

ACT FOR DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

Strategies for living a life that matters

Online:

www.abmacounselling.com/ACT

www.facebook.com/groups/ACTFall2017

KATE'S
STORY



WHAT IS AVOIDANCE?

Avoidance is an action designed to escape emotional distress.

It is triggered by our Limbic System, which instinctively alerts us to fight, flight or freeze in the face of a perceived threat (more on that later!)

Some common avoidance strategies:

Distraction, Ignoring, Blocking Out, Suppressing,
Fixing, Solving, Pushing Away, Self-soothing,
Procrastinating, Minimizing, Withdrawal, Perfectionism

Examples of Avoidance Strategies:

Distraction:

Ignoring:

Blocking Out:

Suppressing:

Fixing:

Solving:

Pushing Away:

Self-soothing:

Procrastinating:

Minimizing:

Withdrawal:

Perfectionism:

WHEN IS AVOIDANCE A PROBLEM?

Occasional use of avoidance can be helpful if it creates a long term benefits:
(e.g. avoiding driving in a snow storm)

Chronic Avoidance may have short term benefits but creates long term problems:
(e.g. social anxiety ⇒ staying home ⇒ relief from anxiety ⇒ loneliness)

While Avoidance helps us temporarily escape our distress, many stressors
(e.g. our relationships, our emotions, our health) cannot be avoided.

Efforts to continually get rid of something that can't be avoided creates more distress:
fatigue, fear, frustration, discouragement, stress, anxiety, depression.

THE COST OF AVOIDANCE

Attempting to avoid unpleasant interior experiences
can interfere with our goals,
especially if the expectation is that
we will only be able to live a meaningful life
once our pain goes away.

THE COST OF AVOIDANCE

Avoidance plays a central role in the maintenance of mood disorders: while painful, the presence of unpleasant symptoms is not the problem; Trying, and failing, to get rid of the pain is what creates suffering, such as:

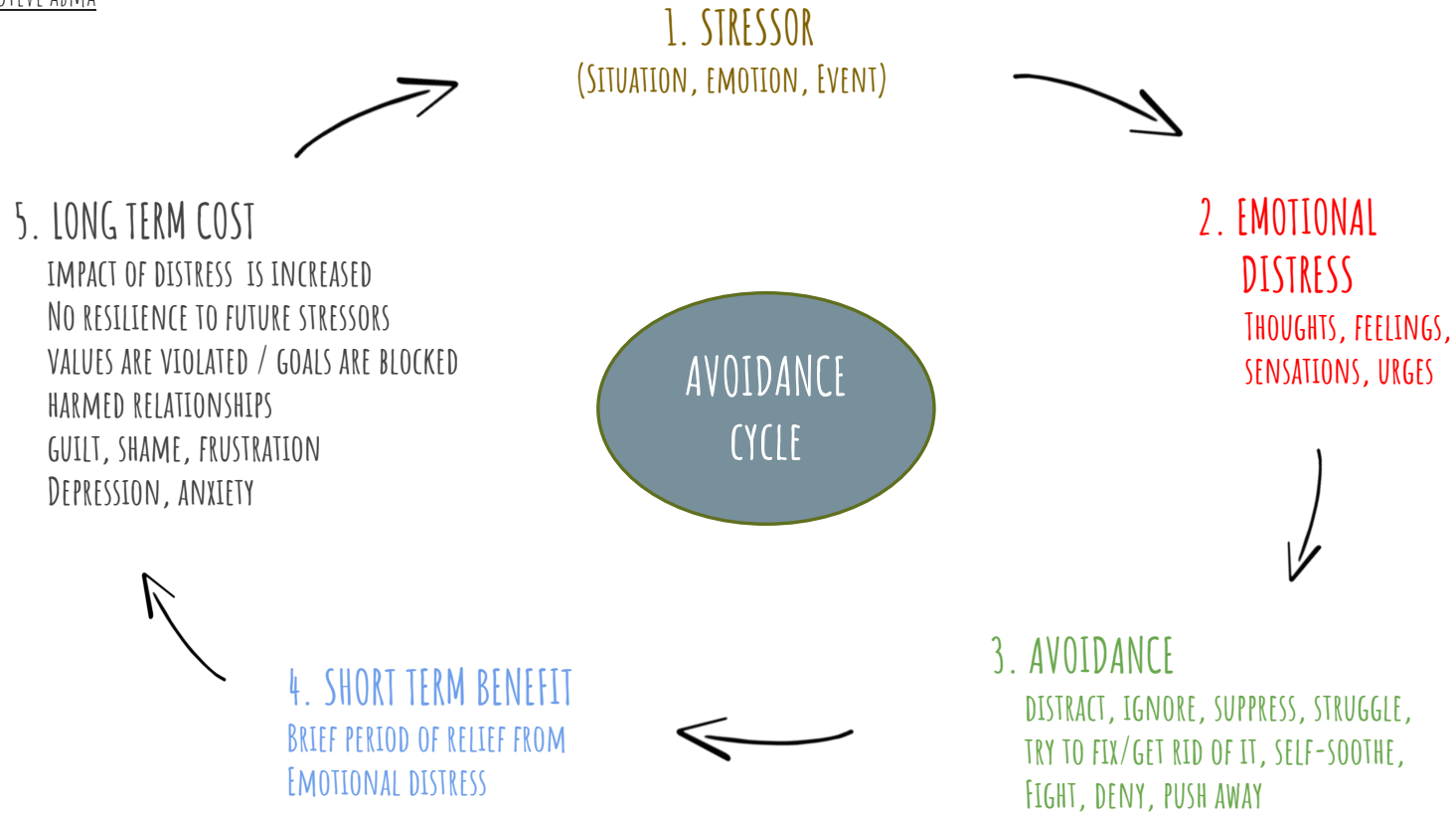
frustration (*why can't I get rid of this?*)

discouragement (*maybe there's nothing I can do*)

fear (*will this always be with me?*)

self-doubt (*there's something wrong with me*)

spiritual crisis (*if God cared/loved me/existed, He would take this away*)



5. **LONG TERM COST:** Weight gain; guilt, shame and frustration; harms relationships with herself and others; diminishes hope, confidence, joy and peace; Brain is wired to want more sweets and relief; she feels unable to stop the cycle and is vulnerable to future stressors

1. **STRESSOR:** Unmet longing to be in a committed relationship. Unhappiness with work/life balance. Dissatisfaction with her health and appearance.

2. **EMOTIONAL DISTRESS**
“What’s wrong with me?” “Will this ever change?” Loneliness, fear, discouragement, frustration, urge to avoid/self-soothe



4. **SHORT TERM BENEFIT:** For moments at a time, she is able to push away her distress through distraction, withdrawal and self-soothing

3. **AVOIDANCE:** distracts with long hours, self-soothes with sweet foods and internet, withdraws from social gatherings

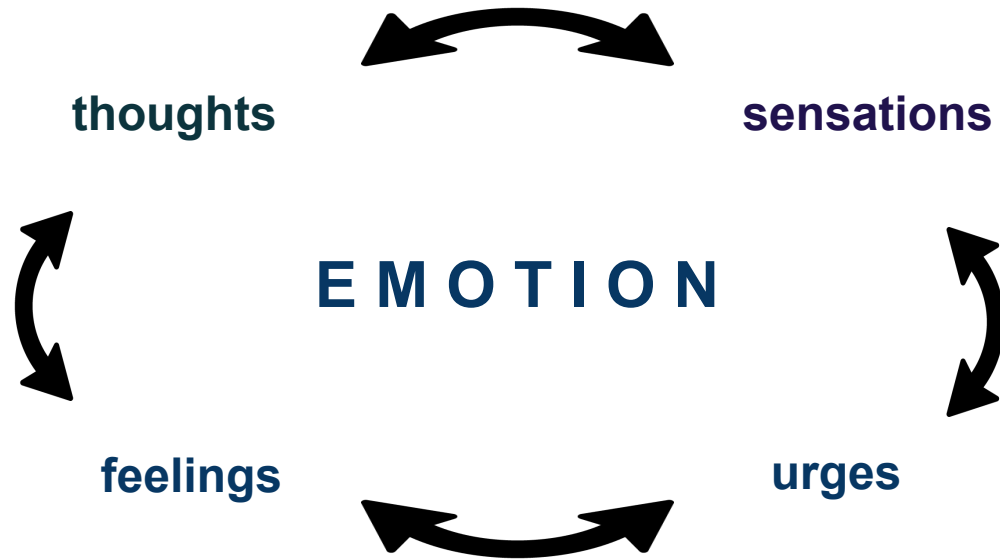




THE COST OF
AVOIDANCE:
KATE'S
STORY



ANATOMY OF AN EMOTION

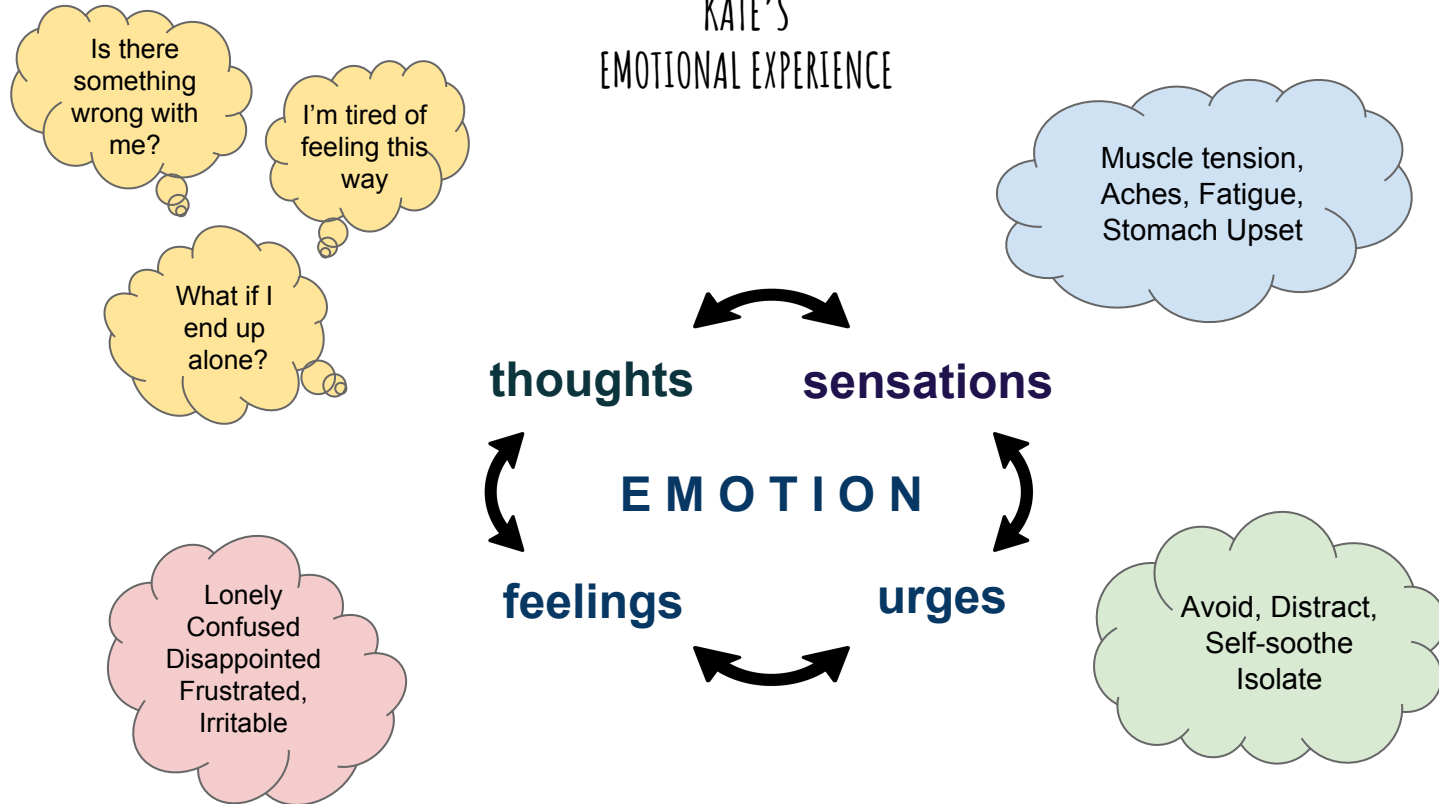


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FEEL AND BE YOUR BEST

SIMPLE, POWERFUL AND PROVEN STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, HABITS AND ADDICTIONS.

KATE'S EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE



ANATOMY OF AN EMOTION

- **Thoughts:** the content of what you are thinking - e.g. “I need some chocolate” “I better not fail this test” “I can’t take this anymore”
- **Feelings:** the label or interpretation we give the emotion - e.g. joyful, content, hurt, disappointed, frustrated, etc.
- **Sensations:** anything you feel in the body - e.g. relaxed, loose, tense, aches and pains.
- **Urges:** impulses to do something or not to do something - e.g. the urge to help someone, eat, yell, withdraw, etc.

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SKILLS FOR OBSERVATION

- Act like a detective - simply gathering information
- Record what you observe, regardless of how you feel about it
- Notice without judgment, criticism or 'should' statements
- Treat yourself like you would a friend: be kind and compassionate
- On a scale of 1-10, rate the distress level of your emotional response