

Container Exercise

This handout offers information on how to do the Container Exercise. Learning to worry less will help you feel better. When you worry less, your mind is calmer and quieter. It can help you think less about what was or what could be.

This exercise can help you do this. You can use this exercise any time. You can use it before you start a new task, before you go to sleep or when you have thoughts that will not go away. This exercise can help you think of your worries less often or not at all.

How to do this exercise:

1. Sit in a comfortable position or lay down.
2. Close your eyes or look directly at a spot in the room.
3. Breathe normally. Take five slow breaths in and out.
4. Ask yourself in your head (not out loud), "Is there any part of my body that is stiff, painful or needs attention?" You might think about the area or areas in your body where there is cancer.
5. When you take a breath in, think about this part of your body. This is what is called, "breathing into your body". When you breathe out, breathe away from this part of your body. Do this for ten slow breaths.
6. Now picture in your mind a container (or a box) that has a lid (or a top that closes). Right now the container is open. It is waiting to hold all the things that you are worried or thinking about.
7. Ask yourself this question: "What have I been thinking about a lot? What have I been worrying about?"
8. As you think about these things, picture yourself putting them into the container one by one.
9. When nothing else comes into your mind, ask yourself once more, "Is there anything else I have been thinking about a lot?"
10. When nothing else comes into your mind, picture yourself putting the lid on the container. Then picture yourself putting this container outside the door or on a shelf. You can also choose to set it close by. You can put the container at whatever distance is comfortable for you. Know that if you want, you can open the container at a later time.
11. Now that you are not thinking about your worries or problems, think about what is good or positive in your life.
 - a. If you are going to sleep, think of peaceful thoughts or of your blessings. Do this for one to two minutes and see how calm and quiet your mind can be as you prepare to go to sleep.
 - b. If you are going to do another task, slowly open your eyes. Do not think of the past or the future. You are now ready to do this task with a calm and focused mind.