

Connect the DOTS

When unwanted thoughts or emotions arise, it helps to have a strategy for dealing with them.

Not all our strategies, however, are beneficial for our mental or overall well-being when sustained over time.

With this in mind, it can be valuable to consider the long-term impacts of the mechanisms you use to deal with unwanted thoughts.

Use the table below to consider the long-term impacts of the strategies you currently implement when dealing with painful feelings or thoughts.

The table offers four categories of common strategies:

- **Distraction:** Actions and activities designed to take one's mind off negative experiences and think about something else.
- **Opting Out:** Escaping, putting off, quitting, or otherwise avoiding good and meaningful things to avoid painful thoughts and feelings.
- **Thought Processes:** Deliberately 'thinking one's way' out of pain, e.g.: problem-solving, visualization, planning other things.
- **Substance Use & Other:** Includes alcohol, drugs, herbal remedies, homeopathic solutions, exercise, and any other item that one puts in one's body to get rid of or avoid painful sensations.

Bear in mind that some strategies might be conducive to a richer, more value-driven life!

	DOTS List the strategies you currently employ when painful emotions and thoughts pop up.	Long-Term Impacts List the long-term effects of continuing to employ these strategies.
Distraction	What are some other things that you do or think about to avoid dealing with your thoughts and feelings? E.g. <i>Playing video games, listening to music, cooking, solving puzzles.</i>	
Opting Out	Are there meaningful/beneficial situations, people, or activities that you escape or avoid to get rid of unwanted feelings and thoughts? E.g. <i>Going to work get-togethers, visiting friends.</i>	
Thought Processes	What conscious or unconscious methods do you use to “think your way out of” unwelcome thoughts and feelings? E.g. <i>Disaster planning, plotting revenge, brainstorming solutions.</i>	
Substance Abuse & More	Are there any substances or physical activities you turn to when attempting to escape or eliminate pain? E.g. <i>Meditation, herbal remedies, drugs, painkillers.</i>	