and support or buffer you when the more challenging and potentially derailing passengers show up and get loud or feisty.

### **2. Do an eyes-closed meditation:**

With this concept in mind, we thought we would take a few minutes to explore who this kind & wise passenger (or passengers) might be, so I invite you now to do a little guided meditation on this for the next few minutes. Sound good?

Guide by SAYING slowly:

- a) So if you would like, please go ahead and close your eyes. Start out by focusing on your breathing . . . feeling the rise of your belly on the in breath, and the fall of your belly on your exhale...(Continue for 1-2 minutes).

- b) Now imagine that you are on your bus, the bus that you are driving in a direction that you value, toward the life that you want to be living. But you're taking a break from the driving right now to scan over some of the passengers on the bus. You look around on your bus and notice the familiar faces/characters that we talked about last week and which may have showed up for you this week, the passengers that tend to get in our way or harass us when we are driving the bus. But now you also notice one passenger in particular that sticks out – a very wise, kind, compassionate and loving passenger. If you don't already see a wise and kind passenger on your bus, then you go to open the door and realize that there is a wise and kind passenger waiting to get on. (pause)
- c) Perhaps this wise and kind passenger is someone you've never met before, or perhaps it's a passenger you've known a long time. You invite that passenger on. You invite them to sit close to you near the front of the bus. Perhaps this wise and kind passenger is someone you know, or once knew. Perhaps this wise and kind passenger is a favorite pet who can now speak. Perhaps it is the wisest and most compassionate part of yourself. Perhaps it takes some other form. Take a moment now and just think about what form this passenger takes. . . invite them to sit near you on the bus. And now, listen to what they have to say. To the loving support they offer you. . . (long pause)
- d) You now face the road and begin driving, driving your bus in the direction that you want to be headed, the life that you want to lead, and the other passengers now begin to speak up in their same old threatening or tiring ways. But the wise and kind passenger also speaks . . . What does the wise and kind passenger say to support you . . . to help you be able to continue driving your bus/living your life in a direction that you value? Or perhaps they don't say anything in particular, but still bring you a warm supportive feeling, knowing that they are also with you on this bus. Spend a few moments now just listening and focusing in on what this wise and kind passenger or passengers is offering to you . . . (long pause)
- e) You are so thankful now to have this wise and kind passenger, and you know that when you return to drive the bus another day, this passenger will be there, or you can always call them or other wise, kind, compassionate, and loving passengers back on. . . (pause)
- f) In a moment now, I will ask you to open your eyes and draw and write about the wise and kind passenger that you just focused in on . . . So slowly now, when you're ready, return your focus to the room, open your eyes, and let's spend the next few minutes in silence as you take some time to draw a picture of and note a few sentences about what your wise and kind passenger does or says on your bus. (Pass around index cards and pens if don't already have them) . . . What did the wise and kind passenger say to help or support you? Did he or she buffer or help you to deal with the voices of your other passengers? How so? Take a few minutes now, and then we will discuss

this experience with the larger group. . . . (Give 5 minutes for each participant to draw their wise and kind passenger)

### **Closing Circle**

- Closing circle & Debriefing discussion about wise & kind passengers –spend time continuing to reflect upon passengers and notice what comes up.?

### **Reflections Sheet**

- Complete the Session 5 Reflections Forms and put in envelopes

## Week 5: Brief Session Outline

### **Valued Living Week 5 basic outline with approximate timing**

*As participants arrive:* have complete session-by-session measure and sign in

#### **0:00-0:15 Introduction**

- Welcome everyone back and introduce this week's session
- Mindfulness of 3's
- Briefly review basics of the Passengers on the Bus metaphor, linking back to Compass

#### **0:15-0:35 Home Practice Group Check in**

- Focus on the Valued Behavior Commitment and Accepting (or at least noticing) Your Passengers worksheets
- Write reflection questions on board
- Go around the circle and have each participant respond in turn
- If group is large or talkative, can divide into 2 smaller groups for check in

#### **0:35-1:20 Passengers on the Bus Metaphor: Round Two**

- Act it out in the group with group members who did not have a chance to go last time and wish to go

#### **1:20-1:25 Break**

#### **1:25-1:40 Wise and Kind Passenger on the Bus Exercise**

- Introduce
- Do the eyes-closed exercise
- Draw / write index cards portraying wise and kind passengers

#### **1:40-1:55 Closing Circle**

- Allow group time to share reflections upon wise and kind and other passengers and notice what comes up

#### **1:55-2:00 Reflections sheets (place in designated envelope)**

## **Week 6: Valued Living in the Moment**

Session intention: Build on work from last session and throughout the group to help group members keep moving forward in meaningful life directions, apply ACT skills to future planning and hone goal-setting skills

Avoid traps of: Judging participants for not having a future plan or overly praising those with more developed plans, reassuring survivors that they'll be fine/healthy (when the future is uncertain)

Bring to group: Chime, extra participant workbook handouts, reflection sheets, pens and paper, S1 Compass

As participants arrive: Have them complete session-by-session measure and place in designated envelope

### **Introduction (10 minutes)**

Start on time (as long as half the group is present)

1. Welcome people back. Today's topic: Valued Living in the Moment
2. As needed, very briefly restate the group agreements:
  - a. Confidentiality
  - b. Openness to new ways of thinking, experiencing, and being, and inviting awareness and compassion if you find yourself judging yourself or others
  - c. Respecting your own and others' boundaries
3. Lead a 5-minute *Centering Meditation*, using a chime:
  - a. SAY: Each week we have been starting with a brief centering exercise – focusing on breathing, a brief meditation, the mindfulness of 3s exercise that we did last week. And we've looked at your reflections/feedback on those each week, and what we've seen is that some of you really like those and some of you don't
  - b. SAY: So in the spirit of flexibility (because we have been encouraging all of you to try doing and being in new ways throughout the group), we going to try a new approach today to see whether this offers a better means to help us all start the group feeling more grounded and centered . . . So in order to create a shared space, and help ground us in attending to being and participating meaningfully today, we're going to use a chime in our opening centering.

- c. SAY: So in a moment I will ding the chime that will resonate for a little while after I ring it. . . I want you to pay attention to the sound of the chime as best you can, and follow the sound of the chime fading slowly into the silence that follows. In that silence, just notice the absence of the sound, or what other sounds might be present in the room. If you'd like, you can use the silence to check in with yourself – what thoughts, physical sensations, and feelings are present for you in that moment. I'll do this three times in total, and then we will move into our opening circle and discussion for today.
- d. SAY: So go ahead now and close your eyes (or gaze at the floor in the center if you'd prefer) and listen in to the sound, the silence, and your awareness of the present moment . . . as I ring the first chime.
- e. After ringing the first chime, wait a minute or two after the chime becomes silent, and then ask people to follow the sound of the chime into silence once again, and ring it again.
- f. After ringing the second chime, wait a minute or two after the chime becomes silent, and then ring it for a final time. Then after the sound fades into silence, invite the group, when they're ready, to gently open their eyes.

### **Home Practice Check-In (25 minutes)**

- In one big circle or two smaller circles (depending on the size and preferences of your group), give each participant the opportunity to respond to the following questions regarding the home practice
- This has the dual goals of sharing and learning from one another, and helping participants to expand their thinking in their own everyday lives.
- You can write these questions on the board to help everyone remember them
- Home practice check-in questions:
  - Did you commit to something this past week?
  - How did it go? What did you notice, even if you didn't do it?
  - Did you use any strategies from the previous weeks to help you enact your valued behavior?
    - Passengers metaphor
    - Defusion strategies
    - Inviting your wise and kind passenger to be present.
    - (If so: How did that work for you? What was helpful about connecting to that or bringing that in?

### **Exercise: What Do You Want Your Life To Stand For? (25 minutes)**

## **1. Introduction** (5 minutes)

- One of the things that we often hear regardless of whether people have been diagnosed with an early stage curable cancer or one that is more aggressive is that a cancer diagnosis can force us to face the reality of our limited time on earth. Regardless of one's prognosis, and even though you may now have a completely clean bill of health, would you say that getting a diagnosis of cancer can sometimes makes you think more about your own mortality? (ask for head nod). Facing mortality almost always brings fear and uncertainty ...and yet we can also harness some of its power to enhance valued living in the moment.
- To help us harness some of this power, would you be willing to do an eyes - closed exercise with me?
- In this exercise, we're going to address the question of "what do you want your life to stand for"? Over the next several minutes I'm going to ask you to imagine a celebration of your life. . . we can do this one of two ways. You can do this one of two ways:
  - Some people in previous groups have found it very powerful to imagine this as an "end of life celebration" however many years or decades in the future. Others, prefer instead to imagine that this is a "big birthday" celebration. Some important birthday to you at some point in the future. In a moment I am going to walk you through this "celebration". So take a moment now to decide internally what kind of celebration you would like to focus in on.
- This exercise can be uplifting, emotional or surprising, or it may just help you get in touch with what you've known all along. Let's just see what happens. Are you willing to give it a try?

## **2. Exercise:** What do you want your life to stand for? (15 minutes plus another 5 minutes to write)

BEFORE WE BEGIN, please open up your workbooks to the blank 'personal reflections' sheets at the back and let's make sure everyone has a pen. You can put those aside now – we'll return to them later.

In this "what do you want your life to stand for" exercise we'll start by relaxing and then we're going to take an imaginary trip to help us get in touch with what kind of impact we want our lives to have and we want to be remembered for. Please imagine as well as you can, giving it your all, while not beating yourself up if it's challenging to imagine.



*Note to leader: GO SLOWLY, allow sufficient time (a full 30-60 seconds plus) for each imagined person to make their tribute.*

1. To begin with, please gently close your eyes, and connect with your breathing. Please let go of what we spoke of earlier and direct your attention towards your breath coming in and going out. (*enter mindfulness state for 1-2 minutes*).
2. Now, let's say that you have lived a full life and are continuing to live a full life – the people who mean the most to you hold a “HUGE CELEBRATION” in your honor. It could be 5, 10, 15, or 25 years from now...whenever you feel you have reached a future major milestone in terms of your age or it could be at the very end of your life.
3. You will be taking in the toasts and tributes offered by everyone important to you. Just imagine this situation, get yourself into the room of a “HUGE CELEBRATION” emotionally. Now imagine who you'd want to be there. Really see and take in everyone who you'd want there. The guests could be people and also beloved pets or animals. You can even invite the spirits of those important people in your life who may have passed away by this point. Even if you can't quite picture everyone precisely, you can imagine and feel their presence (*pause*).
4. OK, now I want you to visualize what you want the people who were part of your life to celebrate and appreciate you for – maybe you're not even doing these things right now, but you'd like to be doing them and you'd like to be acknowledged for them. What do you want to be appreciated for? Allow that question to sink in. In a moment, we're going to move person to person and invite them to tell you exactly what they're going to appreciate and celebrate you for.
5. What would you like your spouse or partner to say about you? If you are not partnered, imagine what you would want a future partner or dear friend to say about you. Imagine them giving you a tribute. What do you want them to say? Have them say that. Really be bold here and don't hold anything back! Let him or her say exactly what you would most want them to say if you had total freedom and choice about what that would be (*pause*).
6. Now, what would you like your children to remember you for? If you don't have children, you can imagine here future children or anyone or any living being for whom you've played a loving and nurturing role for, including animals and pets. Even if you have not actually lived up to what you would

want, let them communicate it as you would most want it to be. If you could have them say *anything*, what would you want that to be? *(pause)*

7. Now what would you want other family members at your Celebration to say about you – parents, brothers, sisters, cousins, nieces, nephews, aunts or uncles, and so forth? If you could have them say *anything*, what would you most want that to be? *(pause)*
8. What would you want your friends to say about you, to remember you for? Don't hold anything back – be bold here about what you want them to appreciate and celebrate about you *(pause)*
9. What about your co-workers, past or present? *(pause)*
10. What about people you've known through any group or community, such as thru volunteering, high school or college, clubs or teams, neighbors, teaching or participating in classes, exercise or healing communities, religious or spiritual communities? People who may not be close friends but whom you've connected with through communal activity? What would you hope they would say about you? *(pause)*
11. Last but not least, what do you want to say to yourself? What do you imagine being most proud of? Most wanting to celebrate yourself for? *(pause)*
12. Okay, now just sit here and bask in what everyone has said about you. Reflect silently to yourself: How does it feel to have heard those things? *(pause)*
13. What moved you the most? *(pause)*
14. Did anything surprise you? Or affirm what you already know? *(pause a minute or two, depending on where the group seems to be.)*
15. Okay now . . . When you're ready, very slowly begin to feel the chair under you, and draw your attention back to being in this room...*(pause)*...When you're ready, please open your eyes and staying in silence, pick up your pen and take the next few (5) minutes to jot down the things that people said about you in the 'personal reflections' pages of your workbook.
  - Who was there?
  - What did they say?
  - What did you want to say to yourself?
  - Did anything surprise you or affirm what you already know?

## Exercise Debriefing (~13 minutes)

**Can do as a Large Group OR may split into two smaller groups so they have more time to talk amongst themselves (If split into smaller independent groups put questions up on board to contemplate).**

**Note 1:** In our experience, some participants have a very easy and others a very hard time doing eyes-closed imagery-related exercises such as this one. Affirm and make room for those who had a hard time, and still ask them what they would like people to say, even if they can't picture the party or people's faces.

**Note 2:** Initially focus on PROCESS, less emphasis on content until later.

### *Basic questions:*

- What stood out for you as you thought about what you wanted to be remembered for? What was that process like for you?
- What surprised you?
- Did you have a hard time coming up with things? Stepping inside and honoring and taking seriously what you really want to be about? Not minimizing and really going for the largeness of what you want to be about?
- (Recognize themes: if I say it, I'm responsible for it and I could fail)
- Did anyone stand up and say something about you that you haven't yet realized yet? In other words, something that you want to be remembered for that you're not currently doing, that your current behaviors are not aligned with?

### *Challenging fusion and avoidance:*

- Did anyone stand up and say, "Here I remember that you spent your entire life trying to prove that were not \_\_\_\_\_." (fill in words from "Words that Hook You" worksheet...worthless, useless, lazy, unlovable, stupid)
- (If relevant): Did anyone stand up and remember you as someone who was a failure or loser for having cancer? Or a failure or loser as a cancer patient?
- So one thing to notice is that a lot of the stories our minds tell us really do not reflect our aspirations for ourselves, or how others see us – or have the potential to see us. We often beat ourselves up for things that have little or no connection to what we truly value.

- **At the end:** Thank everyone for their willingness to engage in a challenging and emotional exercise, and to share what they learned with the group.

### Break (3-5 minutes)

- It may need to be a particularly short break today because of all there is to do.

### Begin Values-Based Goal Setting & Home Practice (20 minutes)

- Perhaps in this “Celebration” exercise you heard affirmations of who you already are, values you’re already fulfilling. Perhaps you also heard ways of being that you still aspire to? (*look for head nods*)
- So with these aspirations in mind, let’s spend the next 15 minutes or so exploring goals that align with the life that we value, the life that we wish to be celebrated for. Perhaps this is a life that often deeply reflects the values we named in the upper right of our Compass.
- One thing that I want to say before we do this is that it can feel overwhelming to think that we now have to do these things ALL THE TIME. But we DON’T. That would likely drive us crazy to even attempt and would likely be rigid and unwise. Instead, let’s consider what very small, tiny steps we can take to realize more of the things we want to be remembered for. If you think back to what has been truly helpful and meaningful to you in dealing with cancer, how many of you remember tiny actions like a kind word, look, touch of a caring health professional, friend or loved one? How much time did that take? Not long. Neither must our meaningful actions be very big.
- Please turn now to the page in your workbook titled “Setting Values-Based Goals”
  - SAY: Setting values-based goals is a way to help us use our values to set goals for ourselves.
  - If there’s time, walk through this worksheet with participants in group and address questions as they arise. If there’s no time, have them complete it at home. If there’s time, give group quiet time to work individually on completing this.

Introduce as you notice people finishing up the Setting Values-Based Goals worksheet (*If no more time in group then give this as Home Practice*)

- SAY: When you are done with this first page, and it's fine if you're not then turn to the next page ("My Valued Action Plan"). Please choose one of the shorter or medium-term goals and complete the "My Valued Action Plan" worksheet. This is a way to get much more specific about translating a goal into a concrete action plan and working skillfully with barriers that might arise.
- Give group time to work individually on completing this.

### **Closing Circle / Debriefing (10 minutes)**

Leaders and Group members are encouraged to go around in the circle and share one of the value-based goals from the worksheet that they wish to focus on (The 2 leaders are encouraged to model this first and last)

### **Reflections Forms (5 minutes)**

- Complete the Session 6 Reflections Forms and put in envelopes

### **Additional Thoughts for Leaders to Consider**

- Continue to help participants notice when death or illness-related bus passengers show up and how they respond to them
- Some mindfulness and acceptance exercises of the feelings that arise in us when we think about dying? What does thinking about dying trigger and bring up for us? Panic? Fear? Anger/ rage? Peace? Urgency? Defiance?
  - Is there a way to help participants also balance acceptance and change, meaning that although we should encourage them to enact valued behaviors and move closer to what they ideally want to be remembered for, there's also a sense by some cancer patients that it will "never be enough". That is, "even if I'm a great mom for the next few years, if I die of this I will still not be there for my kids when they are teenagers and need me the most," etc.

- For such concerns, is there a way to foster acceptance towards the feelings of anger and powerlessness that can arise from this experience, and to also foster (even the possibility of) acceptance and confidence in “whatever I do, it will be the best that I can give, and that’s okay”?

## Week 6: Brief Session Outline

### **Valued Living Week 6 basic outline with approximate timing**

*As participants arrive:* have complete session-by-session measure and sign in

#### **0:00-0:10 Introduction and Centering**

- Welcome everyone back and introduce this week's session
- Very briefly review group agreements, as needed
- Lead chime-focused centering exercise (5 minutes)

#### **0:10-0:35 Home Practice Check In (Opening Circle)**

- List questions on board
- Give everyone, including leaders, a chance to briefly respond

#### **0:35-0:07 Exercise: What Do You Want Your Life to Stand For?**

- Introduce exercise
- Lead exercise
- At end, invite everyone to write about what they imagined

#### **0:07-1:20 Exercise Debriefing**

- In large or smaller groups
- Focus on process of imagining the celebration, then later on content

#### **1:20-1:25 Break**

#### **1:25-1:45 Introduce and Begin to Complete Values-Based Goal Setting**

- Introduce Values-Based Goal Setting worksheet from workbook
- Then introduce Setting Values Based Goals worksheet from workbook
- If time, begin or complete one or both in group

#### **1:45-1:55 Closing Circle/ Debriefing**

- Everyone (including leaders) share a values-based goal or two they'd like to focus on

#### **1:55-2:00 Reflections sheets (place in designated envelope)**

## **Week 7: Living Your Legacy**

Session intention: Build on work from last session and throughout the group to help group members keep moving forward in meaningful life directions after the groups ends today, to work skillfully with barriers as they arise, and for all of us to say a meaningful goodbye to one another.

Avoid traps of: Judging group members for not making sufficient progress, reassuring survivors that they'll be fine/healthy (when the future is uncertain), not sharing your own experience of the group, forcing quiet group members to share an effusive goodbye

Bring to group: copy of review of tools handouts, envelopes for letters to self, contact list sheet to pass around, extra participant workbook handouts, reflections sheets, pens and paper, S1 Compass

As participants arrive: Have them complete session-by-session measure and place in designated envelope, write agenda outline up on board

### **Introduction (10 mins)**

1. Welcome people back
  - a. Start on time, as long as half the group is here
  - b. Today's topic: Living Your Legacy – Our last group!! Which involves focusing on living our legacy each day... and also troubleshooting and getting back on track when we feel we're not living according to our values
2. Very briefly restate group agreements
  - a. confidentiality
  - b. openness to new ways of thinking/experiencing/being – inviting awareness and compassion when experiencing judging thoughts
  - c. respecting your own and other's boundaries
3. Discuss final three sets of online questionnaires
  - a. In about a week, we will send you another set of online questionnaires, and then another 3 and 6 months after that.
  - b. Thank you in advance for sharing your time and perspective with us. It is extremely important that you complete them if you are at all able to



do so! It's important for the future of groups like this one here and elsewhere.

- c. As before, we will pay you \$25 for completed each online survey, with a \$25 bonus if you complete all 5 of them over the course of the study.
- d. Please also continue tracking your medical appointments on your appointment tracker, which you are also paid \$50 over the course of the study.

### Opening Circle (30 mins)

It's our last group! We want to facilitate your continued connections and will pass around a contact list today, and encourage you to stay in touch if you'd like.

Today we want to do a few things that reflect on looking back and looking ahead...

Explain before we start that we will be going around in a circle and responded to each of the following questions (the other leader should write these on the board):

1. Talk about **1 thing** that they've learned or **1 way** that they have seen themselves grow in the course of the group (if the group hasn't led to growth for you, but you've grown from other sources, that's fine to mention instead)
2. Tell us 1-2 things that you have learned or experienced here (or elsewhere) that have facilitated that for you.
3. For each person, we will take 1 volunteer from the group (including the facilitators) to state **one** thing that we have seen grow or change in you over the course of the group/ these past 7 weeks.

ANYONE can volunteer to say something, and we will only take 1 volunteer per person to share about that person, but if you'd like to tell that person what you have seen (and you don't get to share it) tell them after group today or during the break.

One of us will model this to start...

the other leader be prepared to jump in and offer a reflection for the leader who starts

one leader should go first, and the other leader can go last or second

### Letter to Self (10 minutes)

**Hand out Course Review: Give handout**

Introduce by SAYING: In order to tap our own wisdom and carry it forward into the future, please write a letter to yourself that address the following:

“When I feel stuck or stressed about cancer or otherwise, I want to remind myself that...”

(one leader should write this phrase out on the board for participants to refer to)

SAY: These letters are private – They just for you to see and benefit from.

We will pass out paper and envelopes so that you can seal your letter and address it to yourself. We will then collect them and send them to you in a month.

Afterwards SAY:

- In addition to the worksheet, the “looking back, looking ahead” worksheet in your workbook can also help you to continue doing this work
- You can also refer to the resource guide at the back of your workbook for further resources.

### **Break (5 minutes)**

- Pass around contact sheet during the break for anybody who wants to share their contact information with the other group members – emphasizing that nobody has to sign in – only if they want to

### **The Legacy of *Small Committed Actions* (20 mins)**

- Legacy can feel overwhelming – how many of us feel that it can be overwhelming, urgent, or burdensome to feel that we must leave a legacy? (invite show of hands)
- Legacy can feel really huge – like you have to have a building or foundation named after you or something of that magnitude and concreteness. However, seen more broadly and flexibly, legacy can also be seen as a series of small committed actions that impact others in meaningful ways. We can live our legacy/put our legacy into practice everyday, with flexibility and compassion towards ourselves and others.

Would you be willing to do a brief eyes closed exercise with me to explore this possibility?

- Please close your eyes. Focus on your breathing, watching the breath coming in and out (do breath and body mindfulness for a few moments to re-center).

- Now think of the people who are most meaningful and loving towards you. Who are they? Imagine them in your mind. Now pick one to focus on – no pressure to pick the most important one – just pick one.
- Try to think of a specific day, event, moment, or instance in which this person showed their love and support for you in a way that had a positive impact on you. What did this person say or do that was so important and meaningful to you?
- Try to picture it as clearly as possible in your mind, in as much detail as you can, word for word if possible. <pause for a minute or two>
- When you're ready, gently take in the sounds of the room, and open your eyes
- Please write down: How long was this loving interaction with the person you imagined? In other words, how much time did this loving interaction take?

Leaders Note: One trap of “legacy” is that they can make us feel really rigid and fused with whatever it is we think we should or even genuinely want to do. Genuinely wanting to do something can quickly turn into “I must do this right away and do as much of it as possible!”. This approach drains the fun and spontaneity of life and make otherwise enjoyable things feel obligatory and heavy.

- What is the function of one's future plan? Look for fusion and avoidance
- Moving away and returning = definition of committed action

### **RELLECT BRIEFLY IN LARGE GROUP**

- If time: Share reflections in pairs/ groups of 3. THEN:
- Poll the room: How many thought about an action that took more than one day? Less than one day? Less than an hour? Less than 15 minutes? 5 minutes? 1 minute? (have people raise their hands)
- Do you see how much impact you can have in a very short amount of time? With a small valued action? You don't need to live forever, or even more than a few months or days, to have the kind of impact that a few quality minutes foster...

### **Closing Circle: A Standing Commitment (20 mins)**

- This is an exercise in standing up for ourselves and what we value and envision for ourselves. (or, if you prefer, standing up to commit to something...in a public way)

- Note: You can look back at your notebook and see what you wrote for valued actions you want to do that would move you forward in your life.
  - Explain that people are more likely to follow through on public commitments than private ones. So now we're going to ask each of us to say out loud, standing up in front of the group, exactly what you're committing to. This may feel strange or awkward- I know it did the first time I did it- but it can be powerful and motivating. Plus, we are clearly all rooting for you!!
  - So, if you are willing, let's take turns standing up and saying out loud exactly what we're committing to- as you say it, just notice what comes up inside of you.
1. Please stand and state the valued action you want to commit to.
  2. State 1-2 things you want to keep in mind to coach and maintain compassion for yourself as you move in this direction.
- Who is willing to go first? Say it out loud, like you really mean it. (Coach members to speak loudly and confidently even if they don't feel that way. Have them repeat the commitment if it's too hesitant the first time)
  - Therapists should participate too. Reflect together on what arose when you did this. It's common to feel uncomfortable.
  - Leaders: Coach participants to get to part 2, not just part 1, and to say it like they really mean it – to speak confidently even if they don't feel that way...Invite them to repeat their commitment if it's too hesitant the first time
  - Ask, if needed: Are you each willing to make room for those thoughts and feelings in order to do what you care about, what most deeply matters?

### **Lovingkindness Meditation (5-10 minutes)**

Do lovingkindness meditation for other group members and their passengers and then bring back to self with phrases.

Once everyone has finished, offer a lovingkindness meditation with the function of cultivating the capacity to love and appreciate self and others and shift perspective:

SAY: Now we're going to do a brief lovingkindness meditation out loud, in which we repeat phrases of love and kindness towards others and ourselves. Our intention is to cultivate a sense of warmth and well-being for everyone here, as we close out our

group together.

SAY: I'll repeat a series of phrases and then I want you as a group to repeat each phrase after me, with as much kindness and warm intention as you can muster.

SAY: To begin, please imagine another group member or person you know for whom you naturally feel compassion...

SAY:

**May you have compassion for yourself.**

[leave time for group to repeat this phrase out loud]

**May you be kind towards yourself.**

[leave time for group to repeat this phrase out loud]

**May you love and accept yourself as you are.**

[leave time for group to repeat this phrase out loud]

**May you love and accept your life as it is.**

[leave time for group to repeat this phrase out loud]

**Repeat** this series of phrases 2 more times (once more if short on time)

**Then** direct towards self:

**May I have compassion for myself.**

**Repeat** this series of phrases 2 more times (once more if short on time)

**May I be kind towards myself.**

[leave time for group to repeat this phrase out loud]

**May I love and accept myself as I am.**

[leave time for group to repeat this phrase out loud]

**May I love and accept my life as it is.**

[leave time for group to repeat this phrase out loud]

**Repeat** this series of phrases 2 more times (once more if short on time)

**Then** direct towards the whole group:

May we all have compassion for ourselves.

**Repeat** this series of phrases 2 more times (once more if short on time)

May we all be kind towards ourselves.

**Repeat** this series of phrases 2 more times (once more if short on time)

May we all love and accept ourselves as we are.

**Repeat** this series of phrases 2 more times (once more if short on time)

May we all love and accept our lives as they are.

**Repeat** this series of phrases 2 more times (once more if short on time)

**Repeat** this series of phrases 2 more times (once more if short on time)

Just take a moment to sit with the energy we've generated...[pause 30-60 seconds]

Then, when you're ready, gently open your eyes

**Thank you**

<h2>Reflection Forms (5 minutes)</h2>
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- Complete the Session 7 Reflections Forms and put in envelopes

## Week 7: Brief Session Outline

### Valued Living Week 7 basic outline with approximate timing

*As participants arrive:* have complete session-by-session measure and sign in

#### 0:00-0:10 Introduction and Welcome

- Welcome everyone back and introduce this week's session
- Very briefly review group agreements, as needed
- Discuss future online surveys and medical appointment tracking

#### 0:10-0:50 Opening Circle

- List questions on board
- Limit to one additional sharer for each group member

#### 0:50-0:60 Letter Writing Exercise

- Pass out paper and envelopes; Have them address envelopes to themselves
- Write phrase "When I feel stuck or stressed about cancer (or others), I want to remind myself..." on board
- After they write themselves a letter, collect the letters to send later

#### 1:00-1:05 Break

#### 1:05-1:25 The Legacy of *Small* Committed Actions

- Introduce exercise
- Facilitate exercise
- Briefly debrief in large group

#### 1:25-1:45 Closing Circle: Standing Up for Ourselves

- Everyone stand and share (with confidence):
  - A values-based goal or two they'd like to commit to, moving forward
  - 1-2 things they'd like to keep in mind to compassionately coach themselves as they move in this direction
- Leaders go first and last

#### 1:45-1:55 Lovingkindness Meditation

#### 1:55-2:00 Reflections sheets (place in designated envelope)

## **“VALUED-LIVING” TOOLS THAT WE’VE EXPLORED**

- 1) “Compass” Model
  - a. Clarifying and connecting with what you value
  - b. ‘Towards’ and ‘Away’ moves – choosing to move towards values
  - c. Observing whether what we do to move away from inner pain or emotional discomfort works in the short vs. long term
- 2) Shifting our relationship to fears/worries
  - a. “Passengers on a Bus” metaphor
  - b. Becoming aware of passengers and observing how we respond to them
  - c. Choosing to accept/ open towards/ allow instead of struggle against
  - d. Having compassion for one’s “passengers”
  - e. “Wise & Kind Passenger”
  - f. Using defusion techniques (to give some space between myself and my mind)
    - i. Just noticing what my mind is telling me
    - ii. Labeling: “I’m having the thought that . . . . “
    - iii. Notice the form of the thought (using all senses)
    - iv. Pretend the present is in the past (shift my perspective in time)
    - v. Take the perspective of a loved on or wise & kind presence
    - vi. Reflect on through using 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person
    - vii. “Thank” my mind for the thought or image
    - viii. Use humor: “That’s a nice one mind!” “Good one!”
    - ix. “And” not “but”
    - x. Sing to a goofy song/say in a goofy way
- 3) Mindfulness
  - a. Brief 3-minute Mindfulness exercises
  - b. Loving kindness/Compassion Meditation
- 4) Focusing on Values and Committed Action
  - a. Committing to small actions that reflect personal values
  - b. Remembering what others value in you / “Celebration of Your Life”
  - c. Setting value-based goals / valued action plan
  - d. Troubleshooting barriers and passengers that may show up
- 5) Living your Legacy in everyday moments



## **Additional Readings and Workbooks**

### Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT):

*The Happiness Trap: How to Stop Struggling and Start Living.* Author: Russ Harris, MD, 2008.

*Things Might Go Terribly, Horribly Wrong: A Guide to Life Liberated from Anxiety.* Authors: Kelly Wilson, PhD, and Troy DuFrene, MA, 2010. (Note: Dr. Wilson is a cancer survivor)

*Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life: The New Acceptance and Commitment Therapy.* Authors: Steven Hayes, PhD, and Spencer Smith, 2005.

*Finding Life Beyond Trauma: Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to Heal from Post-traumatic Stress and Trauma-related Problems.* Authors: Victoria M. Follette, PhD and Jacqueline Pistorello, PhD, 2007.

### Mindfulness and Cancer:

*Here for Now: Living Well with Cancer through Mindfulness,* 2007.  
*Being Well (even when you're sick): Mindfulness Practices for People with Cancer and other Serious Illnesses,* 2012.  
Author: Elana Rosenbaum

*Mindfulness-based Cancer Recovery: A Step-by-Step MBSR Approach to Help you Cope with Treatment and Reclaim Your Life.* Authors: Linda Carlson, PhD, Michael Speca, PsyD, Zindel Siegal, PhD, 2011.

*Mindfulness Meditation for Pain Relief: Guided Practices for Reclaiming Your Body and Your Life.* Author: Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD, 2009.

*Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Cancer.* Author: Trish Bartley, 2012.

**Free guided audio files on mindfulness and lovingkindness meditations similar to the ones we did in group are available online in many places, including:**

Mindful Awareness Research Center at UCLA  
(scroll down to the Lovingkindness meditation, among others):

<http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22>

Center for Mindfulness at UCSD

(scroll down to the Lovingkindness meditation, among others):

<http://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/programs/mbsr/Pages/audio.aspx>

## ***Personal Reflection***

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