



## Passengers on the bus

Imagine you've been driving a bus called "your life". Like any bus, as you move along, you pick up passengers. In this case your passengers are your memories, bodily sensations, conditioned emotions, programmed thoughts, historically produced urges and so on. You've picked up some passengers you've liked; these are like sweet old ladies who you hope will sit up the front, near you. You've picked up some you don't like; whom you would just as soon have taken another bus.

As you are driving along, living your life, some of the passengers start bossing you, telling you what you have to do, where you have to go. "You've got to turn left," "You've got to turn right", "That way is too hard" and so on.

If you do what they say and turn the wheel to go where they say, that means that they are happy and quiet, but it also means you are driving your "life bus" in a direction you don't really want to go. You can end up living a life that doesn't have much meaning or value to you.

You would really like some of these difficult passengers to get off the bus but because they are your thoughts, feelings and memories there is no way of doing this.

Even turning around to argue with them takes your mind off driving where you want to go.

In the end, to have the life that you want, you will need to find ways to take all of the passengers - the likeable and the difficult ones- with you. You need to learn how to keep from making deals with the passengers that turn control of the bus over to them. The aim is to be on the bus comfortably with your passengers - distinct from them and yet willing to carry them, with vitality and presence.

Adapted from: Steven Hayes *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy* (1999)





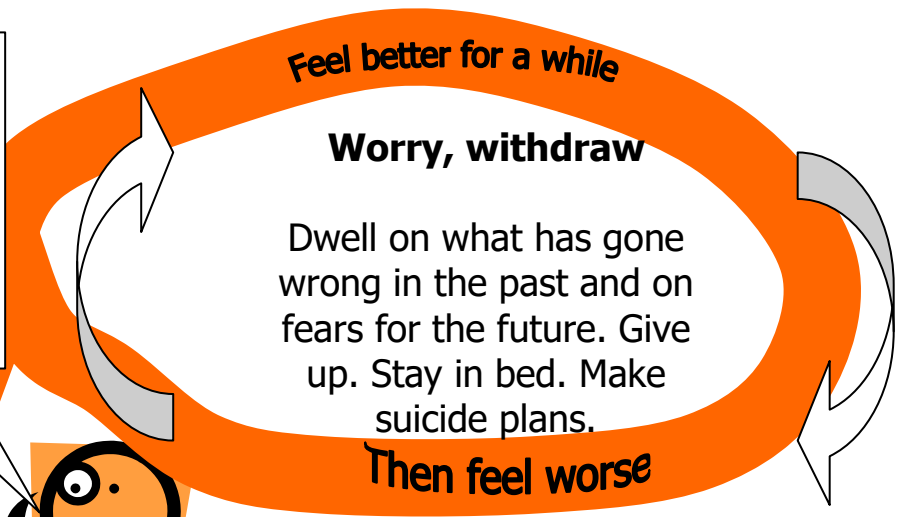
Where I want to go

Caught in an avoidance detour?  
Who is in charge of where your bus is headed – you or your difficult passengers?

**Passenger 1**  
**Feelings of fear.**  
What if you have a panic attack?  
You're weak. No one will help.



**Passenger 2**  
**Feelings of sadness.** If you start crying you'll cry for ever.  
No one likes you.  
If you go you won't enjoy it.



**Passenger 3**  
**Angry feelings.**  
It's not fair.  
Make them pay for what they've done to you

