

## HANDOUT 7-D

### MAKING VALUE-BASED DECISIONS IN SPITE OF NEGATIVE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS: TWO HELPFUL METAPHORS

---

(Adapted from *The Mindfulness and Acceptance Workbook for Anxiety* by Forsythe and Eifert)

#### **“Your life is waiting for you.”**

Imagine that you are walking down the road of life. Ahead of you lie all your goals and aspirations. Suddenly, there is a sign blocking your way. The sign is loaded with negative messages such as “You don’t deserve success,” “You better not try this because it would be humiliating to fail,” and “What makes you think you can do this?”

At this point, you have a choice. You might decide that you must somehow overcome the sign before moving on. So, you try to figure out what the sign means. You might try to explore what life experiences have caused your sign to say what it does. Or you might take a drug, so you can’t even read the sign.

But another alternative would be to just pick up the sign and take it with you. In other words, don’t try to overcome your anxiety. Don’t try to figure it out. Just take your anxiety with you. Allow yourself to feel the anxiety but don’t let it keep you from moving ahead in life and striving to reach worthwhile goals.

#### **“Keep driving the bus.”**

You are a bus driver heading down the road of life. Ahead of you are your valued goals and aspirations. As you drive along, passengers get on and off. Some of the passengers will be positive and encouraging (“Go for it! You’ve got what it takes.”). Many will be neutral. But some will be negative and discouraging (“You can’t do this, you better give up.”).

At this point, you have a choice. You could stop the bus and attempt to silence the negative passengers. Perhaps you will argue with them or even beg them to be quiet. Maybe they agree to be quiet, but in return they want to decide where the bus goes. In other words, your negative thoughts and feelings have hijacked your life and are steering you away from those things that matter most to you.

Your other alternative is to make no effort to argue with, overcome, or silence the negative passengers. Instead, you let them say whatever they want, but you don’t allow them to dictate where you drive the bus. Negative thoughts and feelings come and go but you are in the driver’s seat and you keep the bus headed in the direction of your goals.