

## Tompkins County PROS Program

**Title of service: Advanced Practice Change Triangle**

**Number of Sessions: 12**

**Duration of session: 55 mins**

**PROS service: Intensive Rehabilitation Relapse Prevention**

### **Source:**

Jacobs Hendel, Hillary. *It's Not Always Depression*. New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2018.

Supplemental Sources listed in each lesson

### **Target population:**

- Diagnoses: Depressive Disorder, Anxiety Disorders, Personality Disorders and Substance Abuse Disorders
- Barriers to be overcome: • Difficulty managing symptoms of depression. • Lack of knowledge or understanding of trauma and its effects • Difficulty identifying and implementing coping strategies to help manage symptoms. • Low self-esteem • Poor stress management skills • Difficulty communicating needs and building a support system. **People who feel stuck!**

**Service Goal:** Assist participants in understanding and recognizing the use of defenses and presence of inhibitory emotions that affect their ability to be their best selves and overcome depression and anxiety that create barriers in their lives. Accompany participants through their emotions to discover their Open Hearted Self!

### **Service Objectives:**

- Participants will practice “falling into their bodies” and recognizing physical sensations.
- Participants will recognize anxiety and depression as experiences that keep them feeling core emotions.
- Participants will recognize when they are using defenses to not feel and use them mindfully.
- Participants will understand the basics of the Change Triangle and how to work the triangle when stuck.
- Participants will learn how their early life experiences, thoughts and feelings are twisted together, causing reactions that don't always “make sense” in the present.
- Participants will learn to identify and challenge their core beliefs.
- Participants will practice being vulnerable and sharing experiences and emotions with others.

Tompkins County PROS Program

**Title of service: Advanced Practice Change Triangle**

**Number of Sessions: 12**

**Duration of session: 55 mins**

**PROS service: Intensive Rehabilitation Relapse Prevention**

**Syllabus:**

1. Giving space to “negative” emotions
  - 1a. No Such Thing as Dragons
2. What Causes Anxiety and Depression?
3. Change Triangle Introduction
4. Defenses
  - 4b. Get to know your Defenses
5. Slowing down
6. Dealing with Anxiety
7. Open Hearted State – Pipe cleaners
8. Shame
9. Guilt
10. Fear – holding more than one emotion at a time
11. Rumination
12. Self-Compassion

## Tompkins County PROS Program

**Title of service: Advanced Practice Change Triangle**

**Session number: 1**

**Duration of session: 55 mins**

**PROS service: Intensive Rehabilitation Relapse Prevention**

**Service objectives:** Participants will discuss the possibility and benefits of giving space to “negative” emotions versus fighting them away or pretending that they don’t exist.

**Sources:**

**Handouts/Videos:**

The Power of Sadness in Inside Out (4:04) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ST97BGCi3-w>

**The Guest House - Rumi**

**Activities:**

- Welcome brief intro, class guidelines, check in how will this class help you reach one or more of your life role goals?
- Watch Video Clip The Power of Sadness in Inside Out (4:04) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ST97BGCi3-w>
- Discuss benefits of sadness or other emotions that are often viewed as “negative.”
- Read The Guest House by Rumi Discuss the benefits and barriers to experiencing emotions as they arrive and talk about what that might look like with examples from the class.
- Wrap up – How was the class helpful in overcoming barriers related to recovery and achievement of life role goals?

**Homework:**

Meditation of choice

## THE GUEST HOUSE

This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

**Title of service: Advanced Practice Change Triangle**

**Session number: 1b**

**Duration of session: 55 mins**

**PROS service: Intensive Rehabilitation Relapse Prevention**

**Service objectives:** Participants will discuss the possibility and benefits of giving space to “negative” emotions versus fighting them away or pretending that they don’t exist.

**Sources:**

**Handouts/Videos:**

There’s no Such Thing as Dragons by Jack Kent

Change Triangle for Beginners – Hilary Jacobs Hendel

**Activities:**

- Welcome brief intro, class guidelines, check in how will this class help you reach one or more of your life role goals?
- Read There’s no Such Thing as Dragons Discuss the barriers in recognizing and acknowledging feelings.
- Read the handout Change Triangle for Beginners, review the parts of the triangle.
- Wrap up – How was the class helpful in overcoming barriers related to recovery and achievement of life role goals?

**Homework:**

Meditation of Choice

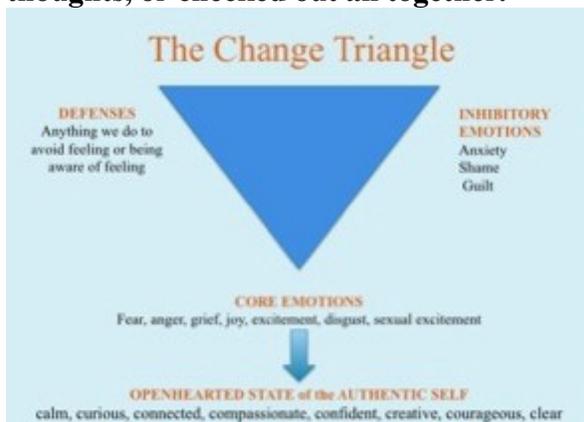
## Part 2: Top 5 Ways To Work The Change Triangle as a Beginner

The **Change Triangle** is a tool based on cutting-edge science in emotions and neuroscience of how the brain changes to restore a sense of calm and regulation. It's a tool everyone can use to help shift from distress to greater peace of mind. The Change Triangle is both a map and a tool that you can use every day. You can turn to it to manage upsetting moments, or when you are in conflict with yourself or those you love, or when you're looking to understand yourself more deeply. You can turn to it when you want to feel more calm and openhearted. Practiced over a life time, working The Change Triangle builds resilience and emotional stability. With practice, comes change. So here are 5 moves to start working the Change Triangle:

### 1. Check in with your mind and body.

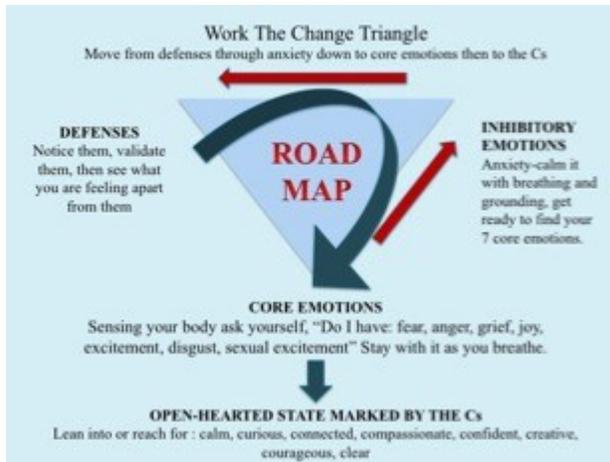
Make a mental or actual note in your daily calendar (like I do in my calendar: see the screen shot below) that reminds you to stop what you are doing for 1 minute a few times each day and check in to find out where you are on TCT right now.

### 2. Notice if you are calm, having feelings (core or inhibitory), up in your head thinking thoughts, or checked out all together.



Review each corner of the change triangle as well as the C's to find what words resonate most for you. You might find yourself on more than one corner. Notice if you are calm, having an emotion, or avoiding your emotions—take your best guess. And remember, all worthwhile endeavors take practice at first. Just validate your truth. No judgment, just acceptance of where you are right now.

### 3. Ask yourself, “Where am I on the Change Triangle right now?”



## The Change Triangle

Look at the map of The Change Triangle and find the corner you think you are on: defense, inhibitory, core, or openhearted state below the triangle.

### 4. Approach yourself with curiosity and kindness. Are you putting aside self-judgments the best that you can?

Validate that merely trying to figure out where you are on the Change Triangle is awesome! No matter whether you easily located your state or if the endeavor was frustrating or confusing, you just did something good for your brain and mind by trying. Keep learning! Keep practicing!!

### 5. To feel better, we want to move clockwise to the bottom of the Change Triangle so you can name your core emotions. Are you working the Change Triangle to find what step is next to find some relief?



Based on the instructions above for what to do at each corner of the Change Triangle, validate what needs to be done for you to get to a better place right now.

If I am in a defense, I want to find what emotions I am guarding against. I ask myself: *If I didn't use this defense, what might I be feeling about my current situation?*

If I am anxious, I pause to calm my anxiety. I **breathe, feel my feet on the floor**, remind myself anxiety is temporary and is caused by core emotions pushing up for expression. When I slow way down, and calm down a bit, I try to name all the core emotions I notice sensing them in my body as well as my mind.

If I am having one or more core emotions, I pick the most prominent one and get to know it by sensing the sensations it causes in my body. **I try to put words on the sensations I perceive**. I drop the story line in my head that goes with the emotion and simply stay with the physical sensations, relating to myself with compassion and kindness—never judgment. I breathe and follow the sensations as they move through my body, until the wave calms.

If I'm in the openhearted state, I make sure to notice and enjoy it. I stay with good feelings like joy, pride in myself, gratitude, and love. I sense them physically to reap the health benefits of doing so. They are vitamins for the brain.

Congratulations! You just worked The Change Triangle! This is a practice not a perfect so A+ just for reading!!

---

## Tompkins County PROS Program

**Title of service: Advanced Practice Change Triangle**

**Session number: 2**

**Duration of session: 55 mins**

**PROS service: Intensive Rehabilitation Relapse Prevention**

**Service objectives:**

**Handouts/YouTube Videos:**

Change Triangle

YouTube video: 10Minute Body Scan

YouTube video: What Causes Anxiety and Depression (5:59)

**Activities:**

- Welcome brief intro, class guidelines, check in how will this class help you reach one or more of your life role goals?
- Complete PHQ9, GAD7 and QoL
- Begin with a seated body scan 10 Minute seated Body Scan discuss any sensations noticed (10:24)<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QH2pzjpeOu8>
- Discuss what causes anxiety and depression.
- Watch : What Causes Anxiety and Depression (5:59)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNsTy-j\\_sQs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNsTy-j_sQs)
- Briefly introduce the Change Triangle
- Wrap up – How was the class helpful in overcoming barriers related to recovery and achievement of life role goals?

**Homework:**

- Daily Meditation of Choice

## Tompkins County PROS Program

**Title of service: Advanced Practice Change Triangle**

**Session number: 3**

**Duration of session: 55 mins**

**PROS service: Intensive Rehabilitation Relapse Prevention**

**Service objectives:** To recognize how depression manifests individually and continue to learn and practice mindfulness strategies to manage depression.

### **Handouts/YouTube Videos:**

Three minute breathing space by Jon Kabot-Zinn (3:54)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oWmGJc8NWI>

Hilary Jacobs Hendel – The Change Triangle (2:12)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WhKlaxqkFg>

### **Activities:**

- Welcome brief intro, class guidelines, check in how will this class help you reach one or more of your life role goals?
- Begin with Three minute breathing space to set the tone and remind people to connect with their bodies.
- Review main learning points from previous session. Write the change triangle on the board.
- Begin with a three minute breathing space – discuss anything that comes up during the minute of opening to whatever is there.
- Watch YouTube Video – Hilary Jacobs Hendel – The Change Triangle
- Discuss ways in which participants learned to experience emotions.
  - (Society, family, media etc.)
- Distribute packet. Ask for a volunteer to read The core emotions section (Middle of 16- middle of 17).
- Read Inhibitory emotions section, just the first paragraph (pg 18)
- Discuss examples of ways in which participants experience inhibitory emotions to cover core emotions.
- End with a three minute breathing space, discuss anything that comes up during the minute of opening to whatever is there.
- Wrap up – How was the class helpful in overcoming barriers related to recovery and achievement of life role goals?

### **Homework:**

Daily meditation of choice.

**Title of service: Advanced Practice Change Triangle**

**Session number: 4**

**Duration of session: 55 mins**

**PROS service: Intensive Rehabilitation Relapse Prevention**

**Service objectives:** Understand and recognize the positive and unhelpful effects of defenses and begin to explore underlying emotions.

**Handouts/YouTube Videos:**

Three minute breathing space by Jon Kabot-Zinn (3:54)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oWmGJc8NWI>

Defenses (2.15) <https://youtu.be/Y9aupYyr3IU>

Handout 1 Pages 20-22 – It's not always Depression

**Activities:**

- Welcome brief intro, class guidelines, check in how will this class help you reach one or more of your life role goals?
- Review main learning points from previous session.
- Begin with a three minute breathing space – discuss anything that comes up during the last minute. How are participants' minds today?
- Watch Defenses video. Brainstorm defenses in general (not personal ones)
- Distribute handout 1 read the first part together and fill out the personal defenses.
- Discuss what it's like to think about your own defenses. Where do you know that in the body.
- Read the second section of the handout and discuss responses.
- End with a three minute breathing space. What if anything different came up? Were you able to sit with any uncomfortable feelings for one minute?
- Wrap up – How was the class helpful in overcoming barriers related to recovery and achievement of life role goals?

**Homework:**

Daily meditation of choice.

## Tompkins County PROS Program

**Title of service: Advanced Practice Mindfully Living with Depression**

**Session number:** 4b

**Duration of session:** 55 mins

**PROS service:** Intensive Rehabilitation Relapse Prevention

**Service objectives:** Understand and recognize the positive and unhelpful effects of defenses and begin to explore underlying emotions.

**Handouts/YouTube Videos:**

Three minute breathing space by Jon Kabot-Zinn (3:54)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oWmGJc8NWI>

Defenses (2.15) <https://youtu.be/Y9aupYyr3lU>

Handout 1 Want to be More Authentic? Hilary Jacobs Hendel Blog

**Activities:**

- Welcome brief intro, class guidelines, check in how will this class help you reach one or more of your life role goals?
- Review main learning points from previous session.
- Begin with a three minute breathing space – discuss anything that comes up during the last minute. How are participants' minds today?
- Watch Defenses video. Brainstorm defenses in general (not personal ones)
- Distribute handout 1 read the together
- Discuss what it's like to think about your own defenses. Where do you know that in the body?
- End with a three minute breathing space. What if anything different came up? Were you able to sit with any uncomfortable feelings for one minute?
- Wrap up – How was the class helpful in overcoming barriers related to recovery and achievement of life role goals?

**Homework:**

Daily meditation of choice.

Want to Feel More Authentic? Get to Know Your Defenses!  
December 16, 2015

|

Hilary Jacobs Hendel

Mary picks fights with her husband at night so she doesn't have to deal with her anxiety around sexual intimacy. Looking for what's wrong with her husband distracts her from her discomfort and the feelings of vulnerability that are lurking underneath the surface. By not directly addressing her anxiety and/or not letting her husband know she is struggling, Mary misses an opportunity to be understood and feel more connected.

Social situations cause stress for Halley. She stays home instead of going out on weekends because she feels safe at home and also lonely. Dealing directly with her fears opens up the possibility that she could soothe them and find alternative ways to engage with others that would feel less stressful and even satisfying.

Robert curses out people when he feels disrespected. Precious emotional energy is used up by his temper and sometimes he even feels ashamed after he overreacts. Instead of acting out, he could get curious about his anger. Using tools like The Change Triangle, he could find better outlets for his frustrations and even learn to "let it go."

These are all examples of defensive behaviors: the brilliant and creative ways we avoid our [emotions](#).

All of us use defenses to avoid emotions. In fact defenses are developed for precisely that reason—to avoid painful feelings. Defenses are adaptations our minds make to help us cope with vulnerabilities. While defenses serve a purpose, there is a cost to the protection they offer. To feel vital, connected and authentic, we must move beyond our defenses.

Defenses can be healthy, sometimes problematic or very problematic. A healthy defense is one in which we have choice and control. After a stressful day at work, we can choose to distract ourselves with a funny movie, for example. Medicating stress with a drug like alcohol is an example of a sometimes-problematic defense because it can become an unhealthy habit. A very problematic defense is behaving in self-destructive ways that chronically hurt you and your relationships. Addressing core emotions directly will help you lead a less defended life and one where your most authentic Self feels safer to come forward.

The great news is that we can begin to remedy these problems by noticing when, how and for what we are using our defenses. Once we become aware that we are avoiding something, we can ask ourselves what emotions might be underneath. [Slowing down](#) helps you begin to notice what's happening in your body and brings attention to your emotional world.

When I notice I am defensive, defended, or just too up in my head, I ground myself by feeling the soles of my feet on the floor. Then I take 4 or 5 long deep belly breaths. Sometimes I picture

myself on the beach to deepen my relaxation. Feel free to try this. This is a great practice any time. And, it sets the stage for learning more about the emotions we are blocking.

Now more relaxed and slowed down, I ask myself, "What am I feeling?" Then without judging, I try to label all the emotions I can notice. Validating emotions helps them calm down. Maybe you notice a hopeless or sad feeling. Maybe you start to get in touch with parts of you that hold resentments or fears. Maybe you also notice a physical sensation like a tension in your stomach. Whatever you find, accept it. If you don't know what you feel, that's ok too. When I'm confused about what I am feeling, I try on each core emotion one at a time. I ask myself, *Am I sad? Am I angry? etc.* to see if any of those core emotions fit. Again, always validate what you find by reminding yourself that "feelings just are!"

Congratulations! This is a great beginning to learning more about the relationship between your defenses and your emotions. Next time you recognize a problematic behavior you might even be able to stop and notice that you have been here before. You will now more easily recognize the emotions that your defenses are obscuring. If you're feeling really brave, maybe you'll share your feelings, wants and needs with someone you love. This is a major step to getting unstuck and creating positive change.

A+ for trying!

## Tompkins County PROS Program

**Title of service: Advanced Practice Change Triangle**

**Session number: 5**

**Duration of session: 55 mins**

**PROS service: Intensive Rehabilitation Relapse Prevention**

**Service objectives:** Understand the importance of slowing down in recognizing what is going on internally. Practice slowing down through various relaxation techniques.

**Handouts:**

It's Not Always Depression pgs 59-65

YouTube: Mediation Guide for Slowing Your mind and body

**Activities:**

- Welcome brief intro, class guidelines, check in how will this class help you reach one or more of your life role goals?
- Begin with a meditation to set the stage for slowing down.
  - Meditation Guide for Slowing You're your mind and body (4:31)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K91uPuC7Bxk>
- Review Change Triangle – focus on the need to slow down in order to be able to recognize what is going on.
- What are the barriers to slowing down? Worried about effects on symptoms? Don't know how? Haven't found something that works?
- Distribute handout and review each of the relaxation practices and give them a try. Discuss any barriers that come up.
- Wrap up – How was the class helpful in overcoming barriers related to recovery and achievement of life role goals?

**Homework:**

Daily meditation of choice.

## Tompkins County PROS Program

**Title of service: Advanced Practice Change Triangle**

**Session number: 6**

**Duration of session: 55 mins**

**PROS service: Intensive Rehabilitation Relapse Prevention**

**Service objectives:** Participants will recognize the physical effects of anxiety and learn strategies to decrease anxiety in order to access other emotions.

### **Handouts and Videos:**

YouTube Video: Three minute breathing space by Jon Kabot-Zinn (3:54)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oWmGJc8NWI>

Handout 1: It's Not Always Depression page 80 How to Lower Anxiety During Conflict with Another Person

Handout 2: It's Not Always Depression page 139-140 Core Emotions are Programs for Action and Fight or Flight

### **Activities:**

- Welcome brief intro, class guidelines, check in how will this class help you reach one or more of your life role goals?
- Begin with a three minute breathing space – discuss anything that comes up during the last minute. How are participants' minds today?
- Review Change Triangle
- Distribute Handout 1 How to Lower Anxiety. How can using these skills be important when trying to understand underlying emotions.
- Distribute Handout 2 discussing the impulse of emotions and individuals' experiences
- Wrap up – How was the class helpful in overcoming barriers related to recovery and achievement of life role goals?

### **Homework:**

Daily meditation of choice.

**Title of service: Advanced Practice Change Triangle**

**Session number: 7**

**Duration of session: 55 mins**

**PROS service: Intensive Rehabilitation Relapse Prevention**

**Service objectives:** Participants will recognize their open hearted self and understand the connections between emotions and defenses and how they affect recovery.

**Handouts/YouTube Videos:**

Three minute breathing space by Jon Kabot-Zinn (3:54)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oWmGJc8NWI>

YouTube Video: Pipe cleaners (3:00) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGhZ7pqD-wA>

**Activities:**

- Welcome brief intro, class guidelines, check in how will this class help you reach one or more of your life role goals?
- Review main learning points from previous session.
- Begin with a three minute breathing space.
  - What physical sensations, thoughts and feelings presented themselves?
- Introduce Open Hearted State
  - What are the experiences of participants when they can identify being in a space of an open hearted self.
- Watch Pipe cleaners (3:00)
  - Discuss examples of emotional reactions and of recognizing defenses/inhibitory emotions and work to get to the core emotion underneath
- End with a three minute breathing space.
  - What physical sensations, thoughts and feelings presented themselves?
- Wrap up – How was the class helpful in overcoming barriers related to recovery and achievement of life role goals?

**Homework:**

Daily meditation of choice.

## Tompkins County PROS Program

**Title of service: Advanced Practice Change Triangle**

**Session number: 8**

**Duration of session: 55 mins**

**PROS service: Intensive Rehabilitation Relapse Prevention**

**Service objectives:** Participants will identify and discuss benefits and barriers to allowing feelings to exist without trying to change them.

**Handouts:**

One Minute Video on Emotional Health Season 1 Episode 5 (Shame) (2:07)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8vI13-OROk>

Three minute breathing space by Jon Kabot-Zinn (3:54)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oWmGJc8NWI>

Handout 1: Nine ways to Begin Working with Your (pg 186)

**Activities:**

- Welcome brief intro, class guidelines, check in how will this class help you reach one or more of your life role goals?
- Review main learning points from previous session (Anxiety – fight or flight)
- Begin with a three minute breathing space to help people center and drop into the body.
- Introduce topic of shame. Ask participants to brainstorm a definition of shame and things that cause shame.
  - 1) when our bids for love, physical/emotional care, and acceptance are consistently met with indifference, disdain, neglect or retaliation
  - 2) when we subjectively sense criticism or rejection for who we are, what we need, and what we feel
- Watch video One Minute Video on Emotional Health Season 1 Episode 5 (2:07)
- Discuss the development of Shame and talk about ways to heal the old hurt.
  - Distribute Nine ways to Begin Working with Your Shame (pg186)
- Practice Three minute Breathing Space and discuss experience.
- Wrap up – How was the class helpful in overcoming barriers related to recovery and achievement of life role goals?

**Homework:**

Daily Meditation of Choice

## Tompkins County PROS Program

**Title of service: Advanced Practice Change Triangle**

**Session number: 9**

**Duration of session: 55 mins**

**PROS service: Intensive Rehabilitation Relapse Prevention**

**Service objectives:** Participants will recognize guilt and understand its roots and how it interferes with processing feelings. Participants will work the triangle and practice accessing core emotions by addressing guilt.

### **Handouts/YouTube Videos:**

Three minute breathing space by Jon Kabot-Zinn (3:54)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oWmGJc8NWI>

Handout 1: Are you Really Sorry?

### **Activities:**

- Welcome brief intro, class guidelines, check in how will this class help you reach one or more of your life role goals?
- Review discussion from last week – Shame. Discuss any instances of noticing shame during the week and attempt to access core emotion underneath
- Begin with a three minute breathing space to help participants drop into the body.
- Introduce today's topic – Guilt Define guilt and brainstorm life experiences that cause guilt
- Distribute Handout 1 Read and discuss
- Wrap up – How was the class helpful in overcoming barriers related to recovery and achievement of life role goals?

### **Homework:**

Daily meditation of choice

## Are You Really Sorry? January 15, 2017 Hilary Jacobs Hendel

Apologizing is hard. If you've ever been on the receiving end of an insincere apology, you know how demoralizing that feels. In stark contrast, a good apology is elixir for relationship wounds.

Mara and Jack had been living together for a year. While dusting, Mara accidentally knocked over a glass figurine and it shattered against the tile floor. Unfortunately, it was the cherished award Jack received for his fine work in advertising.

Mara's first impulse was to hide the evidence. Panicking, she entertained fantasies of running away to avoid his anger and upset.

Mara's second impulse was to posture up and convince both Jack and her guilty conscience that this mishap was not such a big deal. "Objects are just objects," she told herself. "It is not as if I killed someone!" Of course, that is true. But that kind of an attitude might not serve her relationship with Jack.

*Admitting we did something "wrong" is a humbling experience. It takes strength to withstand the assault to our egos. Many of us pride ourselves on not making mistakes.*

Some of us were harshly berated for making mistakes when we were young. As a consequence, even though we are adults, we continue the tradition and berate ourselves just like our parents did. Most of us intellectually understand that perfection is not a realistic standard—everyone of us has flaws and makes mistakes—yet "owning" our mistakes can be hard if not painful and scary. Still, we must be accountable for our actions.

The skill of knowing when and how to apologize is one that greatly serves us all and our valued relationships.

So, what makes a good apology?

The late Randy Pausch, in his beautiful book, *The Last Lecture*, teaches us how to apologize. I read his instructions in 2008 and have incorporated them into my apologies ever since with much success. Pausch teaches that a proper apology has three parts:

1. A statement of apology including what you did that you feel was wrong.
2. A statement that demonstrates you understand how what you did affected the other (empathy).
3. A statement showing your desire to make amends and asking how to make amends.

In truth, Mara was deeply sorry. So, her third impulse was to gather strength and courage to look Jack right in the eye and say, "I broke your glass award. I know how much it meant to you. I know it's irreplaceable. I understand how upsetting it must be to lose a cherished possession. If there's anything I can do to make it up to you, please tell me. In the meantime, I understand if you are angry and I am deeply sorry."

Jack was upset but he *felt* Mara's remorse and concern. Her heartfelt apology made it possible for Jack to be sad for the loss of something he cared about without needing to blame or to punish Mara.

Learning about a good apology made me ponder: what makes a bad apology?

- Blaming the person to whom you are apologizing. "I'm sorry I broke your award but you should not have left it there." Whether that is true or not is beside the point now. Shifting blame avoids accountability. Blaming the person you hurt is not a good strategy.
- Beating yourself up instead of being accountable. "I'm sorry I broke your award. I'm a terrible person. I always make mistakes. You should leave me." That just makes it about you and forsakes the person whom you hurt. Beating yourself up is not apologizing.
- Apologizing but then immediately asking for an apology back. "I'll apologize to you when you apologize to me for \_\_\_\_\_!" This is not giving an apology. It is asking for one.

Here's a final story to illustrate a good apology:

Nick invited Ruby to a large family party in honor of his grandparents' 65th anniversary. Nick knew many people at the party and spent much of his time socializing with others, leaving Ruby to fend for herself. She felt awkward and abandoned. When she agreed to attend the party, Ruby imagined something different and was annoyed with Nick for not taking better care of her. Nick understood and followed the recipe for a great apology:

Nick stated what he did wrong. "I'm sorry I spent so much time with others at the party and left you alone a lot of the time."

Nick showed Ruby he understood how she felt (empathy). "I understand you felt alone and awkward. I also understand you went expecting I would spend more time with you. Did I get that right?"

Nick tried to make amends. "Next time we go to a party, we'll talk about a plan first. I will follow through with the plan we make. If I can't spend time with you, like at a business function or whatever, I'll let you know ahead of time. How does that sound? In the meantime, is there anything I can do or say to let you know how sorry I am or to make it up to you?"

Learning how to give a heartfelt apology is one of the best things you can do for your relationships. It's all about accountability! When our actions cause hurt and *we own the damage done*, whether by mistake or on purpose, like in the midst of a reactive moment, it sends a message:

"I care about you more than I care about my ego."

A heartfelt apology is the repair. Truly caring about the hurt feelings we cause fosters deep love and trust. It's not always easy. But I think you'll be amazed by the power of a good apology to heal even the deepest wounds.

Tompkins County PROS Program

**Title of service: Advanced Practice Change Triangle**

**Session number: 10**

**Duration of session: 55 mins**

**PROS service: Intensive Rehabilitation Relapse Prevention**

**Service objectives:** Participants will learn to identify the effects of fear and recognize inhibitory emotions that keep them from experiencing fear. Participants will understand the importance of holding two (or more) emotions at the same time and the benefit of enlisting help in struggles.

**Handouts:**

**YouTube Video:** Three minute breathing space by Jon Kabot-Zinn (3:54)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oWmGJc8NWI>

Handout 1: Fear and Strengths

**Children's Book:** Pout Pout Fish and the Big Dark

**Activities:**

- Welcome brief intro, class guidelines, check in how will this class help you reach one or more of your life role goals?
- Open with a Three Minute Breathing Space – discuss anything that comes up today.
- Introduce the idea of holding two emotions at the same time –giving them both space. Example: Fear and Joy.
- Read the book Pout Pout and the Big Dark to the group. Discuss holding two emotions at the same time and the benefit of a trusted other in facing difficult emotions.
- Distribute Fears and Strengths handout. Complete and discuss using the Change Triangle as the format.
- Wrap up – How was the class helpful in overcoming barriers related to recovery and achievement of life role goals?

**Homework:**

Daily Meditation of Choice

## My Fears And Strengths

What makes me feel scared?

What do I do when I am scared?

What makes me strong?

Who can help me when I am scared?

The next time I am scared, I will...

Draw how you will use your strengths to battle your fears.

## Tompkins County PROS Program

**Title of service: Advanced Practice Change Triangle**

**Session number: 11**

**Duration of session: 55 mins**

**PROS service: Intensive Rehabilitation Relapse Prevention**

**Service objectives:** Participants will recognize and learn skills to address rumination that keeps them stuck in loops of anxiety.

**Sources:**

Hilary Jacobs Hendel blog – “Why Can’t I shut off my Mind?”

**Handouts:**

Handout 1: “Why Can’t I Shut off my Mind?”

**Activities:**

- Welcome brief intro, class guidelines, check in how will this class help you reach one or more of your life role goals?
- Begin with a three minute breathing space and ask participants to really pay attention to anything happening in their body – without judgement or explanation, just what is happening.
- Briefly review the parts of the change triangle, write them on the board.
- Distribute and ask for a volunteer to read through the blog post Handout 1.
- Discuss Beth’s movement through the triangle.
- If there’s time, ask for a volunteer to give an example of getting stuck in ruminating and have the class work through the triangle with the participant.
- End with another three minute breathing space paying attention to any shifts that have occurred in the last hour.
- Wrap up – How was the class helpful in overcoming barriers related to recovery and achievement of life role goals?

**Homework:**

Participants will complete daily exercise record to record their mood and activity level.

Why Can't I Shut Off My Mind?

March 15, 2018

|

Hilary Jacobs Hendel

Beth came to therapy because she could not stop her mind from worrying. She'd think about the same things over and over, getting stuck in a loop that didn't lead to resolution or peace of mind. She'd wake up obsessing about her future and blaming herself for past mistakes. Intellectually she knew she just had to do her best and take everything a day at a time. But she could not quiet her mind.

Ruminating, as defined by Webster's Medical Dictionary, is "obsessive thinking about an idea, situation, or choice especially when it interferes with normal mental functioning; specifically: a focusing of one's attention on negative or distressing thoughts or feelings that when excessive or prolonged may lead to or exacerbate an episode of [depression](#)."

Ruminating feels awful and is exhausting. Many people resort to prescription medications like Klonopin and Xanax to help calm the anxiety that drives ruminations. But there are other ways, more lasting ways, to calm anxiety and experience some relief.

It helps to first learn a little about the relationship between ruminating, anxiety and core emotions. I diagrammed it for Beth on [the Change Triangle](#):

Core emotions (fear, anger, sadness, disgust, joy, excitement and sexual excitement) are natural, universal, unavoidable, and automatic. And core emotions produce [energy](#) for survival actions, like preparing us to run fast to avert danger. Sometimes emotional energy has nowhere to go. The result is anxiety: trapped energy swirling around our body. It feels terrible!

Both core emotions and anxiety are visceral; they are called "feelings" because when we become aware of them we can literally, physically FEEL them. Our natural tendency is to avoid uncomfortable sensations, so the brain - often unconsciously - leads us to disconnect from our body and escape into our thoughts.

Just as anxiety is trapped energy churning in our body as a result of avoiding the feelings of core emotions, ruminations are thoughts churning in our minds to avoid feeling the sensations of anxiety. The way out? Work your way back around and down the Change Triangle: tune into your body, discover which core emotions are at work, and safely process them. When the body calms down the mind will soon follow.

I asked Beth, "Can you scan your body from head to toe and share what you notice?"

Beth immediately said that she was anxious.

"How do you know you are anxious? What physical sensations tell you that?" I asked.

"My arms and legs are jittery, my heart is beating fast, and I feel agitated." Beth did a great job noticing her sensations. This [ability to notice the specifics of how her body felt](#) would be a key step to quieting her mind.

The recipe for a calmer mind is getting better at welcoming emotions. Quiet minds have learned through practice that the discomfort of safely experiencing our emotions is temporary, while avoiding emotional discomfort can lead to lasting anxiety, ruminating or other debilitating defenses and symptoms like depression, [self-harm](#), obsessions, eating disorders and addictions.

Over time, Beth learned to safely listen to her core emotions and sometimes act on them. She validated her deep [sadness](#) from having virtually no relationship with her mother, allowing herself to cry both alone and with

me, and fully accept and [mourn her loss](#). She took night classes to finish her degree which eased her fears. She learned to stop [judging](#) herself or her emotions and to give compassion to the parts of her that suffer without comparing her hardships with those of others. With each of these steps her body and her mind calmed.

Noticing and getting comfortable with the emotions in our body is the main practice for diminishing our worries and ruminations.

### **Ready to try a little experiment?**

Scan your body from head to toe and use the sensations and emotions charts on the [toolbox](#) page of my website to put words on what you are experiencing, which helps calm the brain. Stop at your head, heart area, stomach, abdomen and limbs. Write down the sensations, however subtle, that best describe any anxious feelings in your body. As you do this, be sure to have a loving stance towards yourself: try not to judge anything you notice and strive to be as compassionate to your pain as you would be to a beloved friend, child, pet, or partner.

See if you can name all the core emotions you are holding that are underneath the [anxiety](#), again without judging or needing to know why or whether they make sense. Consider everything on this list: Fear, Anger, Sadness, Disgust, Joy, Excitement, Sexual Excitement. You may find more than one. Name them all.

To stop ruminating, we must work our way clockwise, around and down the triangle by actively shifting our attention to our physical sensations. Once reunited with our bodies, we breathe slowly and deeply to lower anxiety. Then we name, validate and process our core emotions one at a time.

[This is science: the neurobiology and physics of emotions.](#)

Getting comfortable with the physical sensations produced by our anxiety and emotions is one of the secrets to calming the brain and healing psychological distress caused by adversity and childhood trauma (wounds none of us escape just by virtue of living). And, it is a practice, not a perfect. It's not necessarily a quick fix either. However, with work, the brain and body absolutely heal moving us towards peace, calm and greater connection to our authentic self. Hard work now, leads to greater peace for a lifetime.

Congratulations for getting started! A+ for trying!

Further reading:

- [The Book, It's Not Always Depression: Working the Change Triangle to Listen to the body, Discover Core Emotions and Connect to Your Authentic Self](#)
- [The Change Triangle blog and articles](#)
- *Unconditional Confidence* Audio lecture by Pema Chodron
- *Focusing* By Eugene Gendlin
- *Waking the Tiger* By Peter Levine
- *The Body Keeps the Score* By Bessel Van Der Kolk

## Tompkins County PROS Program

**Title of service: Advanced Practice Change Triangle**

**Session number: 12**

**Duration of session: 55 mins**

**PROS service: Intensive Rehabilitation Relapse Prevention**

**Service objectives:** Participants will understand the benefits and barriers associated with using self-compassion.

**Sources:**

Desmond, Tim. *Self-Compassion Skills Workbook*. New York: Norton, W. W. & Company, Inc., 2017.

**Handouts/Videos:**

Chapter 3 Self Compassion Skills Workbook

**Activities:**

- Welcome brief intro, class guidelines, check in how will this class help you reach one or more of your life role goals?
- Distribute and complete PHQ9, GAD7 and Quality of life surveys.
- Distribute and review selected sections from the compassion chapters. Begin with Eight Scientific Discoveries About Self-Compassion. What are the barriers in being compassionate to ourselves?
- Wrap up – How was the class helpful in overcoming barriers related to recovery and achievement of life role goals?

**Homework:**

Daily Meditation of Choice