

Mindful Coping Group
(RIO-based workshop)
Student Workbook

Student Counseling Center
Pacific University

Welcome to the Mindful Coping Group! We hope that you find the group helpful in learning to recognize and better manage the concerns and struggles of life. Mindful Coping, a RIO-based workshop, is specifically designed to help you get a better idea of what you want to change and how to get there. In order to get the most out of the group, it is important to complete all 3 sessions in addition to the exercises in this workbook. What is RIO? RIO stands for **R**ecognition, **I**nsight, and **O**penness. It is specifically designed to help people with their emotional concerns. Many of us think in terms of problems (i.e., what we don't like about ourselves, what's wrong with our lives, etc.) and forget to focus on what we actually want in our lives. It is almost as if we believe that erasing the unwanted parts of our lives would leave us with no problems.

Simply reducing pain does not guarantee pleasure. This is why it is important to create a clear vision of what we want in our lives. Creating a vision of change supports our motivation for making the change, provides us with a roadmap to our desired goal(s), and shows us where we are on the journey of change.

As you begin your journey, please remember **change is not linear**. Be prepared for setbacks. Snags can be due to any number of factors including difficult situational events, changes in motivation, sliding back into old habits, fear of the unknown, etc. Many people find that they take one step back for every two steps forward. That's okay. You could see this as an obstacle, or you could embrace this as a natural rhythm of the change process. **The main goals of this group are to give you tools to recognize your concerns and to develop a clearer idea of what you want to change in your life.** Once you have developed your roadmap to change, you will have a better idea of where you need to go. You may decide to continue on your own or enlist other resources such as friends, family, advisors, professors, or professionals to help you reach your goals. You may even decide that this is not the right time for you to continue this change process, and you would rather focus your energy on other priorities. Whatever you decide, we can support you in your process and hope that this group will help clarify your goals. If, at any time, you feel that you need additional support, please let your group facilitator(s) know or contact Student Counseling Center at 503.352.2191.

About Psychological Pain

Everyone experiences psychological pain. This could be sadness, anger, anxiety, heartbreak, embarrassment, etc. Not only is pain normal, but it communicates important information about our experiences. Much like how the pain from a paper cut tells us that we have an injury, psychological pain serves a similar function. Most of us take care to minimize how often we feel psychological pain, but some pain in life is inevitable. Some of us try to minimize our pain so much that we unintentionally cause other problems or more pain. For example, someone who experiences anxiety when meeting new people may choose to avoid these types of interactions. Although the person will be successful in avoiding the anxiety of meeting someone new, that person may create other experiences, such as loneliness or sadness from missing out on new experiences. Furthermore, some methods of minimizing or avoiding pain can have more significant consequences. For example, someone might choose to manage anxiety with alcohol or other drugs, learn to shut off or numb feelings completely, or stay continuously busy to the point of physically exhausting or otherwise negatively impacting their body.

By changing our relationship with our psychological pain, we create flexibility. We do not have to get stuck with one option: avoiding pain. We can learn other strategies that will add a variety of tools to our psychological tool box. This is one of the goals of the group. Although some amount of discomfort is inevitable throughout any change process, we want you to take care of yourselves and silently excuse yourself from any activity that feels like it is “too much.” You can simply sit quietly while the rest of the group finishes the exercise and re-join when you feel comfortable. If, at any time, you feel like you cannot be in the group session any longer, please notify your group facilitator or front desk staff.

***Make sure to bring this workbook with you to the group so that you can complete the in-session exercises.**

Session 1: Recognition

Journal Exercise 1: Facing the Current Situation

<p>What have I tried in an attempt to avoid, eliminate, or control my unwanted internal response? <i>(e.g., I don't attend parties because I am anxious when meeting new people)</i></p>	<p>What have these strategies prevented me from doing? <i>(e.g., I have missed out on several opportunities to see close friends, I haven't made any new friends, I'm lonely)</i></p>

Journal Exercise 2: Breathing Space

Journal Exercise 3: Arriving, Gathering, Expanding: AGE Technique

Journal Exercise 4: Recognition Homework

Take some time to breathe and practice learning to recognize your experience. Although we used the breath as a focus in Session 1, you can practice this skill with the other senses, visualization, or other guided meditations. You can lie on the ground with your feet up against the wall, noticing your breath, hand on your diaphragm. You can breathe in for a county of 4, hold your breath for a count of 7, and breathe out for a county of 8, repeating this 4-7-8 pattern four times. You can count your breath (each time you exhale, count one) to five, then start again at 1; you'll know your attention has wandered when you lose count or find yourself at higher numbers.

Write your practice plan below. At the conclusion of each practice session, please take some time to write down your reactions.

TIP: Remember to use language to add flexibility and space between yourself and your experience: "I'm having the thought..." or "I am having the feeling of..."

Session 2: Insight

Journal Exercise 1: Leaves on the Stream

Journal Exercise 2: Acceptance for Understanding

As you continue to reflect on the Acceptance for Understanding exercise, please record the details of your experience to the following questions.

Reactions to this exercise:

If you were to locate the experience within your body where would it reside?

How does it feel to have this experience as a physical sensation?

What does having this experience say about what's important to you, about your life, about yourself? Maybe what's missing in your life as a result of struggling. Remember: If it isn't important, you wouldn't be experiencing discomfort/pain.

Journal Exercise 3: Insight Homework

Take some time to reflect on your **Insight** about internal experiences by practicing what you learned from Sessions 1 & 2. Please take some time to write down your reactions.

TIP 1: Remember the Tug-of-War metaphor: Emotional pain is like a monster that wants to play “tug-of-war” with us. The goal is to understand what the pain means to us so that we can drop the rope instead of trying to fight the monster.

TIP 2: Remember to use “and” instead of “but” to increase flexibility in your thinking.

Session 3: Openness

Journal Exercise 1: Magic Wand

If you had a magic wand and could make all your discomfort disappear, what would be different? How would you act or be different? What would change in your life?

TIP: Remember to intentionally select your strategies:

- 1. Change: When we need to change something outside of ourselves.*
- 2. Openness: When we are experiencing uncomfortable thoughts, feelings, sensations, and etc.*

Journal Exercise 2: Acceptance of Pain and Struggling

As you continue to reflect on the Acceptance of Pain and Struggling exercise, please record the details of your experience in the following.

What has it been like to struggle with this experience?

What have I done to control this experience? Have my attempts to control my experience caused more distress or problems?

What have I given up in the service of trying to reduce or control my pain? In other words, what have I sacrificed in my life that is valuable?

Seminar 3 Worksheet: Values Compass

Values are what we find meaningful in life. They are what you care about and consider to be important. Values are different for everybody, and they can change over time. These are what we began to discuss in the Heading West Metaphor during the last RIO seminar. They aren't goals so much as a direction.

The domains below are valued by some people. Leaving aside any obstacles for the moment, think about what is important to you, and what you think makes for a meaningful life that you could value.

Family Relations

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

Physical Wellbeing

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

Partner Relationships

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

Citizenship / Community

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

Parenting

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

Spirituality

If applicable, what kind of relationship do you want with God(s) / nature / the Earth?

Social Relationships

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

Recreation

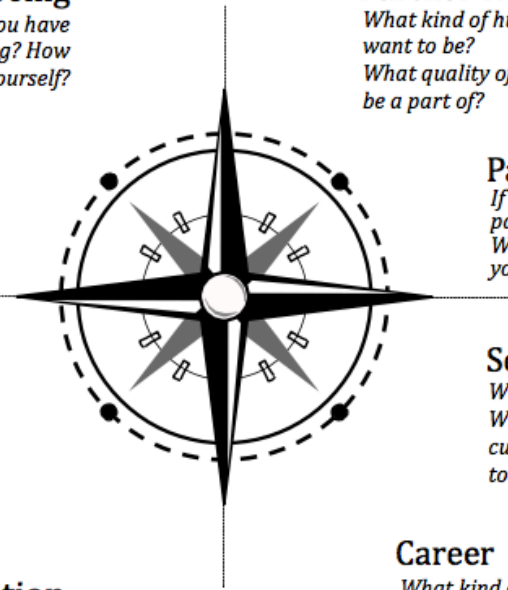
*How would you like to enjoy yourself?
What relaxes you?
When are you most playful?*

Career

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

Education/Growth


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



Adapted from Wilson, Sandoz, Kitchens & Roberts (2010). The Values Living Questionnaire: Defining and measuring valued action within a behavioral framework. *The Psychological Record*, 60, 249-272.

Journal Exercise 3: Values Compass

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

Physical Wellbeing	Family Relations	Partner Relationships
Citizenship/Community		Social Relationships
Spirituality		Parenting
Recreation	Education/Growth	Career

Journal Exercise 4: Reflect on your values

Consider these questions as you think about your values. You can refer back to values compass as necessary.

If you continue to avoid your unpleasant internal experiences, what impact is that having on your ability to live the way you want to live?

In your waiting for the unpleasant internal experiences to go away, does that impact your experience in the meantime?

What do you think would happen if, instead of waiting for an unwanted internal experience to go away before you started living your life to the fullest, you started living your life and openly accepting your experience?

TIP: Remember the “Heading West” metaphor: Values are a series of multiple journeys with milestones to let you know you are heading in your chosen direction. You can always keep heading west: it’s the journey, not the destination.