

A3. Passengers on the Bus Metaphor

One way to think about barriers is to think about them as passengers on the bus of life.

Imagine life is like a journey, and you're the driver of your bus. You want to go places and do what's important for you. Over the course of your life, various passengers have boarded your bus. They reflect your thoughts, feelings, and all kinds of inner states. Some of them you like, such as happy memories or positive thoughts, and some you feel neutral about. And then there are passengers that you wish had not boarded the bus; they can be ugly, scary, and nasty.

So, you are driving your bus of life with all sorts of passengers on board. The scary passengers can threaten you and want to be at the front of the bus where you see them. You take this very seriously and stop the bus to struggle and fight with them. You may try to avoid them, distract yourself, or throw them off the bus, but they are your inner states, so you can't get rid of them. However, while the bus is stopped, you're not moving in the direction that's important to you.

You may also try to make deals with the passengers; you'll give in and do what they tell you to do if they agree to keep quiet in the back of the bus. This may feel a little easier than fighting with them, but it means the passengers are in control of the direction your bus is heading.

By fighting and struggling with the passengers or giving in to them, you, the driver, are not in control of your journey of life, and it's likely that you are not heading in a direction that is important to you. But what if, even though these passengers look scary, nasty, and threatening, they can't take control unless you allow them to? There can be different ways to respond to the passengers so that you can head in the direction that is important.