

# The Switch

*Choosing where we want our attention to be*

We are now living in a modern world where electronic devices are becoming increasingly addictive. We are becoming more disconnected from the physical world and mindlessly reactive in the way we are communicating through our device.

**The Switch** is a practice to help bring awareness to our device behaviour, in the very moment, to give us back choice.

The practice is based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) processes.

Just like a light switch, we can switch the 'lights on' to where our attention is and choose where we want it to be.

**Purpose 1:** Choosing whether to be on our device - switching our attention between our devices and the physical world.

**Purpose 2:** Choosing how to be on our device - switching from *reactive* to *contemplative* when communicating with others through our device.

**The Switch** involves three questions:

1. Is it helpful, right now?
2. Is it urgent, right now?
3. Is it allowing me to be the person I want to be, right now?

## Purpose 1 - Choosing whether to be on our device

In addition to behavioural boundaries (allocating time where we are physically separate from our devices) this is a practice for the moment – allowing us to choose the device, rather than the device choosing us.

### Question 1: Is it helpful, right now?

*How is being on my device (and its content) making me feel right now? Is it making me feel better or worse about myself?*

*Is it serving me (and others) or is it depleting me?*

### Question 2: Is it urgent, right now?

*Can my device wait 5 seconds, 5 minutes or even 5 hours, if it means that my attention can be somewhere more important in this moment?*

### Question 3: Is it allowing me to be the person I want to be, right now?

*What is my device taking me away from in this moment?*

*Is being on my device allowing me to be the person / friend / parent / professional / partner, I want to be in this moment?*

\* With this third question, we tap into our values - our personal WHY. It is the foundation question that underpins the first two questions. It allows us to choose the most important place for our attention to be, in that very moment.

## Purpose 2 - Choosing how to be on our device

The three questions can also be considered when we are communicating on our devices - responding to text messages, emails, and social media posts / comments etc.

The three questions can be particularly useful when an uncomfortable emotion has been triggered, provoking a heightened urge to (mindlessly) react.

We can switch from *reactive* to *contemplative* when communicating with others through our device - allowing us to step beyond our reactive ego, to switch 'on' to our values and acknowledge our shared humanity.

### Question 1: Is it helpful, right now?

*Is it helpful to RESPOND?*

*Is responding going to make me feel better or worse about myself?*

*Is responding serving me (and others) or depleting me (and others)?*

*Is it my ego or my values telling me to respond?*

*" Being placed second last can be a true triumph, when it's choosing to have the second last word."*

### Question 2: Is it urgent, right now?

*Is it wise to respond NOW?*

*Would it be wise to pause, take a mindful breath, and wait 5 seconds, 5 minutes or even 5 hours before I respond?*

*Would waiting allow for any intense emotions to ease, allowing me time to contemplate HOW I respond?*

*" The more we feel the urge to respond, the more we probably need to wait."*

### Question 3: Is it allowing me to be the person I want to be, right now?

*HOW do I want to respond?*

HOW = how we show up in what we say and do, including our language and tone and acknowledgment of the 'human being' on the other side.

*Is HOW I am responding allowing me to be the person / friend / parent / professional / partner I want to be in this moment?*

\* With this third question, we tap into our values. It allows us to step beyond our reactive ego, to switch 'on' to our values and acknowledge our shared humanity.

Two processes to practice around the three questions are **Reminding** and **Reflecting**:

**Reminding:** When we have become unintentionally switched off - distracted or reactive - 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 (e.g., thoughts and feelings) and the world around us (e.g., the addictive content in our phone) will take our attention away. 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 make a switch, 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, again and again.