



RAD

Lesson 8: Teaching Companion

Lesson Summary

Lesson 8 introduces the first major strategy for responding to RoAD Blocks: Taking Notice — Looking In. In earlier lessons, students learned that uncomfortable thoughts and feelings are normal and only become RoAD Blocks when they leave us stuck doing notRAD moves. Looking In helps us accept these thoughts and feelings instead of fighting them, avoiding them, or letting them control our actions.

Many will likely notice that this lesson introduces a form of mindfulness. RAD draws on theory from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), which views mindfulness not as relaxation or clearing the mind, but as purposeful awareness—paying attention to the present moment with openness, curiosity, and without judgment. In RAD, we break mindfulness into two types: thought-watching and grounding. Thought-watching is what we call Looking In, where students learn to notice thoughts and feelings as passing events rather than facts or commands. Grounding appears in Lesson 9 as Taking Notice: Looking Around. It helps students shift attention outward to the present moment. This two-part approach keeps mindfulness simple and connected to making RAD moves.

In RAD, Looking In has two steps. First, students notice when an uncomfortable thought or feeling shows up. Second, they label it using a specific phrase: “I’m noticing I’m having the thought that...” or “I’m noticing I’m having the feeling of...”. This phrasing reminds them that they have thoughts and feelings — they are not defined by them. That small shift creates distance between the student and the RoAD Block, a process known in ACT as **defusion**. With that distance, students can accept their internal experiences instead of getting pulled into arguments with their minds, rumination, self-judgment, or avoidance. There are other ways to approach this process of stepping back from our thoughts (what ACT calls defusion) so they have less power over our actions. These are referenced in the extension activities.

The lesson emphasizes that Looking In is not about getting rid of uncomfortable thoughts or feelings. Instead, it helps students see these experiences as temporary events that come and go. When students unhook from these RoAD Blocks, they gain the freedom to make choices based on their values. By helping students Recognize, Accept, and then Do what matters, Looking In becomes a core RAD skill that can be used often. It can be used on its own or together with other strategies such as the Looking Around strategy introduced in lesson 9.



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Extension Activities

Thanking Your Mind

Looking In connects closely to another strategy from acceptance and commitment theory called “thanking your mind.” Both approaches help us create a little space between ourselves and our thoughts so they don’t take over or push us into notRAD moves. When we use Looking In, we say, “I’m noticing I’m having the thought that...” which reminds us that a thought is just a thought, not a command or a fact.

“Thanking your mind” does something similar—it treats the thought as a message from a busy mind that’s trying (sometimes clumsily) to help. By responding with, “Thanks, mind,” we acknowledge the thought without getting into an argument with it or trying to make it go away.

Both strategies reduce the power of RoAD Blocks and help students unhook from unhelpful thoughts so they can focus on making RAD moves that align with their values. For the extension activity, take a break from listening to me and watching my videos, and enjoy this one by world-renowned author, doctor, and ACT guru Russ Harris: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=206WtwEyqzg>. After, use the worksheet to reflect on this video and how it may also connect to the ideas and concepts in RAD.

Practicing Thought Watching

Looking In is a skill that needs to be practiced. Other mindfulness videos can be a great way to do this, so that when you really need to move past your RoAD Blocks, you are fluent in the skill. Here are two thought-watching videos that are also outside the RAD universe. These can help you improve your skills at Taking Notice: Looking In. One is by Russ Harris again and another is by another organization. The worksheet can be used for either one of the videos, or for other ACT metaphors you may encounter. I am assuming by now, learning about RAD has gotten you excited about the theory of ACT and you may have come across other metaphors in your personal research! In fact, ACT uses metaphors to explain many of its concepts, and there are many available. These two are great examples of metaphors that incorporate thought-watching.

Sushi Train Metaphor: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzUoXJVI0wo>

Leaves on a Stream Metaphor: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1C8hwj5LXw>



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Thanking your mind?

Before watching

The video is titled: Thanking your mind. What do you think it might be about.

After Watching

What does Russ Harris mean by “thanking your mind”? How do you do it? When do you do it? Why do you do it?

How is this similar to RAD’s strategy “Taking Notice – Looking In”?

How might “Thanking your mind” help you with RoAD Blocks?



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Practicing Thought Watching?

Practice thought-watching with the videos provided. Reflect on them and connect to RAD.

Sushi Train Metaphor: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzUoXJVI0wo>

Leaves on a Stream Metaphor: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1C8hwj5LXw>

Video Title:
Before watching
Based on the title of the video, what do you think it might be about?
After Watching
Reflect on the strategy: How do you do it? When do you do it? Why do you do it?
How is this similar to RAD's strategy "Taking Notice – Looking In"?
How might practicing this help you?