

The Light Switch

A values metaphor

The Light Switch can be a metaphor for having awareness around living our values. In particular, for bringing awareness to when we have reacted away from our values. In the very moment.

It is influenced by a range of tools and metaphors that already exist within Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) resources, including the 'Struggle Switch' (Harris, 2007) and 'Choice Point' (Bailey, Ciarrochi & Harris, 2013).

As human beings, we often get switched 'off' from living our values. This is due to our humanness (internal experiences, including thoughts and feelings) operating in context (e.g., external situation), both of which we cannot control. Fusion with our internal experiences can trigger reactions in an attempt to control what we cannot. Underpinned by our survival instincts. Sometimes, we react so automatically that we don't even notice - the lights are off and therefore our awareness is 'in the dark'!

However, as soon as we notice ourselves switched 'off', we can immediately switch ourselves back 'on'. Just like the simple flick of a light switch, we can realign with our values, instantly, and increase our behavioural repertoire by choosing to engage in one simple values-based action. This action may require noticing the fusion with our internal experiences and active defusion (unhooking) and willingness processes etc. Otherwise, we can simply ask ourselves – *Am I being the person I want to be right now?* To then make the switch.

The Light Switch therefore highlights that living a mindful, psychologically flexible and values-based life is not about staying switched 'on'. But rather, *noticing* when we have become switched 'off' and then *choosing* to switch back 'on'. Again and again.

The metaphor also emphasises that the full meaning we experience from living our values does not just come from merely (and often inattentively) behaving them. But rather, it's *seeing* ourselves choose to behave them – that is, it's 'switching the light on' to live our

values with intention and choice - that allows for a full sense of meaning and purpose in these moments.

Internal experiences
(e.g., thoughts, feelings etc.)
interacting with context,
can switch us **off** our values.



We can immediately
switch ourselves back **on**
by choosing
a values-consistent action.

Two processes to practice around the Light Switch are **Reminding** and **Reflecting**:

Reminding: When we have become unintentionally switched 'off' – distracted, reactive and/or avoidant - it is very important to not judge ourselves for this. We cannot expect ourselves to stay switched on; it's impossible to stay aware when our humanness, interacting with the situation, can so easily switch us off. Instead, it's about *noticing* when we have become switched off. Noticing this is a valuable **reminder** of what matters to us and the person we want to be.

Reflecting: After we switch back 'on', it is important to reflect – to acknowledge that we have switched ourselves back to being the person we want to be and living the moments we want to live. This **reflection** empowers us. It motivates us and reinforces the practice - to keep switching ourselves back 'on' to our values, and to experience full meaning from this, again and again.