

How To Create Psychological Smog

This exercise shows you what happens when you hold on tightly to your thoughts, turning them into a thick “psychological smog”. Pull your journal or worksheet out once again, and using the examples in chapter 8 as a guide, write down as many “smoggy” thoughts as you can identify:

Shoulds

No Point Trying

If Only

Painful Past

Scary Future

Reason Giving

Judgments

I Know Why

Deep-Seated Fears

Okay, so now you’ve got a long list of “smoggy thoughts.” The next step is to read them through and buy into them as much as you can. Give them all your attention, dwell on them, believe them, get totally absorbed in them. The aim is to make the psychological smog as thick as it can possibly be, to get so absorbed in these thoughts that you basically lose touch with everything else. Do this for at least a minute, then answer the questions below.

When we get lost in the smog, we soon stumble into the quicksand of painful emotions; so what are you feeling right now?

How do you feel toward your partner right now?

Does dwelling on these thoughts help to improve your relationship – or make it worse?

Right now, do you feel like you want to act on your values—to care for and connect with your partner? Or do you feel more like giving up, running away, or lashing out?