

Getting Wise to Your Mind:

Making the Most of University Life

Making the Most of University Life is a course that will help you to understand yourself better, and to understand your Mind. The course is based on *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)*. ACT helps people to overcome their distress using techniques such as 'Mindfulness'. ACT also aims to help people to understand how to live in accordance with their own important values. This course is all about you having a better life.

Your Are Not Your Mind

Some of our actions are under our conscious and deliberate control, but many of our actions are controlled automatically by our *Mind* e.g. breathing / walking. It is useful if ordinary routine actions are carried out automatically, however, it is often better to do some things 'thoughtfully' or 'mindfully' e.g. shopping 'wisely' rather than impulsively. It can be unhelpful to allow our Mind to decide what we will do and can lead to a lot of unnecessary distress.

How the Mind Works:

1. Your Mind does its own thing—you have no control over the many things it does
2. Your Mind constantly judges, compares and searches for meanings / patterns
3. Your Mind tries to figure out what's going on and often jumps to conclusions
4. Your Mind wanders (it travels through time)
5. Your Mind is always looking out for threats and is very cautious to avoid danger
6. Your Mind is often highly critical and is likely to be very critical of YOU

Your Mind's wandering will often take your attention away from what's going on *in the moment*, and it may take you to places and issues that you find worrying or upsetting. When this happens you cannot switch your Mind off so the best thing to do is simply to acknowledge what is going through your mind and 'let it be'.

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Unhelpful Mind

The Mind evolved to keep us safe so it is **always looking out for potential threats**. This can lead the Mind to be over-sensitive and make mistakes, even when there is no real danger. Therefore, the Mind can be cautious and hold us back from doing anything different or daring. This may then stop us from doing things that could make our life better.

The Mind **constantly compares things** and it often makes negative comparisons which can make us feel low or anxious. Even when things are going ok, your Mind might say “it won’t last”, “it’s not as good as...”.

The Mind can be very **critical**, and it is often particularly critical and hurtful towards ourselves.

What Can We Do?

It is very important to remember that you do not have to believe everything your Mind tells you or go along with its ideas!

When we know our Mind has got it wrong, it is useful to ignore the Mind’s unnecessary warnings and to do the WISE thing instead. This isn’t always very easy and may take a lot of courage.

Feel the Fear and Do it Anyway

It is helpful to become more thoughtful and take more control over our actions, so that they become less ‘automatic’; less ‘mindless’ and MORE MINDFUL.

Remember, your Mind travels here and there, back and forth in time. But YOU (the observer) are always here and in the present.

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