

Fount Institute

Mind Wellbeing

Exercise Booklet



Sahba Saberi

This exercise booklet is designed to be used in conjunction with Mind Wellbeing audiobook or ebook.

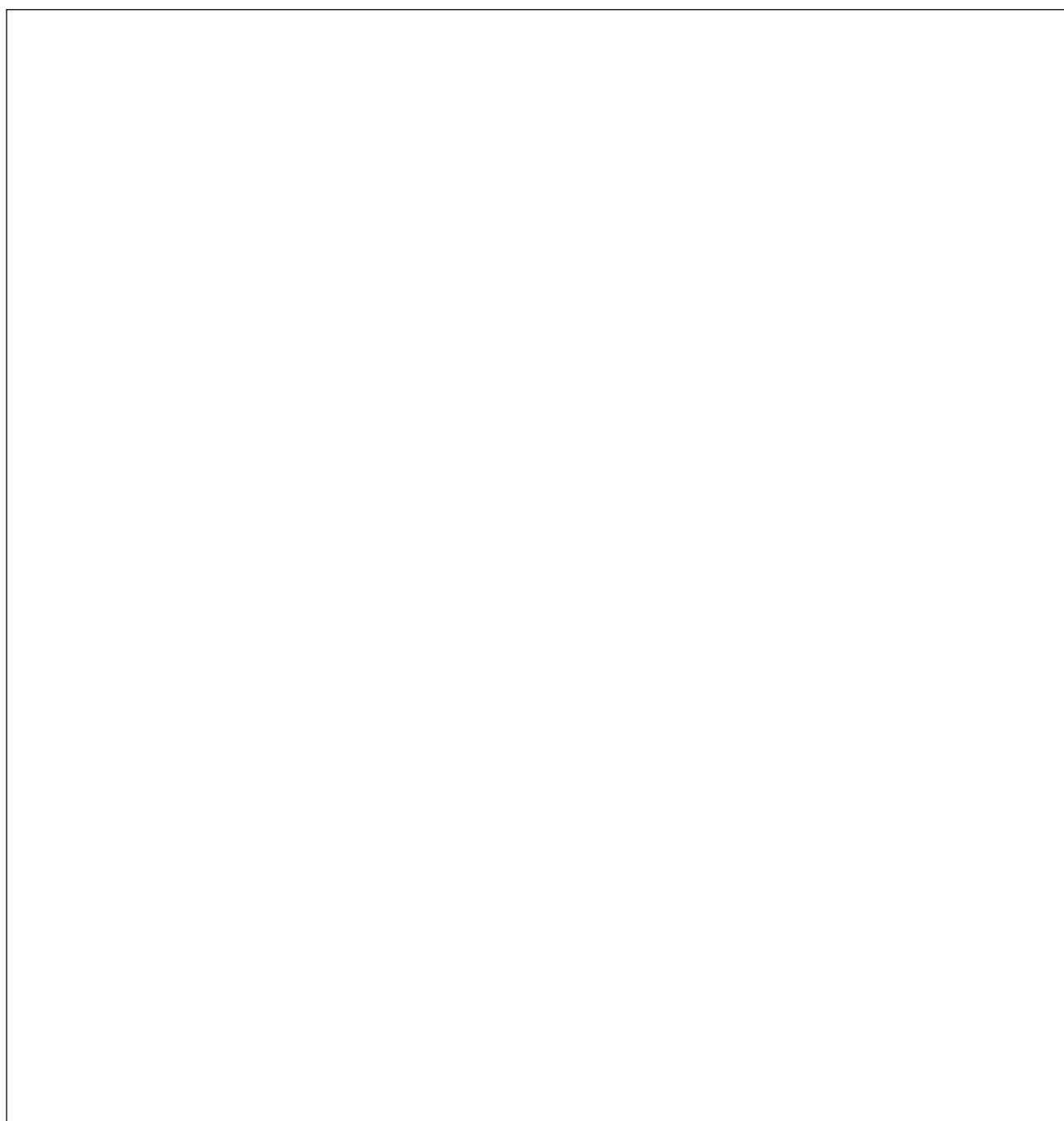
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Introduction

Activity

Create an artwork that shows one or several of the ideas that have made an impact on you in this chapter. You can create a song, a dance, a painting, build a sculpture, create a skit or use any other creative methods to express yourself. If you are studying this book with a group, you can turn this into a group activity.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to create their artwork as described in the activity instructions.

Exercise from section “How to Use This Book”:

If you like, take a few minutes to make a promise to yourself to commit to reading this book thoroughly, and stopping to practice the exercises.

My commitment scribbles:

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Chapter 1: The Building Blocks



Activity from section “The Building Blocks”:

What did you find to be the differences between these 3 blocks (thoughts, emotions and awareness)?

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Activities from section “Conditioning”:

Take a moment to think about some of your habits. Can you pinpoint any time, place, people or emotions that trigger the urge to go back to your habit?

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Take a few minutes to make a plan to gradually face one of your fears, the way Phil did with his. Make sure your plan is gradual enough to be achievable. If your fear is very strong, you can even start to face it using a picture, a video or by imagining it. You would also have to rely on pictures or imagination if your fear is around something that can actually harm you (e.g. wild animals, drowning etc).

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Homework



1. Carry out the exposure plan that you've made today.
2. Practise mindfulness every day, even for a few seconds. Make a plan right now by writing down a time of the day that would be best for practising mindfulness:

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Now make an internal commitment to give your mind a break from thinking by practising mindfulness every day at the time you just decided on. If it helps, think of some ways to remind yourself to practise it at the allocated time. Some good ideas for reminding yourself are to leave a note to yourself where you will see it, an alarm or notification on your phone or to wear a piece of jewellery as a reminder.

Chapter 2: Emotion Regulation



Let's Recap!

Please take a minute to remember the differences between thoughts, emotions and awareness. Close your eyes and notice your thoughts, then any emotions you may have in your body and then your awareness of everything around you.



Now, see if you can remember which of these statements are true and which are false.

Thinking is an internal conversation.

True

False

Emotions and awareness are made up of words.

True

False

Thinking is made up of words.

True

False

An emotion is an experience that can be pleasant or unpleasant.

True

False

Awareness is about being attentive to and noticing what is here right now.

True

False

To be aware of something is the same thing as thinking about it.

True

False

Take a guess...what do you think this harmful way of dealing with unwanted emotions is?

Hint: This strategy might help with uncomfortable emotions at first, but it can cause us harm if we overuse it.

Question from section “Emotion Regulation”:

Take a guess...what do you think this harmful way of dealing with unwanted emotions is?

Ready to guess? Pick one of the following options:

- A. Thinking too much about our problems and becoming overly emotional about them
- B. Thinking negatively
- C. Trying to avoid experiencing unwanted thoughts, emotions and memories
- D. Facing uncomfortable situations and attempting to brave through them

Exercise from section “Acceptance in Practice”:

Exercise 2

Now take a moment to privately explore some of the current unwanted circumstances in your life. Make a list of these below:

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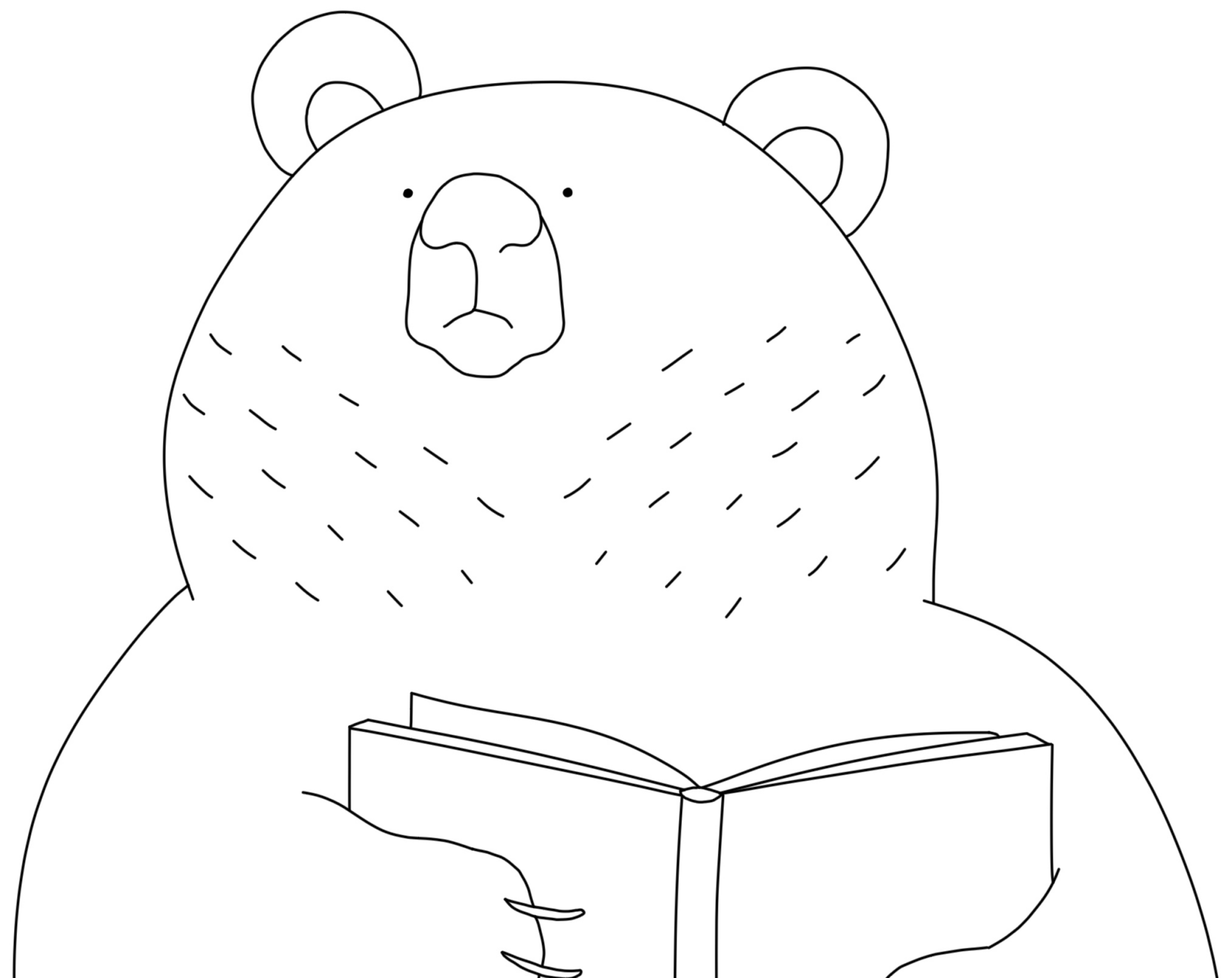
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Can you practice acceptance around these circumstances, even while making plans to improve them?



Chapter 3: Thoughts



Revision

1. Emotions are powerful, so we try to control, shape and them.
2. is an unhealthy way of regulating emotions. It means avoiding our internal experiences, such as thoughts and emotions.
3. Acceptance means:
 - Letting go of our internal resistance and war against the reality of this moment.....
 - Letting go of our external resistance and war against the reality of this moment.....

Question from section “A Few Points to Remember”:

So, what do you think happens to our thoughts when we don't pay attention to them? Do you think our thoughts change when they are just happening in the background and we are not looking at them? Do you think they might behave any differently?

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Question from section “Healthy Thinking”:

Let's do a little activity. Use any material or objects that you see around you, in your stationary drawer or in the kitchen, to build a structure that can support a pen... or several pens. You can build a bridge, a tower, a table or any other structure that you like. Your aim is to use your raw material to build the most robust structure you can think of to support your pens. What ideas can you come up with?

Now have a think of the following question:

Which one of your inner building blocks did you use to come up with your structure?

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Activity from section “Thought Errors”:

Read the following story and explore what thought errors the character might showing. What would be an alternative, more helpful way of thinking?

Rose was not invited to the wedding of a friend. She and her friend hadn't seen each other for a long time, for no reason other than having grown apart and finding different friend groups. But Rose couldn't help wondering if not being invited to the wedding meant that she was an unlikable friend or her friend hadn't considered her worthy of friendship. So she felt quite hurt.

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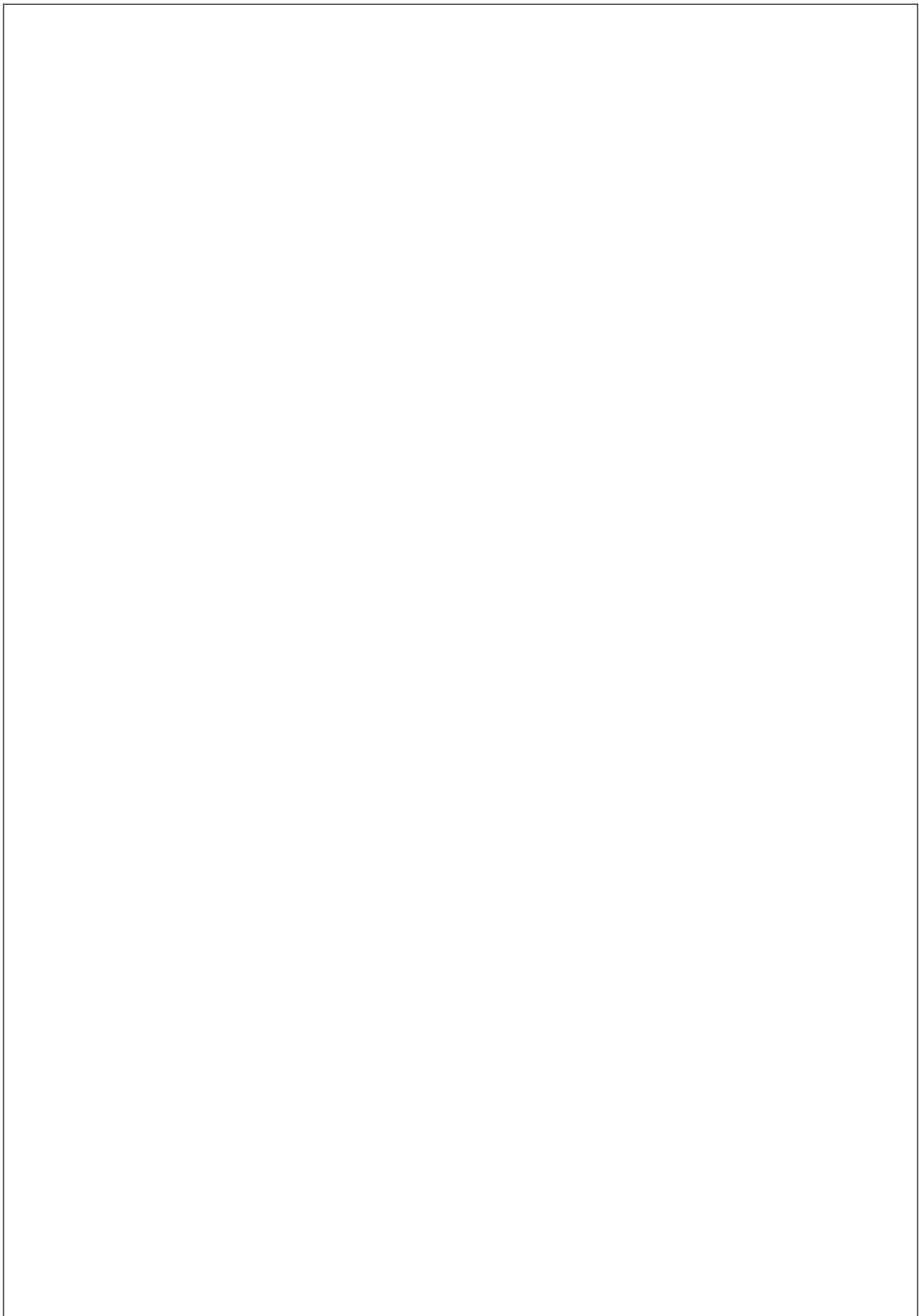
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Homework



See if you can come up with a way to help yourself remember to notice your thoughts and practise active thinking every day. Create an art-work or a note to yourself that you can leave near your work-station, on the dashboard of your car, on the fridge or anywhere else that you regularly look. You could even make yourself a piece of jewellery as a reminder. [see next page for blank space]



Chapter 4: Fine-tuning the Art of Thinking



Revision

1. Which of the following statements are correct?

We should believe all of our thoughts. If we think them, they must be true.

True

False

We need to be like a scientist when dealing with our thoughts: examining and testing them before believing them.

True

False

2. Active thinking means:

A) Paying attention to

B) Checking the of the thoughts.

C) Letting go of

D) Acting on

3. What is experiential avoidance?

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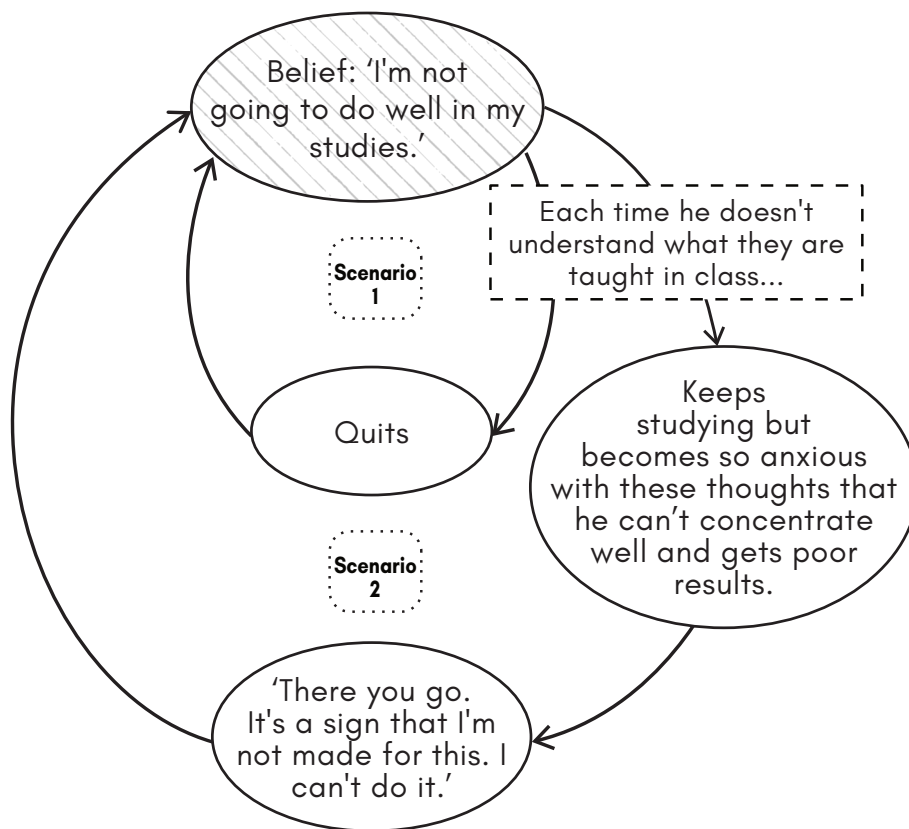
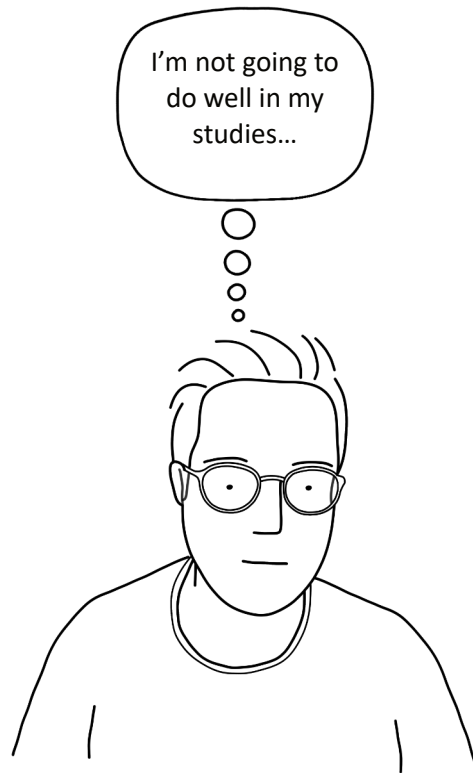
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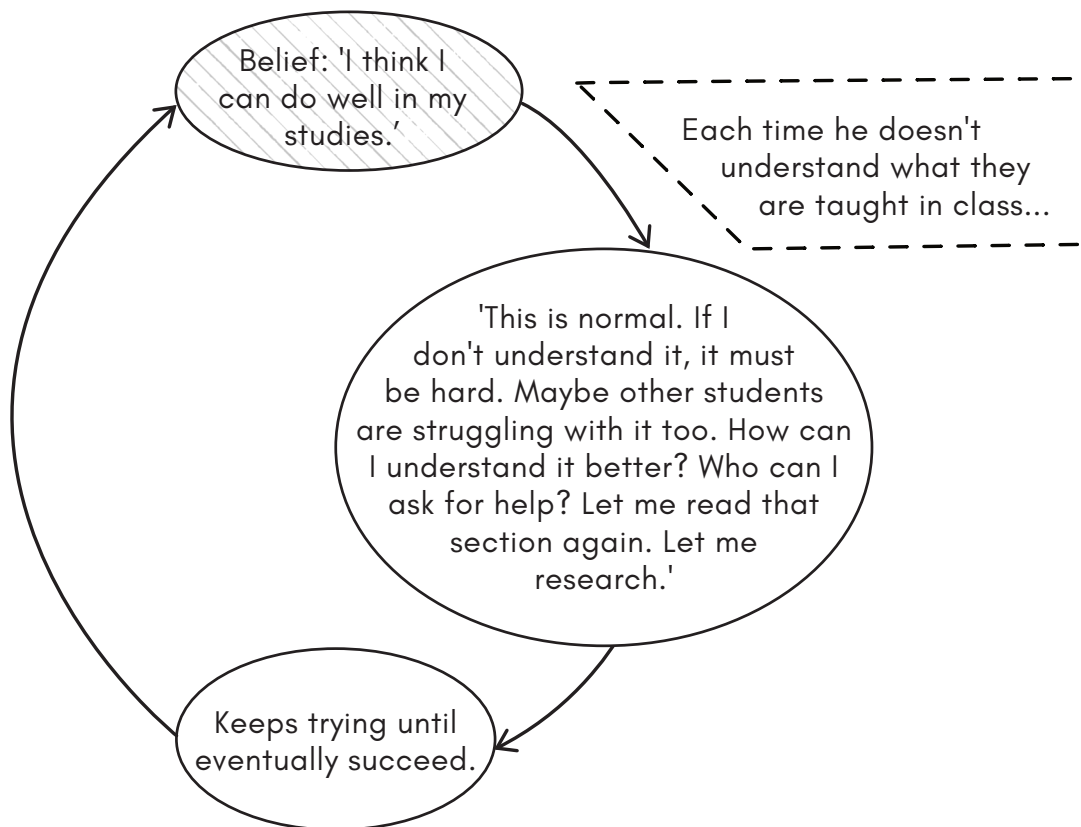
Table from section “Points to Remember When Active Thinking”:

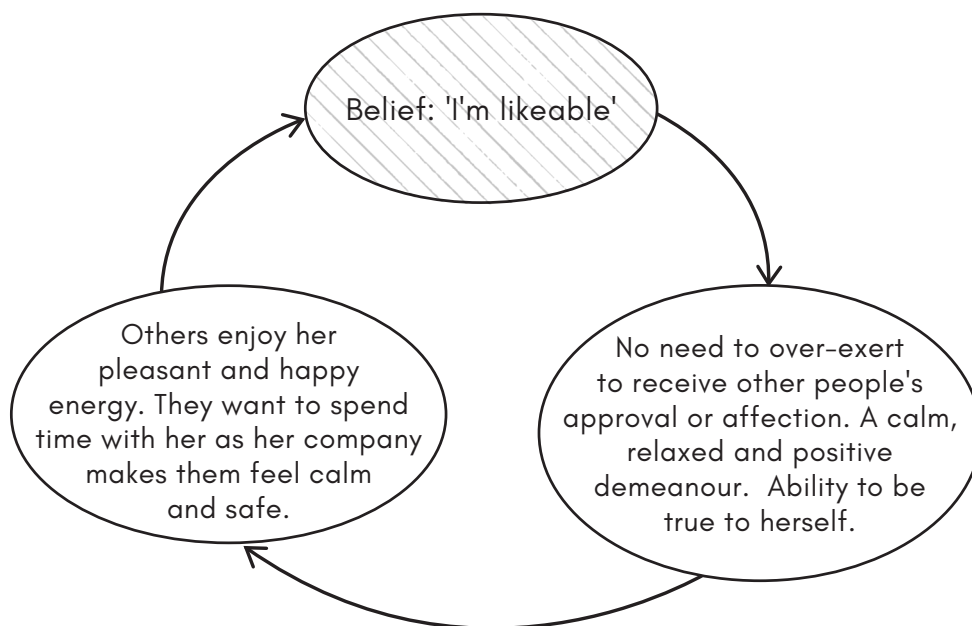
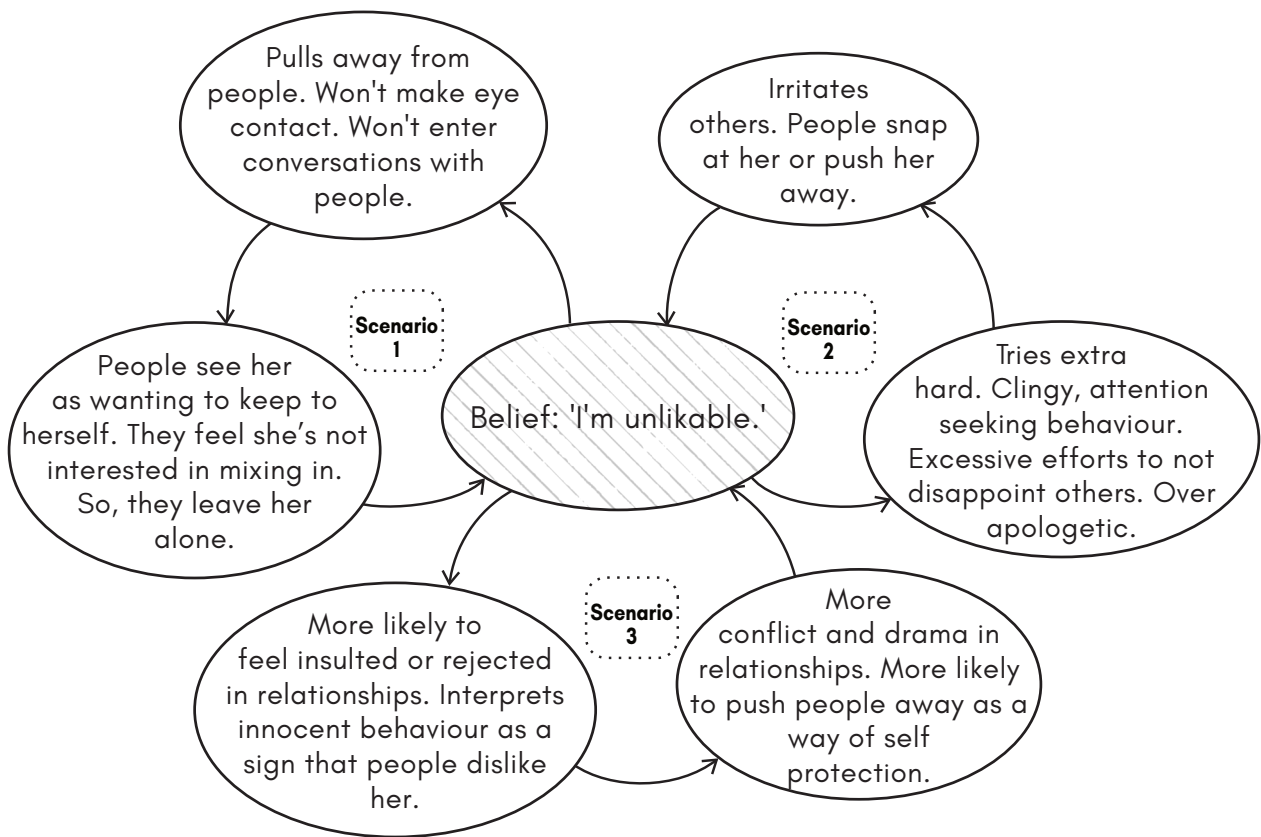
You may find the following structure helpful when writing your thoughts. If you are using a notebook, you can copy this table into your notebook, or just use similar headings to guide your writing process.

External Situation / Circumstances	My Thoughts	Thought Errors	Alternative Thoughts

Diagrams from Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

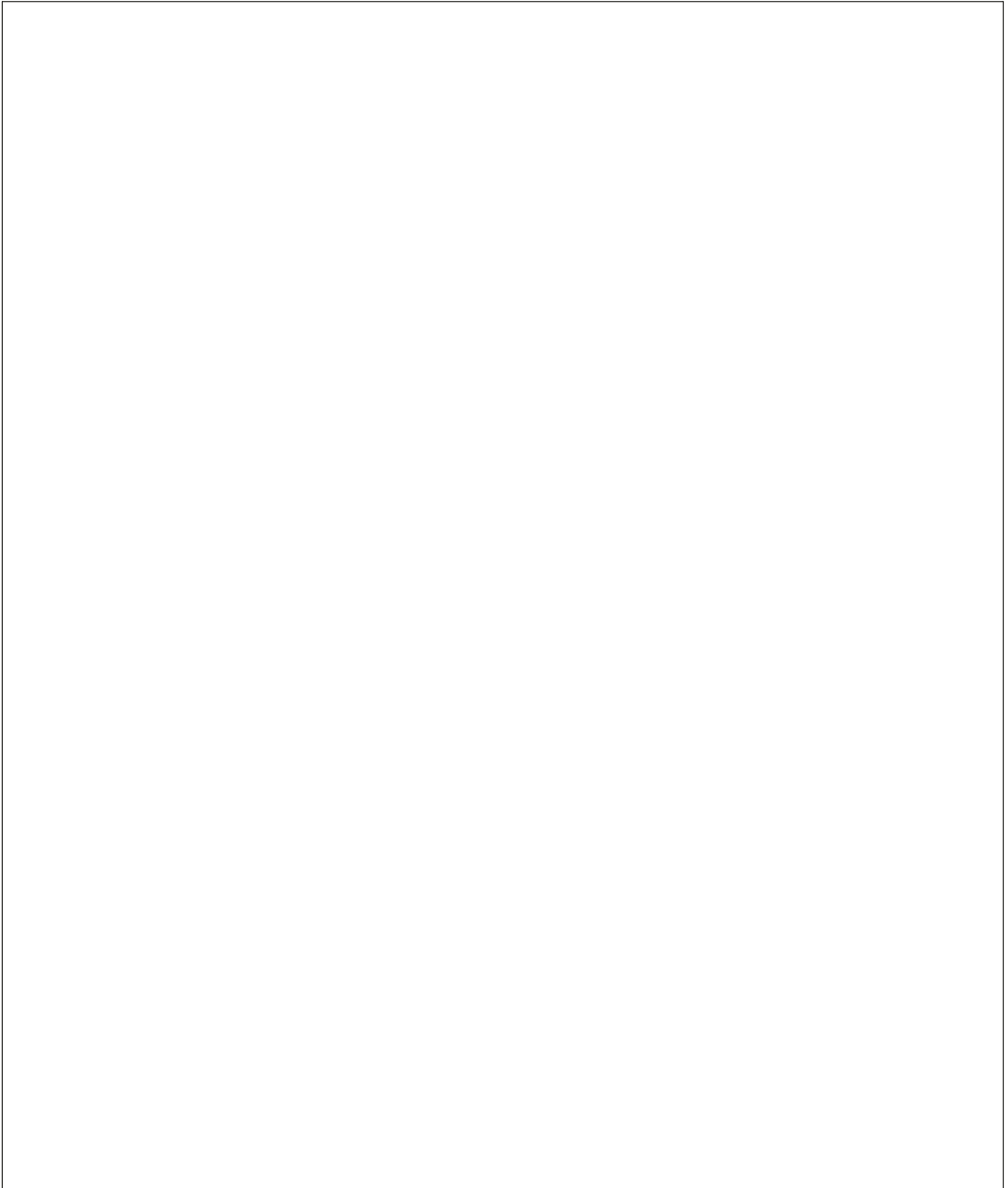






Activity from section “Self-Fulfilling Prophecies”:

Take a moment to draw a chart, similar to the ones we just looked at, that explores one of your key beliefs and any ways in which this belief may be proving itself right.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to draw a chart as described in the text above. The box occupies most of the page's vertical space.

Exercise from section “Rethink Your Past Decisions ”:

First, on the left side of the box below write a description or draw a picture that represents the current view that you have towards yourself or the world around you. Take your time and write down whatever is on your mind. Even if you feel like filling the whole column with just a sentence or word. Let your emotions pour onto the page. Once you are finished with filling out the left side of the box, pause and notice how your body feels. Does it feel any different to before?

Now, on the other side of the page write an alternative view or draw an alternative picture. Assess your thoughts using the skills that you have learned in this chapter and the previous one. Can you find any thought errors? You don't need to worry about believing the alternative picture yet. You just need to explore the alternatives.

My current life view	A more rational alternative life view

Homework



Now take a moment to make practical plans around writing your thoughts down. Have a think: do you have a notebook or diary that you could use for this purpose? Will it be a notebook that can fit into your pocket or handbag? This way you can carry it around with you and use any free time during your day to write down your thoughts. Or you could allocate a time at home to writing down your thoughts (e.g. every night before bed).

In the coming week, work towards getting into a habit of regularly writing your thoughts down. You might choose to do it at a set time of the day (e.g. just before going to bed at night) or whenever you are struggling with emotions or stress.

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Chapter 5: Emotions



Revision

Classical conditioning is.....
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(Can't remember the answer? For a recap, refer to Chapter 2: Conditioning.)

Exposure therapy means that we face those things that we have been conditioned to fear or dislike, instead of avoiding them. What happens when we perform exposure therapy?
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Acceptance can help relieve mental anguish and discomfort and it brings us a greater level of inner peace. Choose which one of the following two statements is true about acceptance:

Acceptance is letting go of our *internal* resistance and war against the reality of this moment.

True

False

Acceptance is letting go of our *external* resistance and war against the reality of this moment.

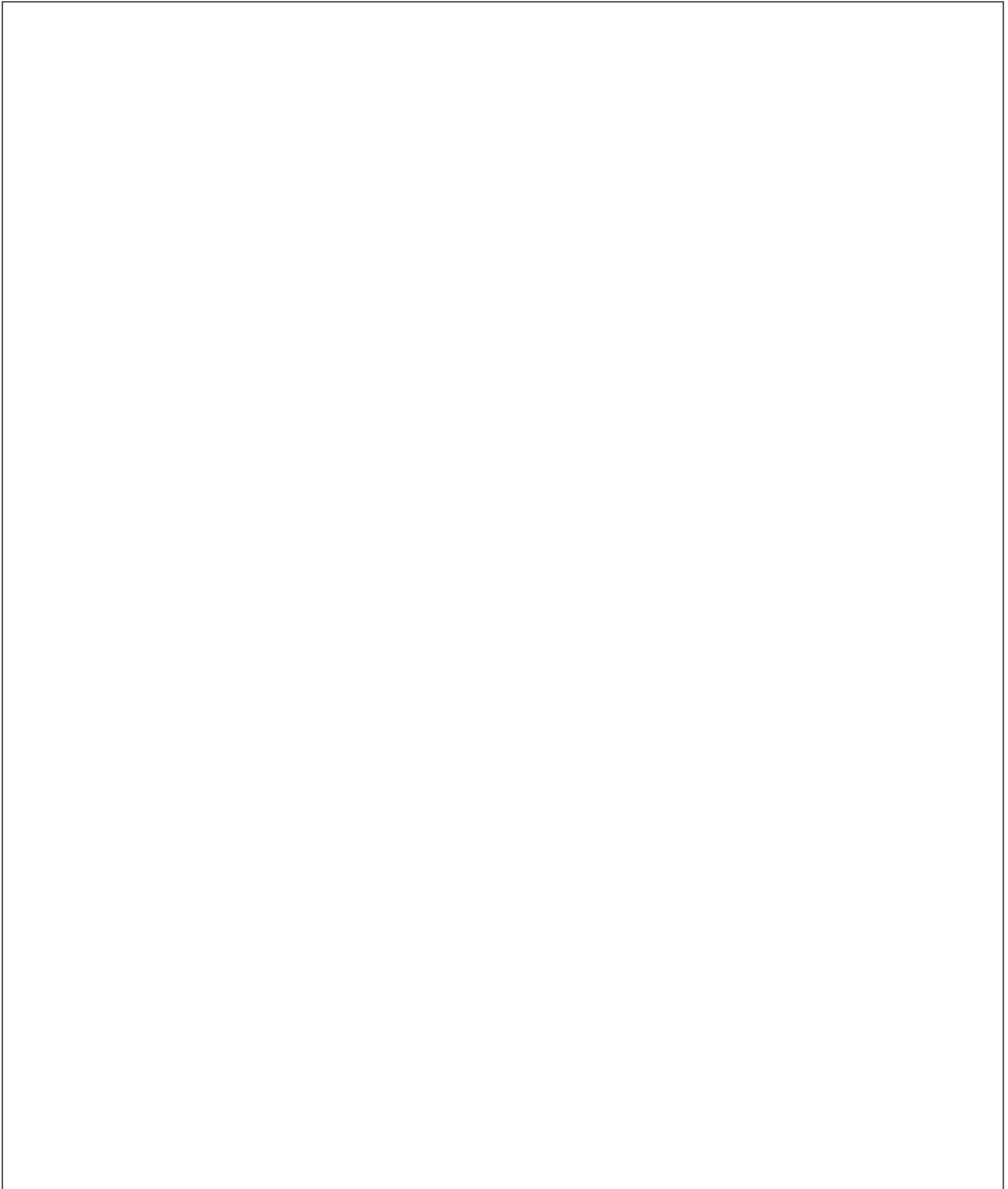
True

False

(Can't remember the answer? For a recap, refer to Chapter 3: The Bird.)

Artwork

Using any art form that you like, express a thought or emotion that has been on the surface a lot for you lately. You can use symbols. You can use colours and shapes or any other ways of expressing yourself.



Activity from section “Experiencing Experiences”:

Let's take a look at a few common emotions and consider how they feel to you. First up, anger. How does anger feel to you?

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If your answer was along the lines of 'anger feels like everything is unfair', 'it feels like no one respects you' and so on, you are actually using your thoughts to describe the feeling of anger. The kind of answer that we are looking for is a lot simpler than that. Just pay attention to your body. We are looking for answers like 'it feels like my face is getting hot', or 'I feel a pressure in my throat and chest' and so on. Try one more time. How does anger make *your body feel*?

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And what about the following emotions? Don't forget, you are not describing your thoughts here. You are only paying attention to your body and trying to describe how the emotion makes your *body* feel:

Fear

Sadness

Shame

Worry

Excitement

Nervousness

Boredom

Disgust

Chapter 6: The Self



Revision

What makes emotions uncomfortable is what the body is feeling. So, in order to reduce the discomfort of emotions, what do we need to focus on?

- Thoughts.....
- External circumstance
- What the body feels

Let us recap the rules of emotion exposure. Decide which of the following statements are true about the practice of emotion exposure, and which ones are false:

When your eyes are closed, you think about your emotions.

- True
- False

When your eyes are closed, you pay attention to your emotions. You do not think.

- True
- False

You first check to see if the emotion is somewhere in your body. If it is, you keep your attention on that part of the body.

- True
- False

If you cannot find the emotion in your body, you sit with the experience of the emotion anyway.

- True
- False

You try to figure out why you have the emotion, or where it comes from.

- True
- False

You try to make your body relaxed and make the emotion go away.

- True
- False

You try to control the emotion.

- True
- False

You try to make the emotion go away by telling yourself that it's not logical or helpful.

True

False

When you practise emotion exposure, you do not try to control or change the emotion.

True

False

Emotion exposure is not a relaxation practice. Your job is not to try to relax or to make the emotion feel better. Your job is to simply watch the emotion and pay attention to the experience, even if it is uncomfortable.

True

False

Emotion exposure is an automatic process. You don't need to deliberately change your emotions. You just face the emotion and let your body do the rest of the work.

True

False

Exercises from section “Self-Image”:

What do shame, pride, embarrassment, humiliation, self-admiration and self-resentment have in common?

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How do you feel after those two mindfulness exercises? Do you feel calmer and more at peace? Do you see that while you were practising these mindfulness exercises, you weren't really giving any thought to ideas about yourself? Your focus was on the reality of this moment, not on any thoughts about who you are, what you're like, or what you do or don't like about yourself. Was that not a more freeing experience?

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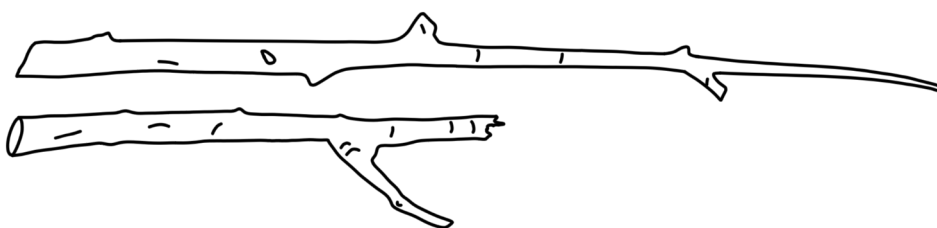
Diagrams from The World of Comparisons

Take a look at this wooden stick:

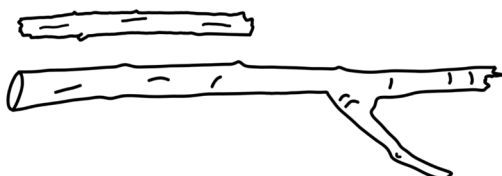


Would you say that this stick is short or long? Think about that question for a minute. Is this stick short or long?

Right now, you may be feeling a little bit confused, thinking: 'compared to what?' And you are right to be confused. You are spot on. This stick, on its own, and without being compared to any other objects, is *neither short nor long*. It is just as it is: a stick. But if we place it next to a longer stick:



All of a sudden, you may conclude that our stick was short all along. Your brain would label the stick: 'short'. Now let's remove the longer stick and place our stick next to a shorter one:



This time you may conclude that our original stick is long. Your brain would label it as 'long'.

Exercise from section “The World of Comparisons”:

Make a list of some of the judgements that you have made about yourself or others as a result of comparison:

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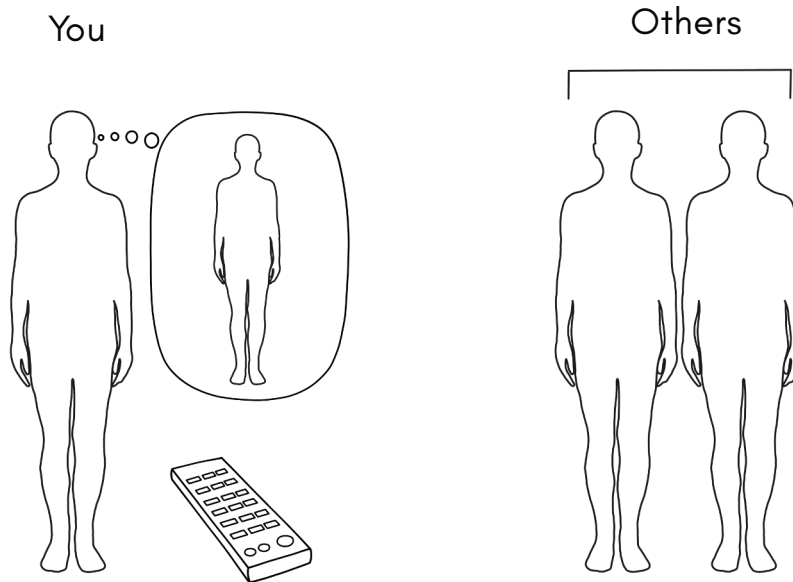
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Diagrams from Fear of Being Judged



Question from section “Fear of Being Judged”:

Who do you think holds that remote control? Who controls the image that you have of yourself? Do you control it? Or do others control it?

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Question from section “Personalisation”:

How did it feel to see yourself in a non-personal way?

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Exercise from section “Change Can Start With You”:

When we are surrounded by a world that is still operating on the basis of comparison, it's easy to be tempted to join in to escape emotions of shame, fear, loneliness or anxiety. Imagine being surrounded by people who express a lot of opinions about who is more amazing and who is generally not good enough. Can you think of some people in your life that tend to do that? Write down some of the comments that you remember them making:

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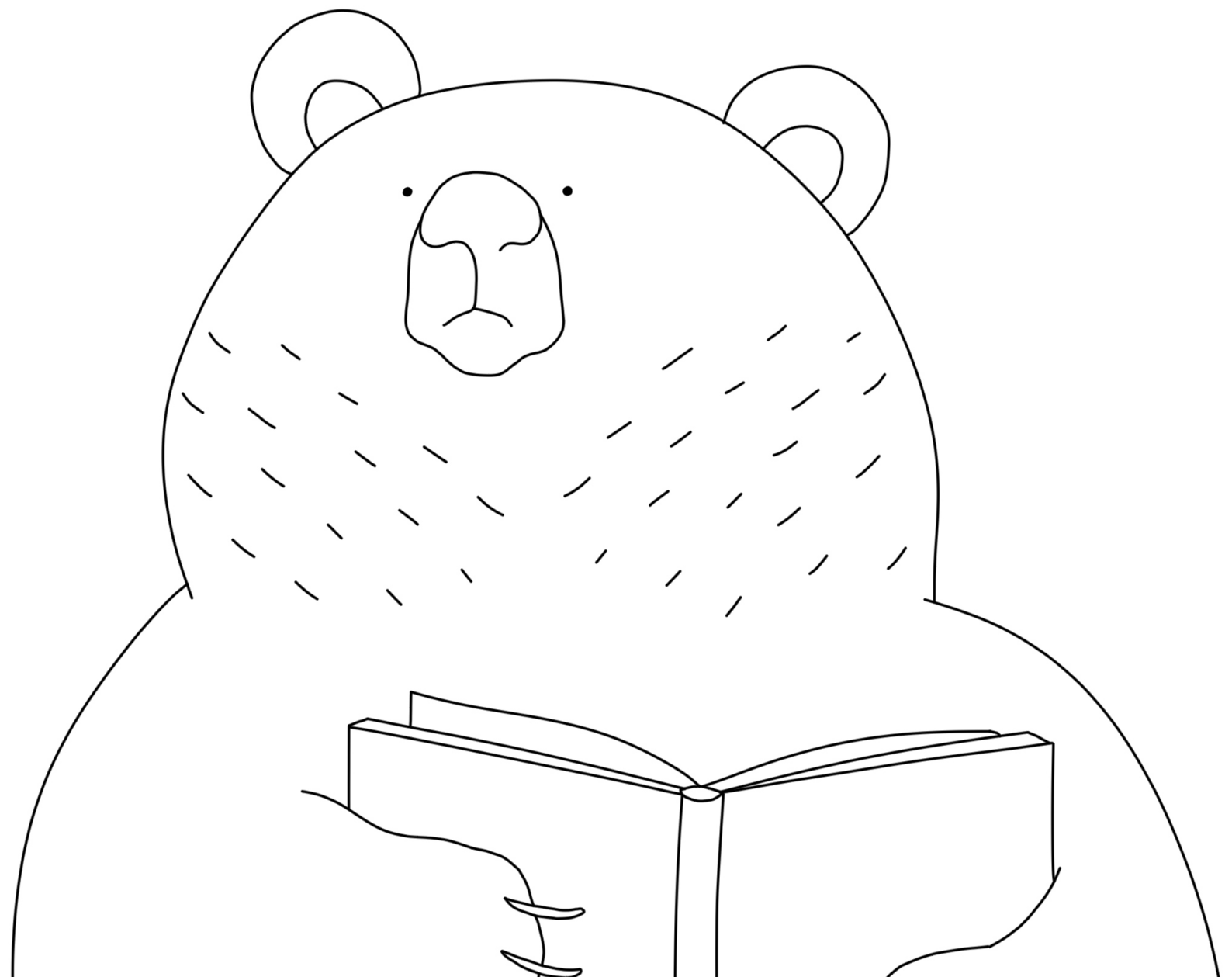
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Chapter 7: Self Compassion



Exercises from section “Blame”:

What similarities or differences do you see between explaining a behaviour and making excuses for the behaviour?

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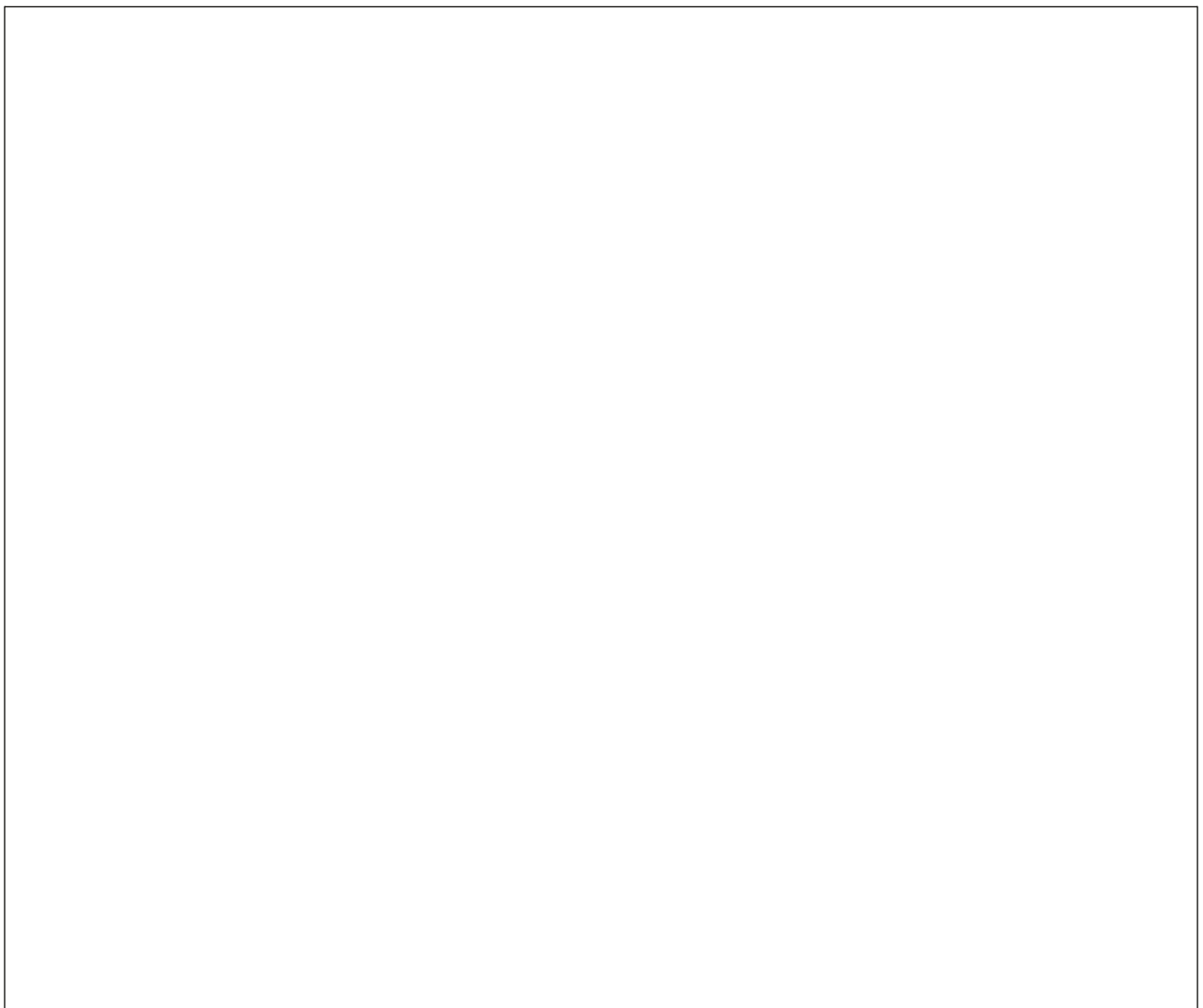
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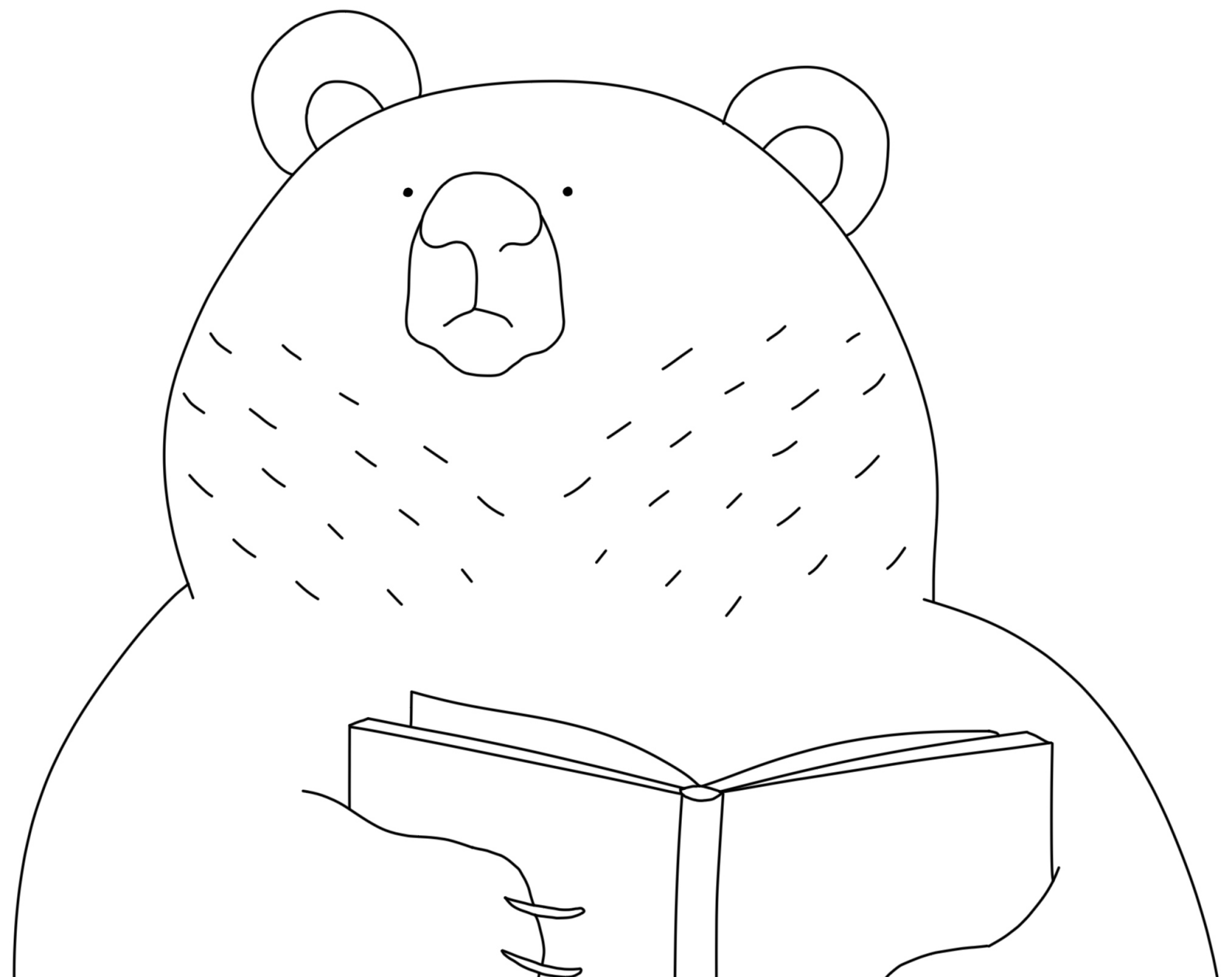
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Exercises from section “Artwork”:

Finish this chapter by creating an art-work, by yourself or together with your study group, around the topic of self-compassion or blame.



Chapter 8: Anxiety



Exercise from section “Worry”:

Maryam's story is similar to the kind of worries that many of us experience. Different people may worry about different things, but the essence of most excessive worrying is the same.

Write down some of the things that you tend to worry about.

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Exercise from section “Worry Time”:

Now take a minute to think about a good time of the day or night that you could allocate to worrying. It can be at the beginning or end of your day, or right in the middle, depending on your lifestyle.

I will practice worry time at this time every day:

You can allocate 15 to 30 minutes (or longer if you prefer) to worrying each day.

The length of time I will allocate to worry time is:

Note: you can adjust the above if, after practising worry time, you decide that your needs are different to what you decided here.

While having your worry time, try to practise active thinking. You may like to write down your thoughts. After your 15 to 30 minutes is over, bring your attention to your body and practise emotion exposure around any left-over emotions.

Exercise from section “Obsessive Compulsive Tendencies”:

You can begin the process of active thinking or planning your exposure therapy steps by making some notes below:

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Exercise from section “Posttraumatic Stress”:

You can begin the process of active thinking around your memories of trauma by making some notes below. Remember not to overwhelm yourself and start with smaller, easier steps:

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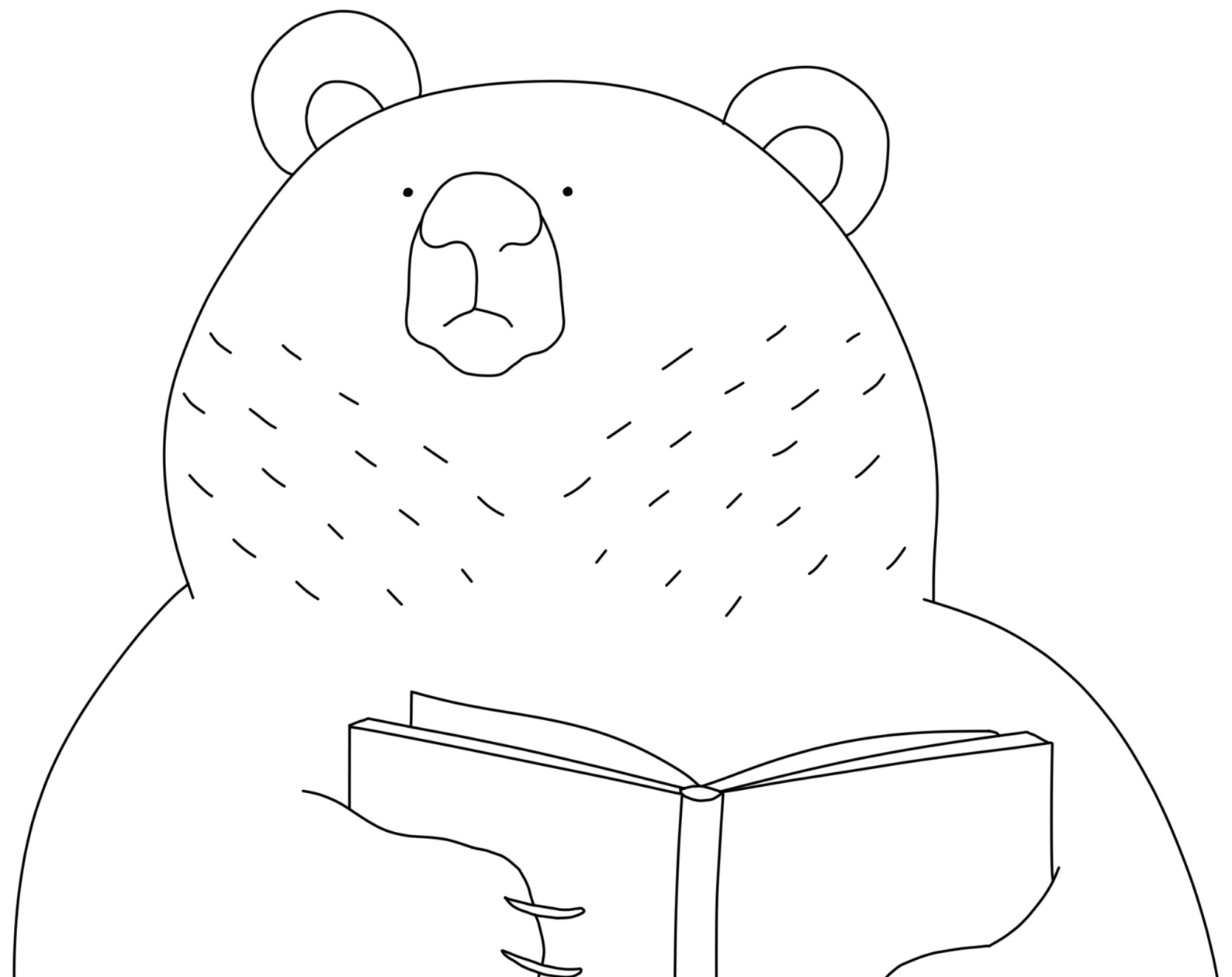
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Chapter 9: Task Management



Revision

Decide if the following statements are true or false.

The best way to combat obsessive thoughts is to avoid the uncomfortable situations that trigger them.

- True
- False

Incessant worrying can help us deal better with future problems and emergencies.

- True
- False

Your future self is a lot better equipped to deal with future problems. So, allowing your current self to worry about unknown future scenarios is a waste of your time and energy.

- True
- False

By worrying, you experience suffering on a daily basis. This is ironic, since we often worry because we don't want to suffer.

- True
- False

Exercise from section “Task Management”:

Take a moment to make a list of all the things cluttering your life - all your unfinished tasks and unachieved goals:

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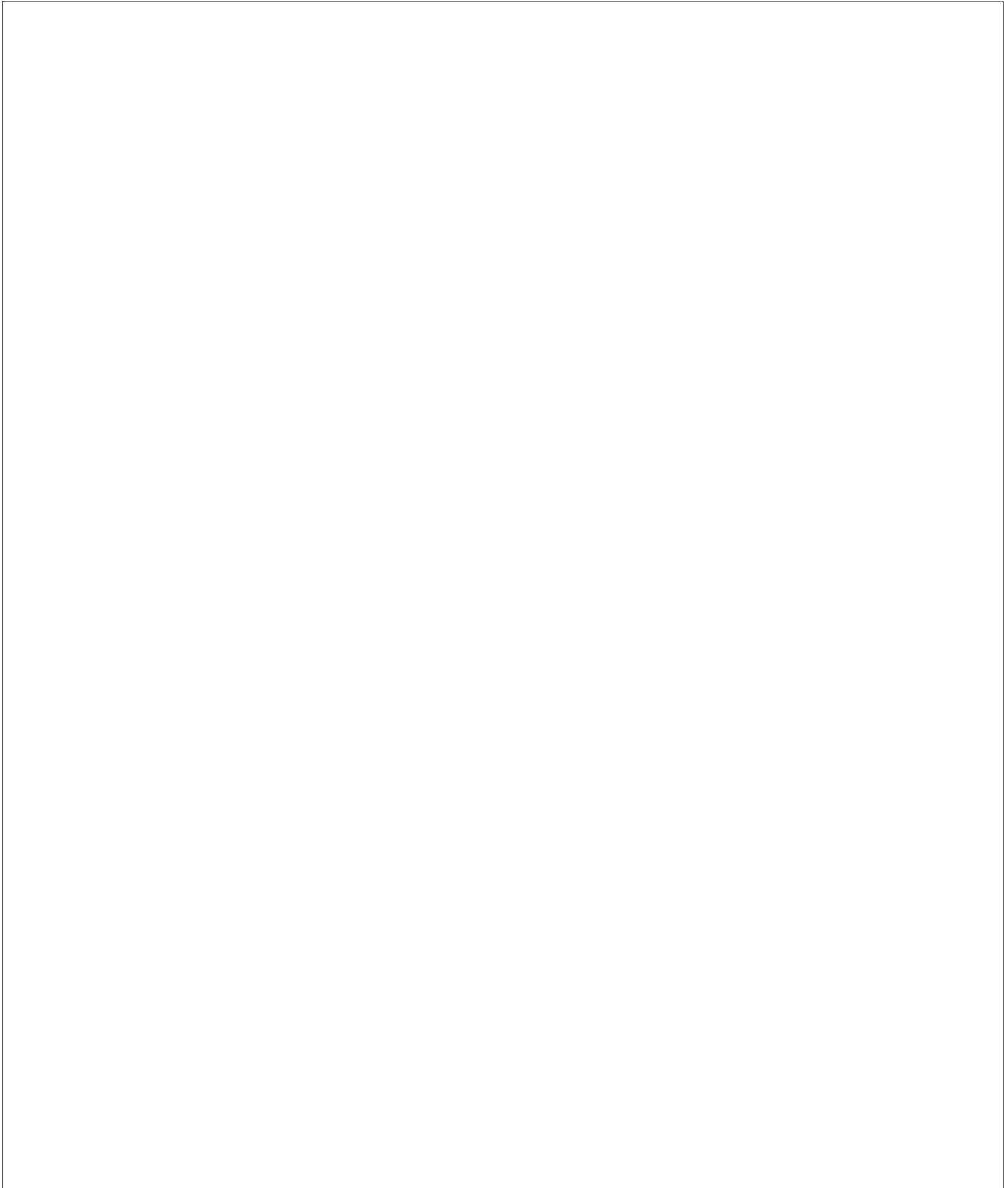
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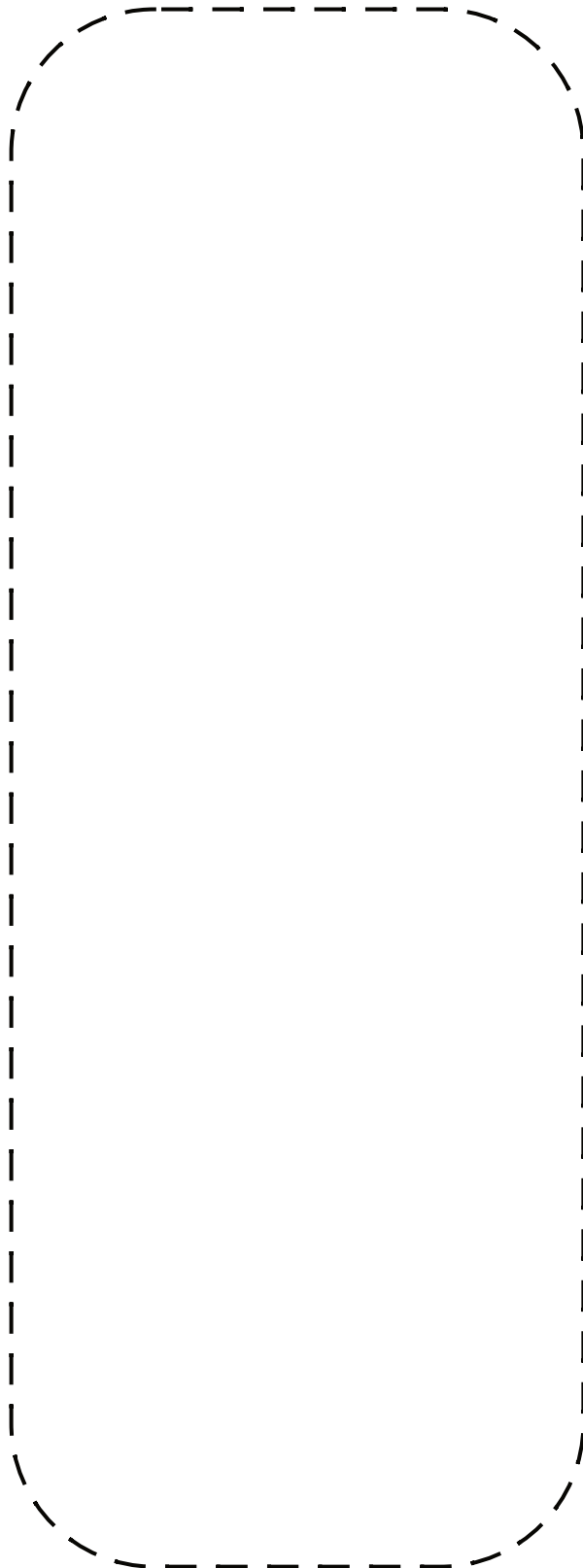
Exercise from section “Mindfulness in Work and Study”:

You have 1 minute to draw one hundred circles in the blank space provided.

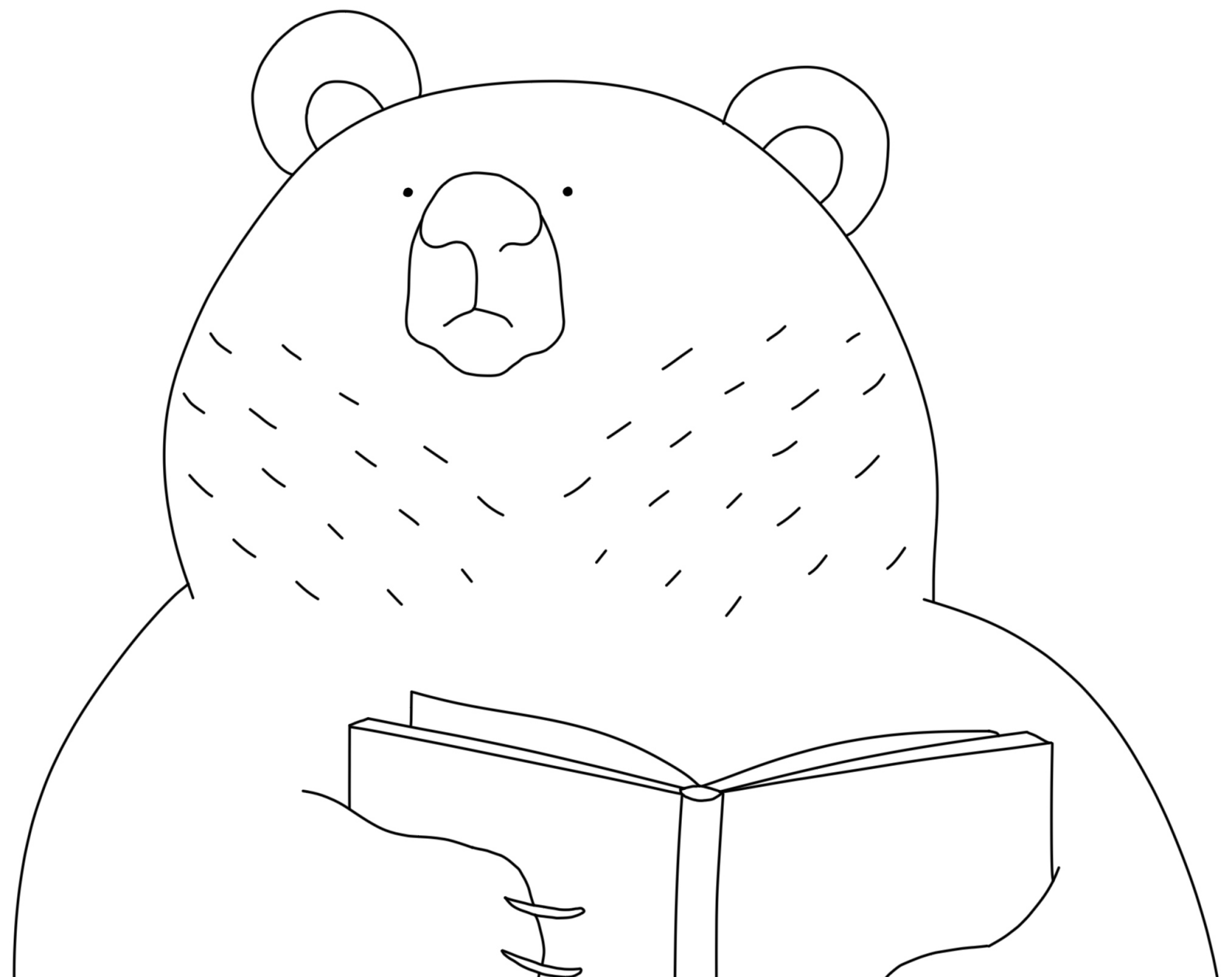
A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for drawing one hundred circles within a one-minute time limit.

Activity

Now grab a piece of paper and create a banner to place near your workplace, be it by your computer, in your workshop, in the kitchen or in your toolbox, to remind yourself to practise mindfulness as you work.



Chapter 10: Communication



Exercise from section “Putting it into Practice”:

Let's practise this a bit now. First, write a list of some of the people in your life that you need to communicate with for one reason or another. You may need to communicate about big issues, like the overall quality of your relationship with your partner or parents. Or, it could be about a small irritation, like the fact that your roommate keeps leaving the bathroom lights on.

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Activity from section “Active Thinking and Communication”:

Have a look at the following interaction between wife and husband.

'I think you're very distracted. Like remember the other day when I asked you to pick up a watermelon from the shops and you came home with a bag of tomatoes instead? We needed tomatoes for the soup, but if you had asked me first, you would have known that we already had enough tomatoes in the fridge. And speaking of the fridge, I can't believe you still haven't fixed it. You promised to fix it. You never carry through with your promises. I bet if your ex had asked you to fix her fridge, you would have done it in a heartbeat!'

How many different points do you see in this paragraph? How many different thoughts, emotions or concerns is this person raising at the same time?

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Chapter 11: Fine-Tuning the Art of Communication



Revision

Decide if the following statements are true or false.

People are like islands. The job of communication is to stop the islands from guessing what is on the other islands, and instead seeing for themselves what is really there.

True

False

If communication becomes difficult in a relationship, there is no point trying too hard. It is best to stop talking about things or, if necessary, end that relationship.

True

False

Communication can be hard work, and we may need to practise, be patient and use our creativity.

True

False

Healthy relationships are those in which people do not argue, and do not bring up problems or disagreements.

True

False

While communicating, it is helpful to act on emotions like anger, hurt or shame to get a relief from these emotions (e.g. we could blame, hurt back, or focus on self-defence).

True

False

Good communication is focused on understanding the other person and helping them understand you.

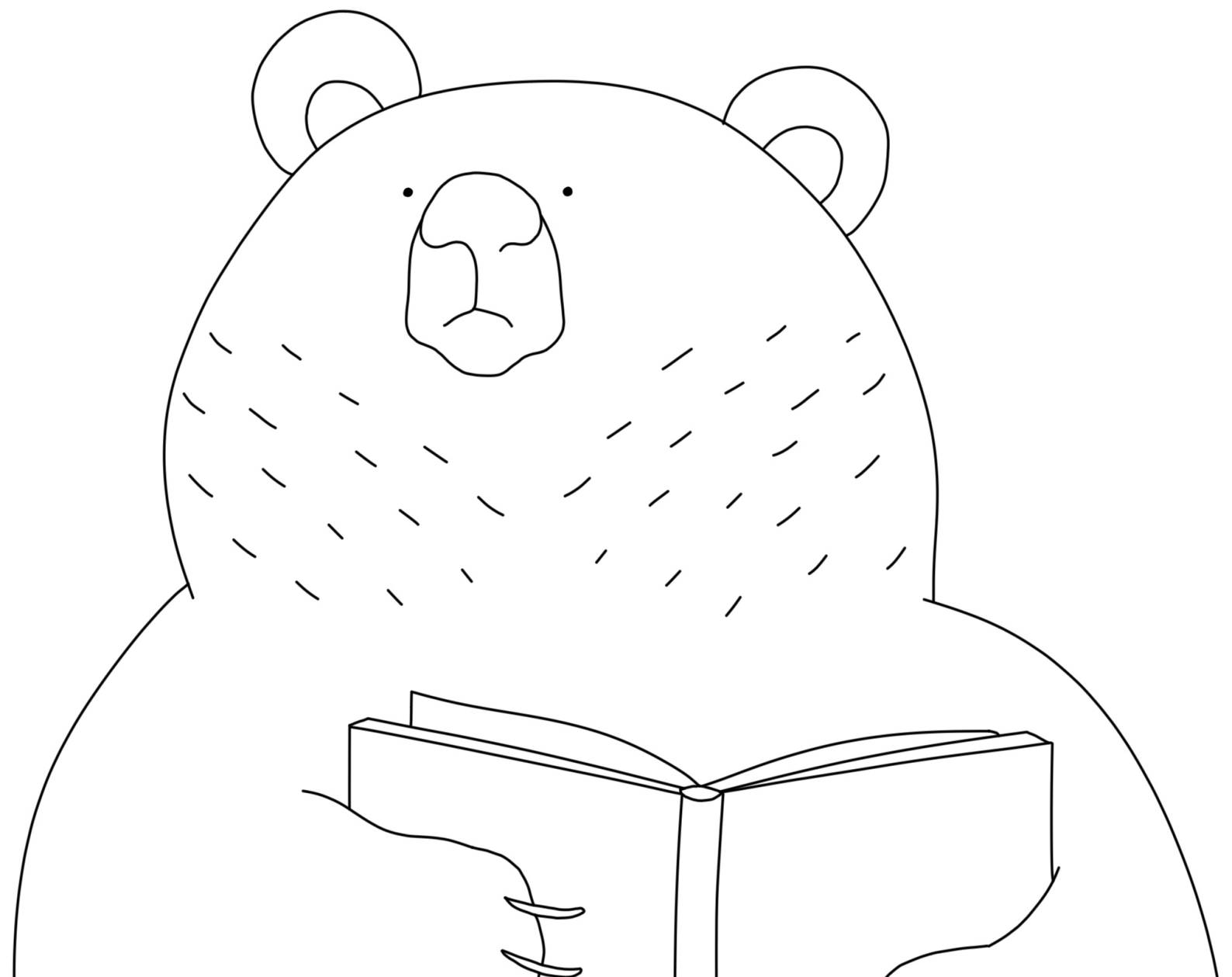
True

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In the previous chapter we learned the following important steps to good communication:

1. Notice your own thoughts that you want to communicate (active thinking).
2. Organise the thoughts that you want to communicate in an order that makes sense. This includes not saying too many ideas all at once. Separating and grouping your different points, then saying them in an order that makes sense to the other person. Or in the order of priority - meaning that you decide what points are more important or need to

Chapter 12: Kindness



Activity from section “Similarities and Differences”:

Think of a person with whom you have disagreements or don't see eye to eye. Write down their perspectives, as you have heard them expressed in the past.

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Exercise

Let's finish this chapter with a few exercises around practical real life scenarios of compassion.

Everyone is capable of experiencing suffering, regardless of:

How intelligent they are

True

False

Where they are from

True

False

How much money they have

True

False

How educated they are

True

False

What they look like

True

False

Their ability to logically understand the world around them

True

False

What gender they are

True

False

What age they are

True

False

How nice or helpful they are

True

False

We should be compassionate to people because we like them, agree with them, they are related to us, or they are similar to us.

True

False

We should be compassionate to people because they can suffer.

True

False

People suffer, even if their suffering doesn't directly impact us.

True

False

To be kind you need to see the other person as your equal, and feel care and warmth towards them.

True

False

Read the following scenarios and decide which ones are compassionate:

Continuing a joke, even though your friend finds it hurtful. You don't think the joke should hurt them, so you tell them to stop being 'oversensitive'.

Compassionate

Not compassionate

Criticising people a lot as soon as you don't like something about them.

Compassionate

Not compassionate

Calling a friend soon after you have had an argument with her, because you don't want them to feel bad for too long, or to go to bed with negative emotions.

Compassionate

Not compassionate

Refusing to do your friend's assignment, but instead offering to help them figure out how to do it on their own.

Compassionate

Not compassionate

Commenting on your friends' weight, appearance, fashion sense or other characteristics, without considering how your comments might make them feel about themselves.

Compassionate

Not compassionate

Feeling relieved about the fact that a person you owe money to does not know their legal rights, because that way you can get away with not paying them.

Compassionate

Not compassionate

Cutting communication with a friend, with no explanation of what they have done to upset you. In your mind you feel justified because they shouldn't have done what they did to hurt you. Meanwhile the other person doesn't know why they are being punished and begins guessing and second guessing everything they did, and their worth to you as a friend.

Compassionate

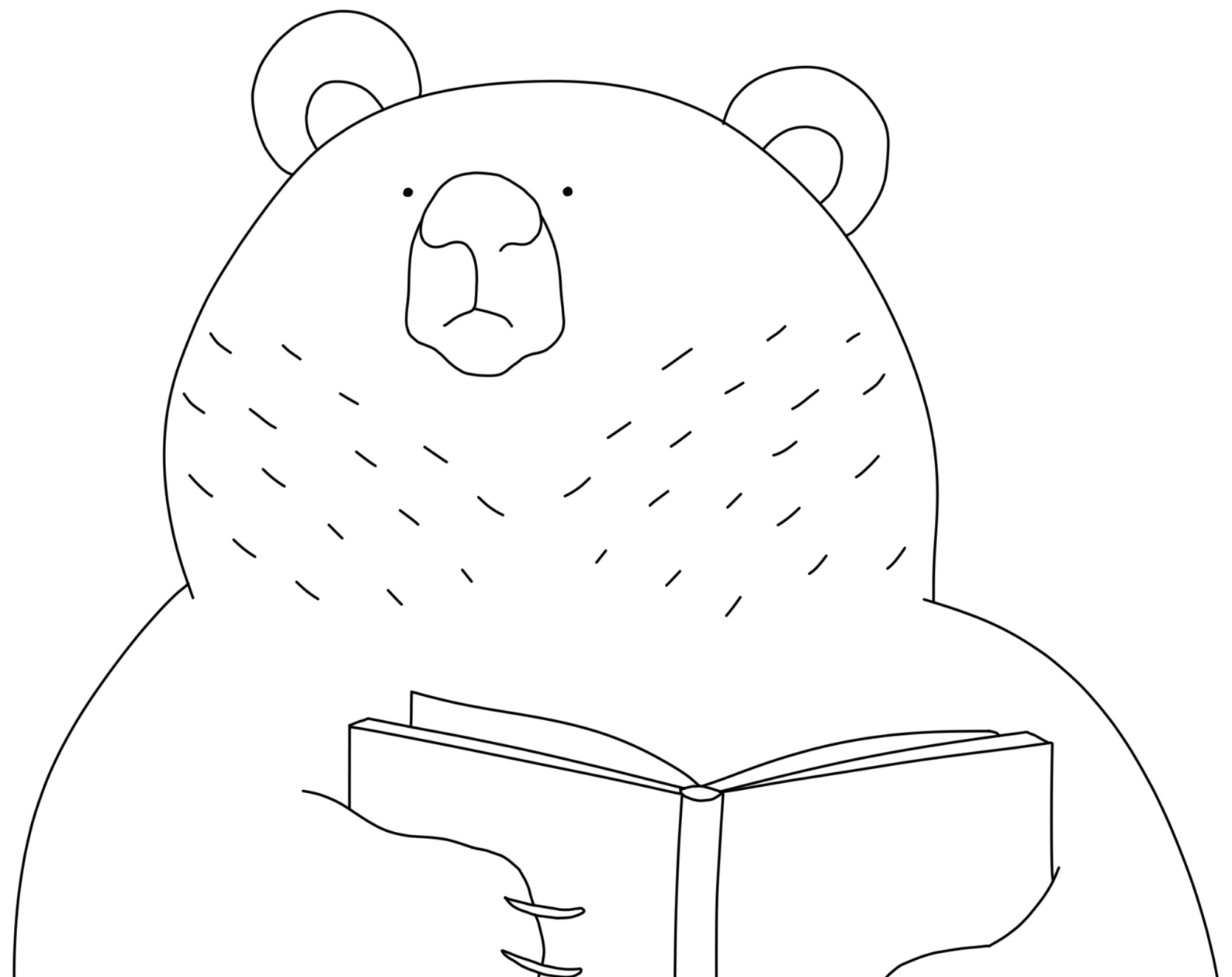
Not compassionate

Blaming an innocent person for the wrongs done by other people, simply because they happen to have shared characteristics like cultural background, skin colour, gender, facial features etc. If they are similar enough to the people responsible for the wrongs committed, then they're probably deserving of blame for their group.

Compassionate

Not compassionate

Chapter 13: Health, Rest and Leisure



Home Practice



Make some plans to improve your physical health. These could include improvements around your exercise, diet, sleep or giving up harmful habits. Set small achievable goals and try to work towards them in the week ahead.

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Activity from section “Undervaluing Leisure”:

Make a list of all of your old and new hobbies. Your hobbies can be anything that you enjoy doing. Anything at all. Even if, to other people, it's not considered a hobby. If you can't think of any hobbies, maybe write down a list of a few things that you wouldn't mind trying. You don't have to be good at it. You just need to be interested in trying it or curious to see if you may enjoy it.

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Activity from section “Fear of Time”:

So, see if you can come up with a plan B and spend time coming to terms with it, and finding your happiness within that alternative plan.

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Activity from section “Remembering This Book”:

If you like, create a contract with yourself. You can start with 'I promise to myself...', and then write down those things that you have learned in this book that you would like to keep working on. For example, you could make plans to continue your mindfulness practices, active thinking and emotion exposure.

Tip: Experience shows that revisiting this book from time to time can help you get more and more out of it. So, you may like to work this into your plan.

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Extra Activity or Writing Space

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