NAME: Automatic Problem Solving Mind

SOURCE: James Hill 2020

INTENTION: Behavioral experiments to help people develop awareness of the uncontrollable nature and influence of mental events and to differentiate between mindful awareness of sensory input verses mental activity related to sensory input.

MATERIALS:

- Images

INSTRUCTIONS

It is helpful to notice ways that our minds add to and alter our experience of life. I am going to present a series of sensory experiences (things you can see or hear). I want to you notice how your mind reacts to it. What does it start saying to you? Does your mind just take it in as it is, or does it start a process of making meaning, problem solving, arguing, judging… Just notice what it does.

Present Stimulus:

- You might start by making a sound (knock once or ring a bell or sing a tone)
- Next you might make a recognizable pattern of sounds leaving out a portion the mind will tend to fill in (bump-bada-bump-bump, (bump) (bump) , or all the tones of a scale except the last one.
- Follow this with the visual images (below).
    - You can just use the visual images, the sounds can help people have the experience of what it is to just experience something directly without any prior learning history. The mind will probably still identify the sound and may have something to say or predict about it, but with less of a recognizable pattern it may feel less compelled to "solve the problem".

You can have a person or group process these experiences by writing on a white board some of the reactions the mind had to emphasize the automatic tendency for the mind to add to, and alter sensory experience, and the difference between this and direct experience.

- You might explore with the group what the world might be like if they could experience it directly without the influence of the mind.
- You might explore the amount of the time people think they are in direct contact with life verses living in their mentally altered experience of it.

Present ways the mind tends to engage:

- Worry, Analyzing, Disputing, Ruminating, Rule Making, Reason Giving.

    - *Problem solving is natural and helpful in some situations, especially outside problems (how to not be eaten, how to build a building that does not fall over, how to move a pile of rocks that are in the way…). When this ability is applied to inside "problems" it may not helpful, in fact it may be counter-productive (it makes internal experiences more pronounced, longer lasting, and more influential). When we try to hit the delete button it amplifies it instead.*

Noticing and Choosing (Pilot)

Mental Activities (Copilot)

1. Worry
   - Thinking about future risks and problem solving
2. Analyzing
   - Making meaning and looking for cause and effect relationships
3. Disputing
   - Questioning the truth or validity
4. Ruminating
   - Mental rehearsal / Analysis Paralysis.
5. Rule Making / Following
   - If this happened, then this should happen next, or this should not have happened.
6. Reason Giving
   - This happened because…

1+1

2x2

The opposite of up

Mary had a little cow

I am
worthless

I am perfect
in every way