

## Recognizing Feeling Blockers (or ways we avoid feelings)

Uncomfortable feelings trigger anxiety which then trigger defences (ways that we consciously or unconsciously block these feelings from our awareness).

### Case Examples

- 1. Tom has just broken up with his partner. A friend he hasn't seen in some weeks bumps into him at the shops and asks him how his girlfriend is. Still raw from the break-up, Tom manages a quick "she's doing good" response before changing topic. In this example, Tom made a decision to change the subject and not discuss the break up (conscious defence).

- We all have defences or ways that we avoid our feelings. Some can be adaptive or helpful (e.g., making a joke to lighten the mood) whereas others (drug addiction, restrictive eating) can be destructive and harmful.

Noticing your defences (especially ones that are unconscious) can be tough. Some things to consider are

- Are there people, places or things that you habitually avoid or that trigger anxiety?

### Example:

1. If your partner broke up with you at a particular cafe, you might refuse to go back there
2. Your mother made a stinging comment to you last time you saw her and you have refused to talk to her since

## People, Places Or Things I Usually Avoid

- Are there specific feelings, individuals, places or things you usually avoid? Use the worksheet below to note these down.
- If you have a trusted friend, partner or family member that knows you well, you could ask for their insights as well around things you avoid and how you avoid them.

 <b>Avoided feelings</b>	 <b>Avoided people</b>	 <b>Avoided places</b>	 <b>Avoided things</b>
<p>Sally's mother scolded her when she was sad. She now fiercely avoids her own and others' sadness.</p>	<p>Bob got into a heated argument with his sister-in-law Mary. Each time Mary comes to visit, he finds an excuse to leave the house</p>	<p>Julie had a car crash on her way to visit a friend. She refuses to drive past the intersection where she had her car crash</p>	<p>Edison is afraid of elevators, so he walks up 10 flights of stairs each day to get to his office</p>

### Safety Behaviours:

- Sometimes people don't avoid a situation per se, but they may use some sort of "safety behaviour" or crux to get through. For example, I once had a client who experienced IBS symptoms every time she left the house, so she carried valium with her. She would seldom use it, but the act of having the valium acted as a crux for her.
- Have a look back over your list above. Is there anything that you can add to this list when you consider if you only do this using a safety behaviour?