



Willingness: The Dirty Swamp
(Adapted from Hayes et al., 2009)

Imagine that you are standing on a shore and something or someone that matters intensely to you is across from you, on the other end. But the ONLY way to reach that something or someone that is important to you is to go across a deep swamp full of filth and trash. It is bubbling at the surface and smells so badly; the smell feels unbearable and the fumes may even burn your skin and eyes. The swamp could even be dangerous, there is no telling just how deep the water is, what lies below the surface, and there is no one who can help you.

The only reason to go through the swamp is because it stands between you and something or someone important to you. What is that something or someone?

Now, what kind of thoughts do you think are going to appear in such a situation? It's likely that there will be thoughts like, "I can't do anything so unpleasant and disgusting", "I can't do that" and "It's not worth the effort", "This is nonsense!"

The most helpful way that you can possibly cross the swamp would be to notice all of those thoughts and the distress they carry with them and let them be, to notice them and make room for them while you keep crossing the swamp.

It's about being open to all the thoughts that may show up and the distress associated with them, about carrying them with you while you keep doing what is important in that moment: crossing the swamp and reaching the other shore. Why? Because it matters. Intensely.