

We CAN choose to control these phone calls or we can choose to allow them to control us.

It's ultimately about CHOOSING to allow acceptable, life-enhancing things into our world and CHOOSING to say "HELL NO!" and not "HELLO!" to things that are NOT acceptable.

29- Script - something written out that tells you what to say, like a movie script! I write-out a script for difficult phone calls. If the call is real important, I practice reading it so it doesn't sound like I'm reading it during the call!

Practicing a script is much better than trying to come up with well-thought out stuff in the Heat-of-the-Moment!

30- Rehearse - (rhymes with reverse!) - to practice, like practicing a speech or dance routine.

31- Know it's natural to get nervous and tongue-tied when you're doing this. That's why I write down what I want to say and I read it off as I need to! However, I'm so practiced with it, it doesn't sound like I'm reading it! I get nervousso, I REHEARSE!

32- Feel free to change the wording so it fits your personality and comfort zone!

need to be Mindful that our RECOVERY GOAL is to GET A GAME PLAN for dealing with them. We need to be Mindful that our Recovery Goal is NOT ONLY a Wise Game Plan...but FOLLOWING THROUGH WITH IT and ACTUALLY DOING IT! Our Recovery Goal is to be MINDFUL of the importance of TAKING A STAND...and Fighting for the QUALITY OF OUR LIFE.

SKILL BUILDER: Managing the Upsetting Phone Calls and Visits

The following technique is a tried n' true way of managing these unmanageable phone calls...and taking control of these Out-of-Control calls. I've tried it, many Members have tried it...and it works! When these conversations Come At Us, we've got to respond to them in a way that stops them from ruining our day and our life!

The first step in Protecting Our Peace and Stability is MINDFULNESS. We need to be MINDFUL these calls WILL BE COMING and they'll be filled with ugliness, criticism, conflict, and negativity.

The second step is...BE PREPARED. We need a Game Plan for dealing with these calls. So, WRITE A SCRIPT.²⁹ Not a Valium script, but something like a movie script...of what you want to say...well, not what you WANT to say, but what would be in the best interests of the Big Picture of Your Life to say! Think about what they'll say and write down what you'll say in response. Consider what they might say next and write how you'll respond. Once you get an idea of what you'll say, REHEARSE!³⁰ Run pretend conversations through your mind. You may need to play it out in your head many times until you get pretty good at it.³¹ Get ENOUGH PRACTICE so when the call Comes At You, you'll be able to ADEQUATELY control the conversation. You might have to say things in a different order than you practiced and you might add things. But, if you have a script drilled into your mind and heart, you should do just fine!

Remember, this life ISN'T about perfection. It's about Participating Effectively and doing the best we can...and THAT MAKES "ADEQUATE" ...PERFECT!

The third step is to FOLLOW THROUGH with what you've PLANNED TO DO! When the call or visit turns ugly, you might say something like,³²

"Mom, I love you and value being able to talk with you. However, when we talk about the past and all the upsetting things going on, that upsets me. I don't want to talk about those things every day. My Recovery Plan requires I manage my moods and avoid upsetting things that aren't necessary in my life. Talking about the past and all the rotten things I've done is of NO HELP to me today. If we've talked about everything else and now it's down to this stuff, it's best we get off the phone and catch up on things tomorrow."

33- We've used "Mom" as an example, but, this could be anyone in our life! Sorry, Mom!

Over-practice - This is a High Priority event and something very important for our recovery. It's hard to be okay with this kind of continual conflict in our life!

34- I'd say "we" instead of "when YOU can talk about things..." It'll take a little heat off of her and reduce some of her defensiveness.

35- Turn off, unplug, or set the phone on vibrate. The point is to Protect YOUR Peace and Stability. If you listen to it ringing and ringing, it's going to raise your blood pressure and upset you even more. Turn it off... and try to distract yourself by focusing on something pleasant and enjoyable!

36- You can use this skill in face-to-face conversations, too. Instead of hanging up the phone, you may end up leaving the house, the restaurant, or wherever to end the conversation... even if it means packing your suitcase and ending an out-of-town visit early.

When our people LEARN that we're serious, they'll LEARN how to have a pleasant conversation with us!

Mom³³ will be VERY DEFENSIVE and ANGRY about this BOUNDARY you set. She'll probably FUSS and CRITICIZE YOU MORE! If she does, say something like,

"Mom, I love you and part of my Recovery Plan is that I can't do upsetting phone calls anymore. I'm going to get off the phone now. Call me back tomorrow and we can talk about things that aren't upsetting."

OF COURSE, Mom WILL BE SHOCKED at this NEW BEHAVIOR and will CONTINUE TO BE UGLY...so, CUT IN and say something like...

"Mom, I love you too much and value our relationship too much to stay on this phone when we're yelling and screaming at each other. I'm going to hang up. Call me back when we can talk about things that aren't upsetting. I love you Mom, good night. I'm going to hang up now. We'll talk again tomorrow."

Now, hang up the phone! Expect Mom to be VERY ANGRY and to call back IN A RAGE. I'd answer it and say pretty much the same thing, like,

"Mom, I love you and value our relationship too much to stay on the phone and scream n' fuss at each other. If you want to talk about pleasant things, then I want to talk with you. If we can't have a pleasant conversation, then, I'm going to get off the phone." (Mom WILL continue to FUSS N' YELL, so say...) "Call me back when we³⁴ can talk about things that aren't upsetting. I'd really enjoy talking with you, then. I'm not answering the phone again tonight. We'll talk tomorrow. I love you, good night."

That's it, be done. Unplug the phone for an hour or turn it on vibrate.³⁵ If she calls when you plug the phone back in and she's still raging in ugliness, say,

"Mom, I said I wouldn't talk with you when you're being hurtful. We'll talk tomorrow. I won't be answering your call again tonight. I'll call you tomorrow and we'll start over. I love you, Mom. Good night."

Then stick to it. You'll be amazed at how effective this is. YOU'RE TEACHING HER how to have an enjoyable relationship with you. SHE'LL LEARN that if she's going to spend time with you, she'll HAVE TO BE nice. SHE'LL LEARN that IF SHE'S UGLY, YOU'LL HANG UP THE PHONE³⁶ and she won't have any time with you! Try it! Don't leave off the love part. It's powerful she knows YOU LOVE HER and WANT a relationship with her. SHE'LL LEARN THAT YOU HAVE NEW RULES for what you'll allow in your life. NEW RULES. NEW BOUNDARIES. NEW LIFE!

Our people DO NOT WANT the rules to CHANGE and they'll FIGHT IT BIG-TIME! THEY'LL PRESSURE US TO GO BACK TO THE OLD WAY! As hard as they push us to go back to the old way, WE HAVE TO PUSH TO GO THE RECOVERY WAY! We'll have to STICK TO these new "dance steps" until our "dance partner" learns to dance nicely with us! They'll either dance nicely or we'll leave the dance floor!

Remember, this is OUR LIFE and it's OUR opportunity to take control of an Out-of-Control situation...and to build peace and stability into OUR LIFE. We've got to do it because obviously no one is going to do it for us!

BE MINDFUL that THEY VALUE OUR RELATIONSHIP, TOO...and once they know we'll LEAVE THE DANCE FLOOR, they'll start to FOLLOW OUR LEAD and begin to DANCE NICELY...and they'll STOP STEPPING ALL OVER OUR TOES!!! But...THEY HAVE TO KNOW WE'RE SERIOUS! We'll have to SHOW THEM WE'RE SERIOUS by Following Through and hanging up the phone or leaving the dance floor EVERY TIME they get ugly! This is a very powerful technique. We need to use it...and to keep using it for ALL our unpleasant phone calls and visits!!!

*We need to Mindfully Protect Our Peace and Stability. We need to control our environment and the things Coming At Us just like we would for an infant.
We need to treat ourselves with the same care and devotion.
We're special and we deserve "handling with care"!*

~~~~~ CHAPTER REVIEW ~~~~~

37- Both start with letter A.

38- Nine things were noted on the first page of this chapter. Before looking, list the ones you can remember!

1. Mindfulness is a state of \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ 37
2. When we're trying to control how we respond to difficult situations, what sort of things should we be Mindful of? 38

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_

3. The opposite of Mindfulness is M \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ S .

4. When does mindlessness become a problem? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. What is Painful Rumination? How can we stop it? \_\_\_\_\_  
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