Acceptance of Pain and Struggling Exercise

Go ahead and get into a comfortable position where you are sitting. Maybe sitting upright in a grounded and stable posture, your arms and legs resting comfortably, and your hands resting in your lap or on your legs, whichever is most comfortable for you...allowing your eyes to gently close or softly gaze at an object near the floor.

Allowing yourself to **Arrive.** Taking a few moments to get 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. *(Pause)* Becoming aware of what you are noticing as you sit here, being aware of this moment.

**Gathering** yourself by noticing the gentle rising and falling of your breath in your chest and belly. Not needing to control your breathing in any way, simply letting yourself breathe naturally. *(Pause)* Allowing whatever it is you’re aware of to just be, without needing it to be other than what it is… as you find it…in this moment. *(Pause)*

**Expanding** your awareness to take in your body as a whole, any signs of tension, any signs of calm relaxation. Just taking note of what there is to observe and notice. Being aware that there is a part of you noticing what you are noticing.

Now, bringing to your mind’s attention what you are struggling with, the uncomfortable internal experiences that brought you to Counseling.

Allowing the internal experiences to emerge into your awareness, allowing space for the discomfort…for the pain. Allowing yourself to be present with that experience. *(Pause)*

Bringing to mind the tug-of-war exercise… Noticing any doubts, fears, worries or resistance you might be having about allowing the uncomfortable feelings to be present. *(Pause)* Bringing those experiences to your awareness with a sense of curiosity and compassion. Just noticing them, acknowledging their presence just as a curious scientist might acknowledge the presence of the information that comes from observing his or her experiment….just noticing your experiences without working on them, believing them, or trying to get rid of them… *(Pause)*

As you remain in the presence of what you are struggling with, asking yourself…What has it been like for me to struggle with this experience? *(Pause)* What have I done to control or get rid of this experience? *(Pause)* Have my attempts to control my experience caused more distress or problems? *(Pause)* What have I given up or put off in the service of trying to reduce or control my pain? *(Pause)* In my struggle to get rid of, reduce, or control my unwanted experience or pain, what have I given up in my life that is valuable? *(Pause)*

Allowing yourself to gently open up to your painful experience…to your struggles that have been in the service of trying to make the pain go away…and the struggling that has resulted from not living your life. Bringing a sense of compassion to any sensations of discomfort that might show up. *(Pause)*

Simply being a witness to whatever comes up…recognizing what you observe without judgment. Asking yourself: can I make room for the discomfort, for the pain? Thinking about the tug-of-war exercise and asking: can I drop the struggle of trying to make the pain go away? Can I turn myself towards that which gives my life value, meaning, and purpose? Is this something I must struggle with? Or can I, like the finger trap exercise, openly lean into the discomfort…in the service of not being trapped by my thoughts and feelings and living my life more fully? *(Pause)*

Now, allowing the discomfort to recede a bit from your attention. *(Pause)* Not necessarily trying to push it away, but not keeping it in the forefront of your attention either. Just letting it fade into the background of your awareness on its own accord. *(Pause)*

Returning your attention to your breathing…slowly breathing in and slowly breathing out. *(Pause)* Attending to the rhythm of your breath, the coolness of the air as you breathe in, and the warmth of the air as you breathe out…

Now, as we get ready to end this exercise, beginning to gradually widen your attention to take in the sounds around you…both inside and outside the room. *(Pause)* Bringing yourself back to the room in which you’re sitting. Taking a moment to intentionally bring this sense of self-acceptance into the present moment. *(Pause)* When you are ready, slowly opening your eyes. *(Pause)*