

RIO

Recognition...Insight...Openness

Student Workbook



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Welcome to RIO! We hope that you find RIO helpful in learning to recognize and better manage the concerns that led you to HSU Counseling Services. Many people pursue therapy with the idea that their therapist will know exactly how to “fix” them. RIO 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 RIO, it is important to complete all 3 seminars in addition to the reading and exercises in this workbook.

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 RIO 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 RIO will help clarify your goals.

If, at any time, you feel that you need additional support, please let your RIO seminar leader know or contact **Counseling and Psychological Services at (707) 826-3236 (24/7).** You may also find additional resources online at: **counseling.humboldt.edu**

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 RIO.

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 RIO session any longer, please notify your RIO session leader or Counseling and Psychological Services’ front desk staff.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is RIO?

RIO is a 3-week workshop that focuses on **R**ecognition, **I**nsight and **O**penness. It was specifically designed to help people with their emotional concerns.

Why does RIO use a 3-session model?

Teaching RIO over the course of three sessions allows you sufficient time to understand the concepts with time to practice in between sessions. Keeping it to 3 weeks allows you to find time in your busy schedule to learn RIO. If you find that you want more time to build the skills in the model, you may complete the RIO workshop again.

Why do I have to do homework?

The focus of this workshop is on building skills; in order to successfully build skills, regular practice is essential. The more you practice, the more you may find you get out of this workshop. You will not be required to provide your homework responses at any time during this workshop.

What if I didn't do my homework?

We strongly recommend completing the homework. The students that report the most benefit from RIO are the ones that are able to practice between sessions and beyond. If you are unable to complete an assignment, we encourage you to come to your next scheduled RIO workshop anyway.

What if I don't feel comfortable in groups?

This is a common concern. RIO is structured and curriculum-driven like a classroom. You may find that you feel comfortable enough to share some of your experiences in the seminars; this allows all the participants to learn and support one another. However, **you are not required to speak if you do not feel comfortable doing so.** You can still benefit from the information presented. **The RIO facilitators respect each participant's right to disclose or not and never require you to share sensitive or potentially embarrassing information about yourself.**

What if I have an urgent need to see a counselor during RIO?

Simply let the RIO facilitator or Counseling Services' front desk staff know and they will help you get the help you need.

What if I have a problem that's hard to define?

This is one of the ways RIO can be particularly helpful. Because it is designed to get you better in touch with your own experiences and goals, RIO may help you define what it is you are looking for.

What if I have a mood disorder that is probably the result of a biochemical irregularity?

Even with an identified mood disorder, such as Major Depression or Bipolar Disorder, change-oriented approaches can be very helpful. Improving our ability to recognize our experiences will enhance our ability to identify mood episodes. The earlier someone with a mood disorder is able to accurately determine when a mood episode is happening, the more efficiently that person can be at managing that mood episode. Plus, research suggests that various psychotherapies change the brain in positive ways, even when there is a biochemical irregularity (e.g., Beaugerard, 2007; Kumari, 2006; Linden, 2006).

What if I am survivor of a traumatic event?

While no one can change events that have already happened, we can learn to become more aware of how these experience impact us today. **We can learn to listen to the stories we tell ourselves about what happened, the evaluations that we might apply to ourselves or others, the feelings and bodily sensations associated with what happened, and how our behaviors and actions have been affected.** By staying true to our experiences instead of trying to control our thoughts, feelings, and sensations, we can often achieve a more fulfilling life, even in the face of traumatic events.

What if I want to get to the origin or "root" of my problem?

Many people believe that if we only knew the root cause of our problems then we would have the solution to the problem. **Although it is true that our behaviors (including thoughts and feelings) are related to our experiences, it is not necessarily true that just identifying the root cause guarantees our current behaviors will change.** If you feel that getting to the origins of your concerns is essential for your change process, we can recommend a variety of alternative options, including referrals to mental health providers that specialize in this type of therapy.

In-Session Exercises & Homework

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

Seminar 2 Worksheet: Acceptance for Understanding

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

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.



Remember to use "and" instead of "but" to increase flexibility in your thinking.

Seminar 3 Worksheet: 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 here.

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?



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.

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

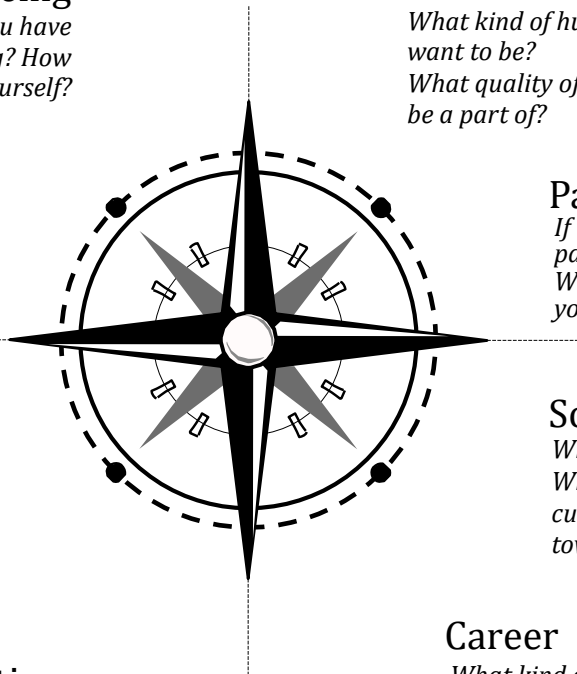
*How would you like to enjoy yourself?
What relaxes you?
When are you most playful?*

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?*

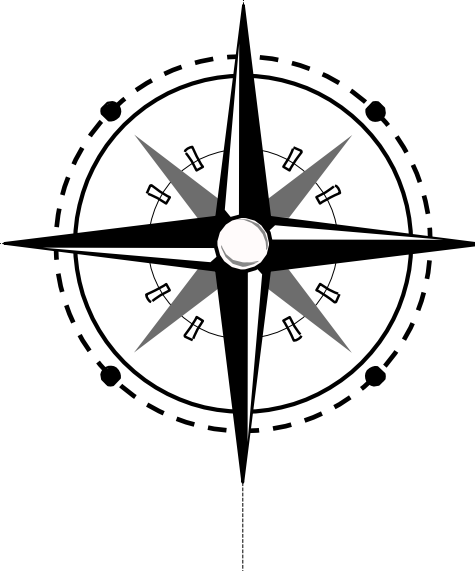
Education/Growth

*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 Valued Living Questionnaire: Defining and measuring valued action within a behavioral framework. *The Psychological Record*, 60, 249-272.

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

Seminar 3 Journal Exercise: Values

Consider these questions as you think about your values. You can refer back to pages 18-19 as necessary.

If you continue to avoid your unpleasant internal experiences, how long are you willing to wait to live your life?

In your waiting for the unpleasant internal experiences to go away, how much are you giving up in the mean time?

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 just started living your life and openly accepting your experiences?

Appendix

Tips for RIO and other Mindfulness/Relaxation/Meditation Exercises

As you go through some of the exercises in RIO and on your own, you may find the following helpful:

1. Even though you may have what feels like thousands of thoughts running through your mind and you don't feel as if you are relaxing, you will likely notice at least some level of relaxation when you finish. As you practice this skill, this relaxation will increase.
2. Sometimes old or hidden pain can arise during these exercises. If you find that you are suddenly angry, frightened, depressed, etc. and you feel safe, gently allow yourself to experience the sensation without forcing yourself to try to understand it. If you feel the need, talk to someone about your experience (i.e., friend, therapist, family member, etc.)
3. You may have heard about "perfect" conditions for these types of exercises (i.e., only in a quiet place, using certain body positions, only 2 hours after you've eaten, etc.). If you find that you can't find an absolutely quiet place or the only time you can practice these exercises is right after dinner, don't let it stop you. If you find whatever is distracting you particularly bothersome (i.e., rumbling stomach, noises outside), try to incorporate it into your exercise.
4. You may not always want to practice these skills. Be gentle with yourself and find creative ways to make your practice more comfortable.
5. A few ideas that may help you maintain your skills practice include:
 - a. Picking a regular time and honoring that appointment as you would a doctor's appointment or class time
 - b. Finding a local meditation group
 - c. Download an app that will help you remember

Breathing Space Exercise: Arriving, Gathering, Expanding (from Seminar 1)

Get comfortable in your chair, let your shoulders drop and gently push your feet onto the floor...and get a sense of the ground beneath you...and you can either soften your gaze on a particular spot in front of you or close your eyes, whichever you prefer.

Just take a moment to notice how you are sitting....And notice how you are breathing...Notice what you see, even if your eyes are closed...And notice what you can hear...Notice what you can feel against your skin and the way your body presses into the chair...And notice what you can taste of sense in your mouth... Notice what you can smell or sense with your nostrils... By settling into the moment and into your body, you are inviting your mind and your ability to recognize into the present moment with you...

Take a moment to become aware of your breathe and he gentle movement in and out as air is exchanged in your nose, mouth, and lungs. Noting the sensation in your belly or chest as the gentle movement of air creates a rise and fall. Simply allowing yourself to notice of sensations as a curious scientist that has never encountered breathing before.

As now see if you can notice the movement of your mind as you're observing these sensations, with no need to change or do anything about them. See if you can observe the activity of the mind becoming more evident as you notice yourself noticing your sensations.

You will find this hard because your mind is a masterful storyteller. It will tell you all sorts of interesting things to grab your attention and pull you away from what you are doing. See if you can let those thoughts come and go, as if they are merely trains passing through a train station- just passing through as you observe the station itself. Keeping your attention on the breath. Noticing your breathe flowing in and out. When a new thought arises, see if you can notice the thought as just another train passing through. Simply noticing-without judgment- as it goes by as you continue to feel the rise and fall of your chest. From time to time, your mind will succeed in distracting you with a new and interesting thought, and you'll lose track of your breathing. This is normal, natural, and will happen repeatedly. Once you notice this has happened, take a moment to note with curiosity what hooked you and gently return back to focusing on your breathing.

Now allow yourself to come back to your breath. Notice the movement of air in your chest and belly. Allowing the sensation of breathing in to become the focus of your attention. Noticing the coolness of the air as you breathe in and the warmth as you breathe out. Noticing the sensations in your feet as they touch the ground and in your body where it touches the chair. As you prepare to bring your awareness back to this room, offer yourself some gratitude, perhaps for taking time today to be present with your thoughts, for practicing recognition, for choosing to take steps towards living your life more fully. And when you're ready, take one more, deeper than normal breath, opening your eyes as you exhale.

Leaves on a River Exercise (from Seminar 2)

Get into a comfortable position where you are sitting. Perhaps sitting upright with your feet flat on the floor, your arms and legs uncrossed, and your hands resting in your lap or on your thighs, whichever is more comfortable.

Allow your eyes to gently close. If you would prefer to keep your eyes open, soften your gaze and gently focus on a spot a few feet in front of you. Taking a few moments to **Arrive** by getting in touch with the physical sensations in your body, especially the sensations of touch or pressure where your body makes contact with where you are sitting.

Being aware of your feet, your body being supported by the chair, how your hands feel with how they are making contact with your body.

Now, **Gathering** your attention by simply focusing on your breathing. Slowly breathing in...and slowly breathing out....breathing in....breathing out. Noticing the rise and fall of your belly and chest as you breathe in...out...in... out... It's okay for your mind to wander away to thoughts, sensations, or feelings. Simply observing that your mind has wandered, observing your thoughts and feelings, acknowledging their presence, and then returning your attention back to the breath. Passively observing the flow of your thoughts, one after another, without trying to figure out their meaning or their relationship to one another.

As best you can, bringing an attitude of gentle acceptance to all of your experiences. There is nothing to be fixed or worked on at this time. Simply allowing your experiences to be your experiences, without needing it to be other than what it is, as you find it, in this moment. You might even catch a glimpse that there is a part of you noticing what you are noticing.

Now, allowing yourself to imagine a beautiful, slow-moving river...the water flowing along... Notice how wide or narrow it is...Noticing the color of the water....

Imagining the day – Is it sunny or overcast? Warm or cool? What season is it...? Imagining you are sitting underneath a tree on the bank of the river. Perhaps your back is resting against the trunk, gently supported. Take a deep breath. See if you can you smell the richness of the earth beneath you or perhaps scent of the land around you. Take a moment to look up into the tree. Notice the leaves

rustling in the gentle breeze. What color are the leaves? What shape do they have? Listening to the sound of the gentle stirring of the leaves. Noticing that once in a while you observe a leaf dropping onto the river and flowing away. Now gazing at the river... noticing leaves floating by on the surface of the water. Looking at the leaves and watching them...slowly drifting along downriver.

As you sit beneath the tree on the bank of this river, becoming aware of the thoughts that are passing by in your mind. You might notice planning for something later today, reminding yourself not to forget something, remembering something that has already happened, or even judging or evaluating this exercise. Whatever you notice, each time you become aware of a thought, imagining yourself placing the thought on one of those leaves. If you think in words, putting them on a leaf in words. If you think in images, putting them on a leaf as an image.

Whenever a new thought enters into your mind, putting each one on a leaf...observing each thought as it is on the leaf...passing in front of you...and then watching it moving away from you... eventually drifting out of sight...down the river.... Allowing the river to move along at its own speed...

Returning to gazing at the river, waiting for the next leaf to float by with a new thought on it. When one comes along, again watching it passing in front of you and then letting it drift out of sight. The river is ever flowing...carrying each leaf along. The river is doing what is natural for rivers to do and that is to carry along whatever is floating on the surface. Thinking whatever thoughts you think, observing them, placing them on a leaf, and allowing them to flow freely along downriver, one by one.

Now, when you are ready, allowing yourself to take a different perspective. Allowing yourself to become the riverbed. Imagining yourself as the riverbed, holding the river and each of the leaves on the surface of the river, and even the thoughts that each leaf carries as it flows by.

As the riverbed, being aware that you are the container for the river... the leaves... and the thoughts. Perhaps even becoming aware that you do not begin or end at the banks of the river...that you extend beyond the banks of the river into the earth itself...

Imagining what the riverbed must see, experiencing the river, the leaves, and thoughts floating along. Wondering what it is like for the riverbed when the river is rushing by or when it is barely trickling, wondering if the riverbed even cares since it merely sets the context for everything to happen. Without the riverbed, there would be no river and no river to carry along the leaves and thoughts. Wondering if the riverbed cares if it is autumn with lots of leaves on the river, or spring with very few leaves.

Now, letting go of those thoughts and images and gradually widening your attention to take in the sounds around you in the room...the feeling of the chair beneath you...the feeling of the breath in your lungs.

Taking a deeper than normal breath and slowly exhaling. Taking a moment to make the intention to bring this sense of gentle-allowing and self-acceptance into the present moment ... When you are ready, slowly opening your eyes.

Belly (or Diaphragmatic) Breathing Exercise

You can do this exercise in any position, but it is helpful do this exercise while lying down when first learning belly breathing.

1. Lie comfortably on your back, with a pillow under your head, your knees bent and your back flat. You can stretch your legs out if that's more comfortable.
2. Place one hand on your belly and one hand on your upper chest.
3. Inhale slowly and expand your belly as you breathe so that your lower hand moves with your belly. The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.
4. Slowly exhale, focusing on the movement of your belly and lower hand as it returns to its original position.
5. Repeat steps 3 & 4 for several minutes, always focusing on the movement of the belly as you breathe. If your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to your breathing.

Breath-Counting Exercise

This exercise focuses on the use of counting with the rhythm of the breath. Start with a short period of time and gradually increase the time. Set a timer so that you don't have to worry about when to stop.

1. Find a comfortable position. Take several deep breaths and settle into yourself. You may either close your eyes or keep them open, depending on your own comfort. If you keep them open, fix them on an object or a spot on the floor about four feet in front of you. Your eyes may either be focused or unfocused.
2. Take deep, comfortable breaths. Notice your inhalation. The pause between inhaling and exhaling, your exhalation, and the pause before starting again.
3. As you inhale, count, "one..." As you exhale, count, "two..." Inhale, "three..." Exhale, "four..." Continue until you reach 10 then start over.
4. If you lose count, simply begin with "one" on your next inhalation.
5. If you notice your mind has wandered, gently notice this, and return your focus back to counting your breath.
6. If you notice any body sensations catching your attention, focus on that sensation until it fades. Then return your attention back to counting your breaths.

Metaphors for Getting Unstuck

When trying to over-control your internal experience

Imagine you are in a pool, playing with a beach ball. The ball is your thoughts, memories, and feelings. At some point, you decide you don't want the beach ball anymore, so you try to push it under the water and out of your consciousness. Every time you push the ball under, it pops back up so you have to keep pushing it down and holding it under. Struggling in this way keeps the ball close to you, and you become tired and frustrated. Imagine yourself letting go of the ball and allowing it to just float on the surface of the water. It may float nearby or float away. Either way, your hands are free and you can now enjoy a swim in the pool.

Clarifying your values

A professor stood before his class with a large jar on the table in front of him. He filled the empty jar with ping pong balls and asked the class if the jar was full. They all agreed that it was.

Then the professor picked up a container of small rocks and poured them into the jar so they filled the space between the balls. Again, he asked the class if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous yes.

Next, the professor picked up a bag of sand and poured it into the jar, filling the spaces between the rocks and balls. When he asked if the jar was full, the classroom agreed it was.

The professor said, "This jar represents your life. The ping pong balls are the important things- your family, physical health, friendships, passions—things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full. The small rocks are the other things that matter, like your career, your home, and your car. The sand is everything else- the little stuff. If you put sand in the jar first, you won't have room for the rocks, let alone the ping pong balls. The same goes for life. If you fill all your time and energy on the little stuff, you won't have space for the things that are the most important to you. Make time for things that are crucial to a meaningful life. Play with your pets. Call your grandmother. Take time to get a checkup. Laugh with your friends. Go on vacation. There will always be time to do the chores around the house and change the light bulbs. Prioritize the ping pong balls first, the things that really matter. The rest is just sand."

You are greater than your internal experiences

Imagine yourself as the sky, and your thoughts, feelings, and other internal experiences are the weather. The weather changes continuously, but no matter how bad it gets, it can't hurt the sky. The mightiest thunderstorms, hurricanes, and blizzards rage through the sky and yet the sky remains unharmed, unchanged. And no matter how big the storms get, the sky has room for it. Plus, sooner or later, the weather always changes, leaving the same beautiful blue sky in its wake.

Committing to Action

Imagine you are the driver on a bus that is on the route of your life. Passengers, like thoughts, memories, feelings, get on and off, and you continue to drive. Some of the passengers are scary. Maybe they shout "You're useless!" or "You're going the wrong way!!" What if they start threatening you, telling you they'll hurt you unless you do what they say?

It's as if you've made a deal with the passengers, and the deal is, "You sit quietly in the back of the bus where I can't see you, and I'll do whatever you say." So, you drive the bus on a different route, one that keeps the scary passengers quiet. You can almost forget they're there. At some point, you get tired of this route and try to turn onto a new street. Immediately the scary passengers jump up, shouting and threatening again. They seem bigger and scarier than before, and you immediately keep going where they want you to go.

What if you turned anyway? The scary passengers haven't ever hurt you. In fact, they can't hurt you without stranding themselves. Imagine you decide to turn. You brace yourself, check the mirror, and turn onto a new street. The passengers yell, threaten, and get right up in your face. And you keep driving. You make it back to the route you truly wanted to be on, and the passengers eventually get tired of yelling and sit back down. Everyone once in a while one of the passengers tries to threaten you again, but you don't allow it to push you off course. This is your bus, and you want to get back to living your life, to driving on the route you have chosen for your life.

Online Resources

Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society
<http://www.umassmed.edu/Content.aspx?id=42066>

Mayo Clinic Stress Reduction Website
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mindfulness-exercises/MY02124>

Meditation Oasis
www.meditationoasis.com

Mindful
www.mindful.org

Mindfulness Research Guide
<http://www.mindfulexperience.org/>

WebMD
<http://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-management-breathing-exercises-for-relaxation>

Apps for your Smartphone, Tablet, or Computer

ACT Coach	CBTi-Coach	Mindfulness Coach
Breathe2relax	Head Space	Mindshift
Breathing Technique by Hemalayaa	Calm	T2 Mood Tracker
	Insight Timer	Take a break!

Books for Further Reading

The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook by Bourne (2011)
Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life by Hayes & Smith (2005)
The Mindful Way Workbook by Teasdale, Williams, Segal, & Kabat-Zinn (2014)
The Mindfulness Workbook: A Teach Yourself Guide by Langley (2013)
The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook by Davis, Robbins, Eshelman & McKay (2008)

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