**Dealing with being stuck**

"You are stuck because you care"

**Two things to do to get out of being stuck**

**1. Start doing tasks and seeing people you have started to avoid. (avoidance feeds the fear)**

**2. Mindful anchor.** The enables your brain to think constructively and hold negative thoughts, emotions, memories, feelings lightly. **Holding them lightly is crucial. (i.e hold things lightly)**

**-How to do the mindful anchor.** The mindful anchor – training the mind to be constructive.

Sit with feet on the ground (and hand on heart) and think of the painful thought(s).

-notice it

-name it

-soften around it (self-compassion/self-kindness step)

-let it go (step back from it)

-what is now possible

1. **Why tasks and seeing people:** You cannot think your way out of being stuck- you need to act and do things.
2. **Learn to trust your experience** (when that has been positive not what your mind says) – as below thoughts are not facts and holding them lightly can help.
3. **Accept what you cannot change and commit to what you can.**

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The brain is not designed for thinking. Its role is to keep us alive. When confronted with a personal issue it will look for the delete button which does not exist (see below).

Handy quotes for mood and stress issues

**The mind is the great liar.**

**Thoughts are not facts.**

Be open to outcome not attached to outcome

Need to be committed but not attached

Don't look back it is not where you are going

**Your brain/mind can be your friend and your enemy.**

**It can be wise or it can be busy- get out of your head into your body**

Your mind is very good at problem-solving so when you are crossing the road it is your friend as it stops you from harm. However, problem-solving is not good for thoughts, feelings, emotions, memories and sensations as it will make good/bad judgements (seeing them as dangerous cars) and that is not helpful. The mind has the capacity to connect events so can remind you that you failed a maths exam when you were 8 and an argument with a friend when you were eleven and join that up to something that went wrong today. It has no on/off button and no delete button.

**The mind has no delete button** and can recall all past negative events. To manage in life **you need to hold these thoughts lightly** when they come, and try and accept (but not condone) them. I use a physical metaphor and cup my hands in front of me when I do this. The mind does not like uncomfortable thoughts such as “ I am unloveable, I am not good enough” and sees them as a danger (like a tiger) and wishes to get away from them. However there is nowhere to run nowadays so that is when we get anxious and instead of avoiding the thoughts we start to avoid seeing people and places (we shrink our lives). This takes away a source of pleasure and reward and can make our situation worse. Thus holding them lightly is important.

**Reduced motivation**

If your motivation is reduced do not

1. Spend extra time in bed when not asleep
2. Do not drink alcohol or drugs to make yourself feel better
3. But do Keep physically fit

**Too much accelerator and not enough brake**

The human body- one is the accelerator which enables you to run from danger or fight the danger (busy mind). The other enables you to be calm (wise mind). In modern society there are very physical dangers so our minds keep themselves occupied with our thoughts and fears and tries to problem solve. Problem solving only works for practical issues in the physical world and does not work in the personal world when we are for example insulted by a friend or colleague or something goes wrong at work. The mind goes round in circles and the solutions often become the new problem e.g. we start avoiding people and places.

**How to get more brake and less accelerator**

1. Be physically fit (regular [daily] moderate to vigorous exercise for at least 30 minutes)
2. Use mindfulness or slowing your breathing e.g. 3 seconds in and 5 seconds out.
3. Be curious about your negative thoughts and feels e.g. I notice that not being good enough is back- how big is that thought; does it have a shape a colour etc – this is enough to trigger off the brake.

**The need for self-compassion in most humans. Cultivating the voice of self-kindness.**

It is curious that many humans find that their minds can be quite judgemental about them and their activities. I wonder if this is due to too much attention to the negative part of the brain that is trying to keep you alive (we need 3 to 5 good experiences to offset one bad one). Professor Paul Gilbert one of the founders of Compassion Focussed Therapy talks about the need to cultivate the voice of kindness in each of our minds. Perhaps it is one of the tasks of being truly adult is to cultivate that voice. Try Kristen Neff website (Texas expert -

https://self-compassion.org/

**Retraining your mind -learning to be comfortable with distress.**

The mind is the great liar. You need to give it something constructive to do rather than spinning your wheels on matters it cannot help. This is where your exercise of hand on heart feet on the ground comes into its own (the mindful anchor). When you feel discomfort use your exercise until the feeling passes or lessens. We call this the mindful anchor.

**Perform under pressur**e–From Dr Ceri Evans Psychiatrist and motivation coach to the All Blacks

Think of situations on a red-blue line. Red is where you feel overwhelmed but do have energy. There are three steps (1) Step back and see where your reaction to the situation sits on the red blue line (acceptance) (2) Step up to a higher performance plane to gain an overview of the situation (values) (3) Step in to the higher plane and take action (using some of that energy from the red zone) (committed action).

**What is anxiety or feeling stuck**

It is the mind seeing real and imagined threats to your welfare. Your mind then starts to over-focus on those threats and becomes busy resulting in difficulty in focussing your attention and concentration.

Anxiety is uncomfortable but it is not dangerous in any way.

You may feel like you are going crazy but with that insight, it means you are not.

It is like having too much accelerator (busy mind) versus brake (wise mind).

Attempts to remove anxiety make it worse. These usually involve avoiding people or places or thoughts and feelings. It is common for people to keep doing these things even when they know they are not working.

Anxiety is a powerful force. We are not trying to get rid of it but rather use it for helpful activities that are good for us.

Anxiety is often a signal that we care about something in life. It may feel like there is something wrong with you whereas there is something right about you.

**What to do about it**

The aim of what we are trying to do: is to train the mind to be able to direct your attention when and where you wish to direct it even when your busy mind wants to go elsewhere.

We do this by using the mindful anchor – anxiety likes being in the future or the past and cannot do the present. The anchor puts you in the present moment.

We will work with you to learn to hold still in the presence of anxiety to see what information it is carrying.

We will work with you to attach a different meaning to the experience of anxiety.

We will suggest you make some changes using the above skills to stay with any discomfort that shows up.