

Cost of Avoidance and Control Exercise

Use this exercise to assess the costs of attempting to avoid or control difficult or distressing thoughts and emotions. Your responses can be used to support your personal development, or as part of an Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) process under the guidance of a trained therapist.

1. Describe a thought or emotion that you have been attempting to avoid or control? This could be a feeling like anxiety, a sensation like back-pain or thoughts and images about a distressing or traumatic event.

2. List everything that you have attempted to do to avoid or control this problem.

3. What has this level of avoidance and control cost you in terms of the things that are important to you, e.g. confidence, health, relationships, missed opportunities, career, personal values etc.?

4. If this approach has not resolved the underlying problem in the long-run, which avoidance and control strategies are you willing to let go of?

5. What uncomfortable thoughts and emotions will you need to make room for if you let go of the avoidance and control?

6. What will you achieve in the longer-term if you focus on what you want, rather than what you feel you must avoid or attempt to control?

7. How will this help you to move closer to your goals and personal values?