

EXERCISE 9: RECOGNISING YOUR AVOIDANCE STRATEGIES

1. Do this exercise when you have an hour to concentrate on yourself.
2. Take your journal and draw a table, similar to the one in the Example Record below (blank copies are provided in the Appendix and online).
3. Look at your watch and note down the time.
4. Then get on with your activities as you normally would. For the next hour observe whenever a thought or feeling about your traumatic experience pops into your mind. Each time it does, notice how you react. Try and rate the strength of your distress on a scale 0–8 (see below).
5. Note how you are trying to cope with the memory. If you find yourself automatically trying to push it from your mind, make a tick in that column of your table.
6. Note also if your intrusive thoughts or feelings trigger ruminations which make you go over events again and again in your mind.
7. Stop yourself after an hour.
8. At the end of this hour check to see how often you tried not to think about it when an intrusive memory about the trauma popped into your mind.

Rate your strength of distress on the following scale:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

No
distress

A little
distress

Definite
distress

Marked
distress

Severe
distress

Here is an Example Record:

Date: 21.12.2016 Time: 11.15am.

Time	Intrusive Memory	Sensations in your body	Strength of Distress (0-10)	Able to tolerate it	Push it away
11.20	<i>Thought about the ice on the road before the car slipped</i>	<i>Tightening of chest, faster breathing</i>	4 <i>Definite distress</i>	✓	
11.35	<i>Smell of burnt rubber (know it's from the accident)</i>	<i>Headache, nausea</i>	7 <i>Severe distress</i>		✓
11.40	<i>Image of other car</i>	<i>Feeling sick</i>	6 <i>Marked distress</i>	started ruminating	✓

What did you observe from your own record? Was the result as you had expected? Or were you surprised at how often you push memories away? Did you notice if you started to ruminate? Note down your findings in your journal, being aware also of bodily sensations and the level of distress the intrusions caused. At what level of distress did you find it hard to tolerate the intrusions?