

CARIBOU CBT

Individual Manual for Youth

A Cognitive-Behavioural
Therapy Intervention for
Adolescents with Depression

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Acronyms and Abbreviations	5
Power Up: Behavioural Activation	6
Session 1	6
Session 2	12
Session 3	25
Session 4	33
Reboot: Cognitive Restructuring	40
Session 1	40
Session 2	46
Session 3	55
Session 4	58
Level Up: Problem Solving	63
Session 1	63
Session 2	71
Session 3	79
Session 4	85
Multiplayer: Communication and Relationships	91
Session 1	91
Session 2	97
Session 3	102
Session 4	107

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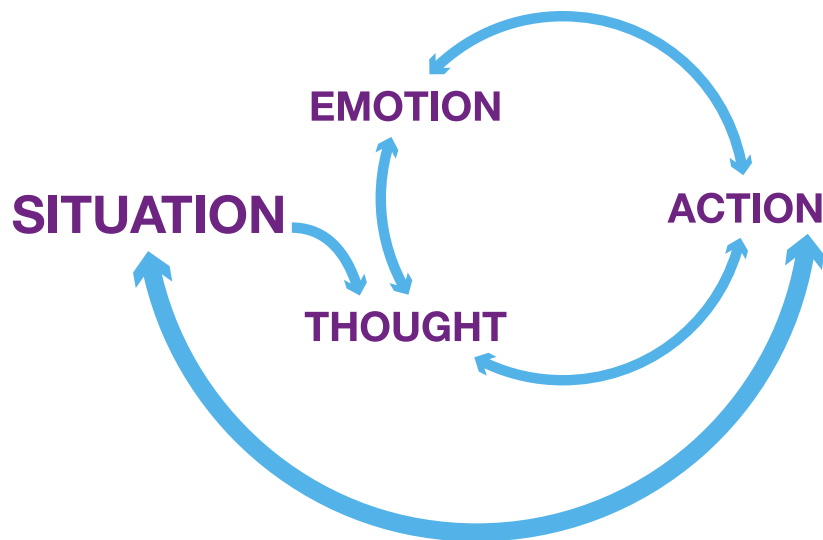
Acronyms and Abbreviations

2SLGBTQ+	Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Trans, Gender Independent, Queer and Questioning, and other identities
ACT	Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
BA	Behavioural Activation
CBT	Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy
CWD-A	Adolescent Coping with Depression Course
DBT	Dialectical Behavioural Therapy
GOALS	G et straight to the facts, use an “I” statement to describe your O wn experience, A sk for what you want or say “no”, L oop back to the first three steps, S how gratitude
MDD-A	Adolescents with Major Depressive Disorder
SMART	S pecific, M easureable, A ttainable, R ealistic, T ime bound



1 Mood Cycle

The concept behind CBT is that your emotions are affected by the situation you are in, as well as your thoughts (cognitions) and actions (behaviour). Look at the diagram below.



Using the above diagram, identify the situation, thought, emotion and behaviour in the scenario below.

“Brianna wakes up in the morning to her alarm. She feels like her mood and energy are low. She imagines that if she gets up and gets ready for school that she will feel horrible — that she will be dragging her feet all through the day. She has the urge to roll over and go back to sleep. She pulls the covers over her head and goes back to sleep.”

Sometimes it is tricky to distinguish each part of the cycle — this is important so that you know what to do next. Label each of the following as a “Situation” “Thought” “Emotion” or “Action”:

Sadness

My mother was raising her voice saying “Please get out of bed!”

You call up a friend.

“Trish doesn’t understand me”.

Smiling

You brush your teeth.

Nervousness

My teacher returned my assignment.

The cycle can get into a loop, where the mood ends up spiraling.

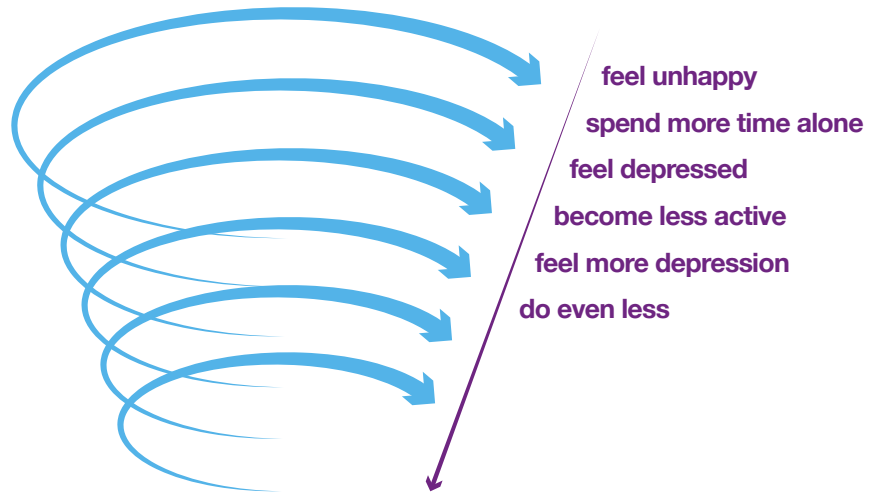
2 Emotion Spirals

When we feel bad, we are more likely to shut down and stop doing things we enjoy. This can make us feel worse. This cycle can lead to a downward spiral in our mood.

When we feel good, we are more likely to do things we like. Once we start doing things we like, we tend to feel better. This cycle can lead to an upward spiral in our mood.

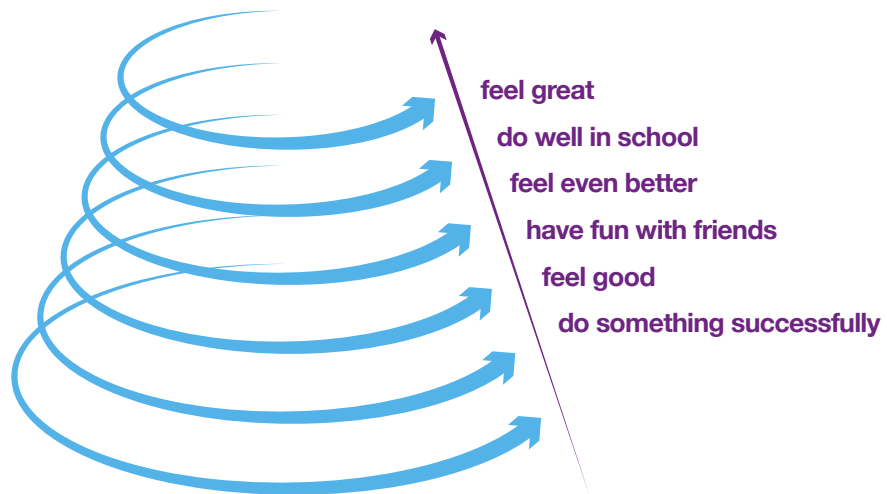
This “behavioural activation” module will help you learn skills to change the spirals by making changes in your actions.

The Downward Spiral



Do you recognize this downward spiral in yourself?

The Upward Spiral



What are some things that cause an upward spiral for you?

3 Noticing and Rating Your Moods

Naming your emotions is an important first step in being able to change your emotion. Some people find this easy, others find it hard. For each of the following emotions in the table below, think about the following:

- What does your body do or feel like?
- What are your thoughts like?
- What actions do you have the urge to do?
- What is your energy level like?

Emotion	Body	Thoughts	Actions	Energy Level
Sad	<i>E.g., heavy, slouching, tearful, chest pain</i>	<i>E.g., negative, hopeless, foggy</i>	<i>E.g., shut down, isolate, cry</i>	<i>E.g., low</i>
Bored				
Angry (irritable)				
Anxious				
Happy				
Proud				
Other (e.g., Numb, feeling empty, guilty, ashamed)				

4 Rating the Intensity of Your Emotions

The intensity of the emotions that you experience throughout the day will change from hour to hour. It can be helpful to be able to describe this intensity for many reasons:

- First, it can help you **communicate** to other people what you are feeling so they can give you appropriate support.
- Second, it helps give you information on what you might need to do to control your emotion. For example, if you are at a 2 out of 5 in sadness (i.e. only slightly sad), you might **use a different strategy** than if you are at a 5 out of 5 (i.e. extremely sad).
- Third, if you notice when your emotion is at a low intensity, you can try to take steps to **prevent it** from becoming a 5 out of 5.

The first step in rating your emotion is to set “anchor points” on a scale from “0” to “5.”

Rating sadness

A “zero” will represent the least amount of sadness you have ever felt. At a “zero” you have no physical signs of sadness, no thoughts that go with sadness (such as negative thoughts) and you are active with a good amount of energy. **Can you think of a time when your sadness was at “zero” (i.e. no sadness)?**

A “five” will represent the most amount of sadness you have ever felt.

Can you think of a time when your sadness was at “five”?

Rating happiness

A “zero” represents the least amount of happiness you ever felt.

Can you think of a time when your happiness was at a “zero” (i.e. not happy at all)?

A “five” represents the most amount of happiness you have ever felt. At a “five” you have physical signs of happiness (e.g., smiling, high energy), thoughts that go with happiness (such as positive thoughts) and you are very active with lots of energy. **When was the last time you were at a “five”?**

Using yesterday as an example, rate the highest intensity each emotion got to throughout the day on a scale from 0 to 5:

Sad

Angry (irritable)

Happy

Bored

Anxious (fearful)

Proud

Sometimes, it is difficult to know what emotion you are feeling. Noticing, naming and rating your emotions can help you feel more aware of what is happening – and help give you more control over the intensity of the emotions.

Write down your personal goal over the next week based on the skills discussed today:

5 Home practice

At the end of each day, rate the highest intensity each type of emotion got to throughout the day. We will explore patterns at the next session

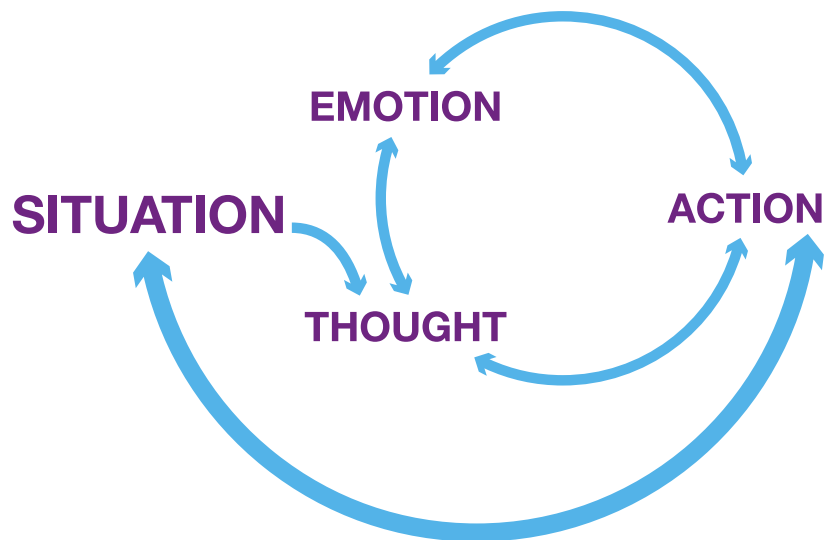
Emotion	Intensity of Emotions (0-5)						
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Sad							
Bored							
Angry							
Anxious							
Happy							
Proud							
Other							

Power Up Behavioural Activation



Session 2

1 Review



Using the diagram above, describe each of the components that are represented in the following scenario.

Ricky had a math test today. He looked at the first question on the test and had a hard time answering it. He said to himself, “I am the worst at math” and then felt discouraged and exhausted and put his head down on his desk. His friend, Kevin, asked “what’s wrong?” and Ricky didn’t answer.

**Did you notice any times in the past week where you got into a downward spiral?
What about an upward spiral?**

How did it go tracking your mood? What are the downsides of tracking your mood? Upsides?

Did you remember to do it? If not, what can you do to help you remember?

Are there any patterns that you noticed in your emotions?

If you forgot to track your mood over the last week, fill out this chart to help you notice your emotions over the past three days. Rate the maximum intensity (from 0 to 5) that you may have felt for each emotion, with 5 being the most intense.

Emotion	Intensity of Emotions (0-5)		
	3 days ago	2 days ago	Yesterday
Sad			
Bored			
Angry			
Anxious			
Happy			
Proud			
Other			

2 Enjoyable Activities

Read each statement, and reflect on each point:

1. The amount and quality of enjoyable activities we do can affect our moods.
2. Our moods can affect the amount and quality of enjoyable activities we do.
3. This relationship between the activities we do and our mood can lead to a “downward spiral.”
4. To change the pattern to an “upward spiral” it is important to engage in enjoyable activities, even when you aren’t feeling confident or don’t feel like doing them.

The following can help you track and increase the number of activities you participate in to see if they make you feel happier.

It can be helpful to get a sense of what a usual day looks like for you.

As best as you can remember, list the activities you did in the past three days. Activities should be specific (e.g., “I worked on my math assignment” vs. “I did homework.”)

Time of Day	Activities		
	3 days ago	2 days ago	Yesterday
Morning			
Afternoon			
Evening			
Nighttime			

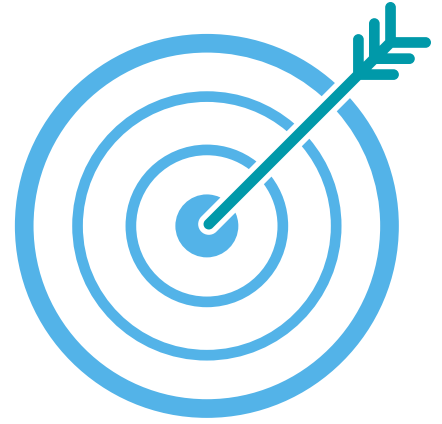
Compare your activity chart to your mood chart. Did any patterns come up?

3 Increasing Activities to Improve Your Mood

It is important that the activities we do are meeting key targets in our lives:

1. **Sense of connection:** Does it make you feel closer to others?
2. **Success:** Does it give you a sense of achievement?
3. **Enjoyment:** Do you like doing it?
4. **Personal values:** Does it fit with what's important to you (e.g., honesty, self-growth)?

In the chart below, rate how much each activity meets each target, using a scale of 0–5, with 5 meeting the target the most.



Activity	Rating of Targets (0-5)			
	Sense of Connection	Success	Enjoyment	Personal Values
Watching videos on YouTube				
Texting friends				
Sleeping				
Playing video games				
Using social media (FB, IG, Snapchat etc.)				
Listening to music				
Going for a walk or run				
Doing homework				
Hanging out with friends				
Cooking a meal				
Having dinner with family				
Playing a team sport				
Doing a personal art project				
Playing an instrument				
Watching a movie with friends or family				
Doing a “games night” with friends				
Other				

4 Finding Balance

It is important to find balance in the four targets discussed above. Take a look at the “Finding Balance in Your Activities — Now” worksheet (pg. 17). List activities you are currently doing in the appropriate petal.

Take a look at the “Finding Balance in Your Activities — Future” worksheet (pg. 18). List at least 10 new activities you think might help improve your mood in the appropriate petal; remember to aim for balance between the four targets. Make sure you list at least two activities in each petal (except “other”). If you are unsure of what activities to include, take a look at the list at the Activities List for Short Term Targets (pg. 22).

Of the activities you identified as wanting to work on, which would be the easiest to start doing?

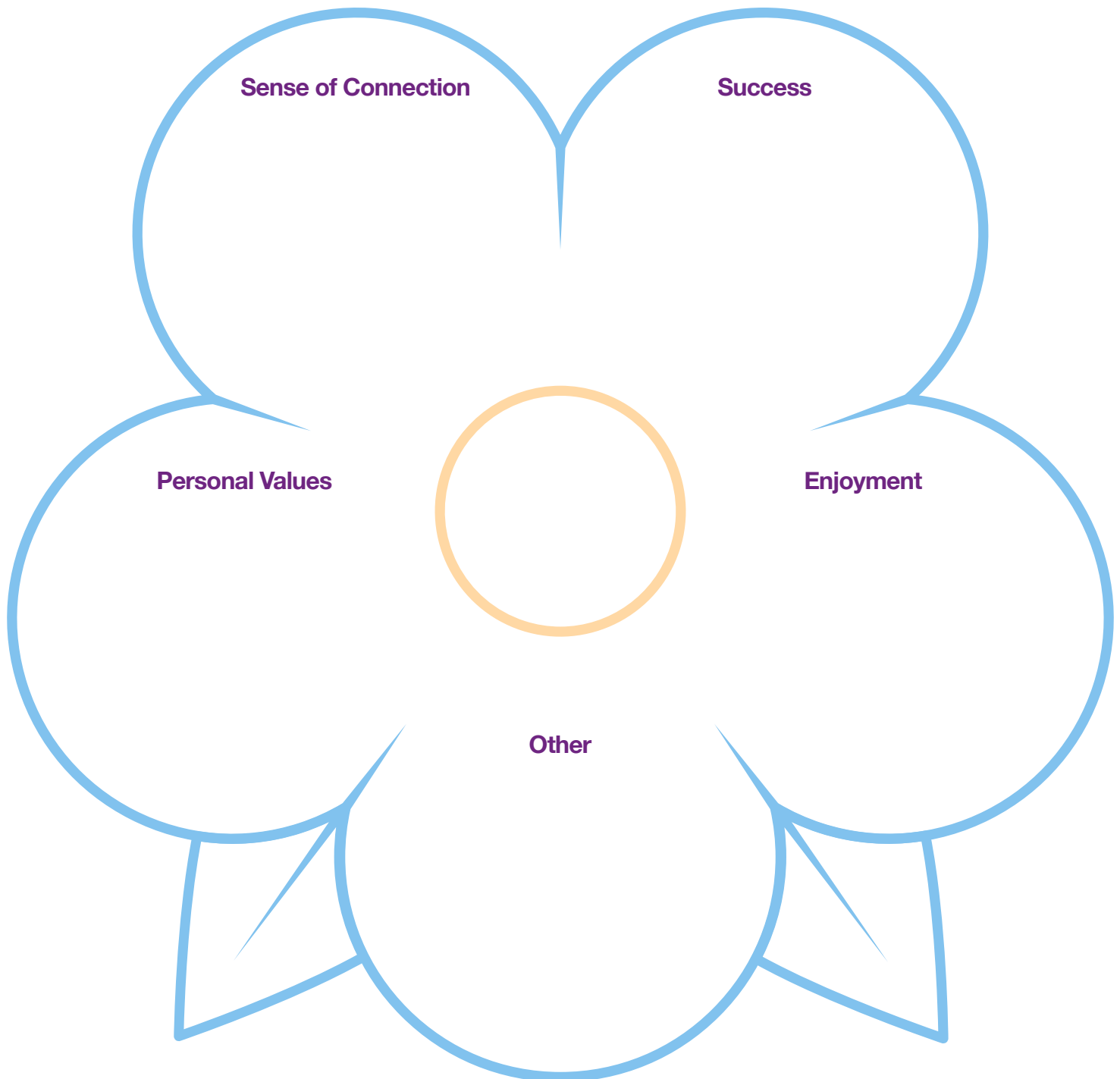
Which would be a medium level of difficulty to start doing?

Which would be the hardest to start doing?

Power Up Behavioural Activation



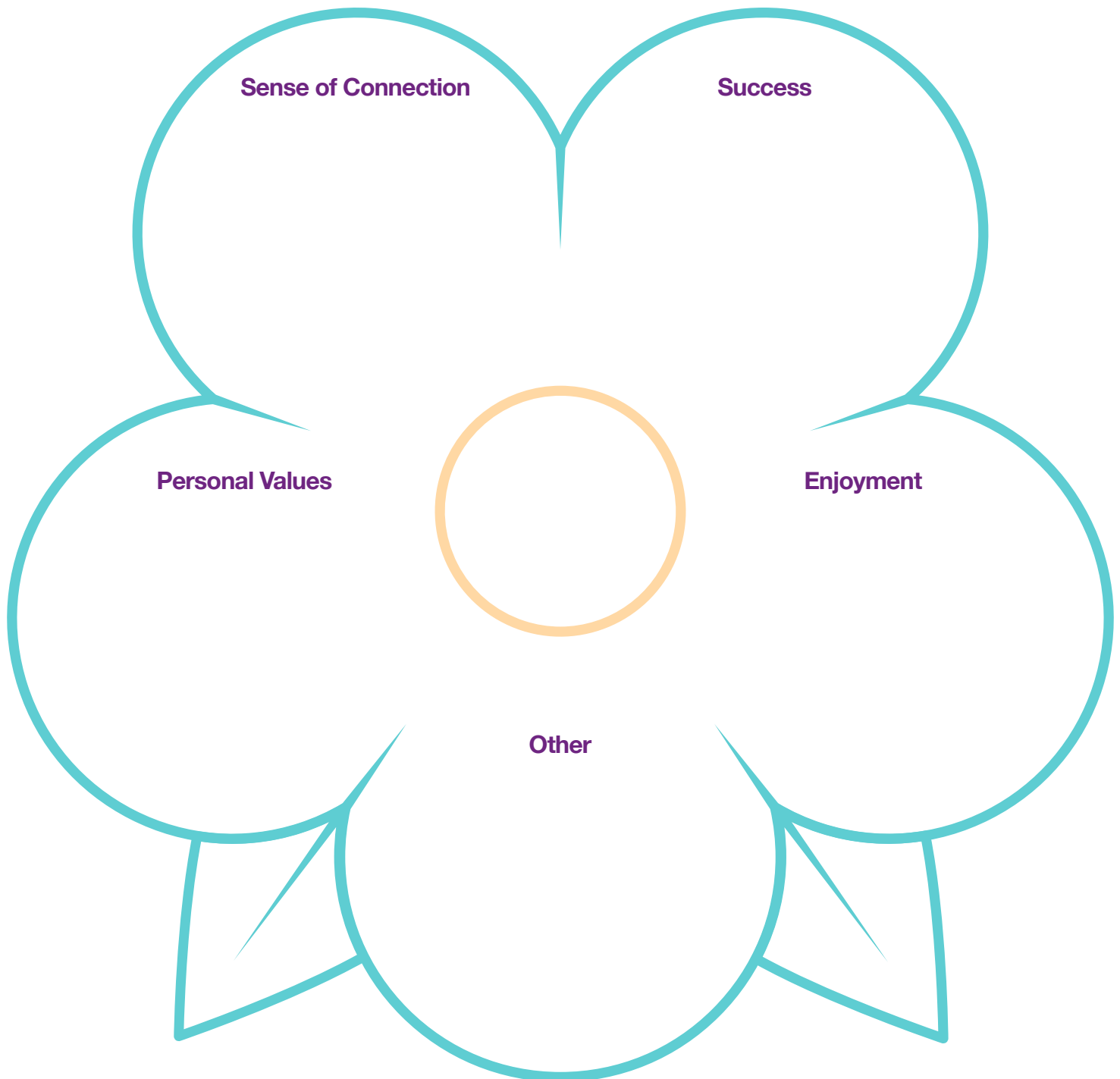
Finding Balance in Your Activities — Now



Power Up Behavioural Activation



Finding Balance in Your Activities — Future



5 Activity Scheduling

We have spent a lot of time talking about what activities you do and plan to do. Sometimes, if our time is too unstructured, our moods get the best of us and throw us in a different direction. Creating a schedule ahead of time prevents us from slipping into impulses to be inactive or to do the same things over and over that might not be helping to improve our moods.

Schedule your coming week on the next page to help ensure you make time for the activities that will be most valuable to you (refer to the activities on your “Finding Balance in Your Activities — Future” worksheet). Do your best to stick to it. Some of it may already be determined for you (e.g. scheduled classes at school). Pay particular attention to activities that you would like to do and are valuable for you during those times that are not already scheduled — even between classes (like joining a club at lunch).

Time	Activities		Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
7:00 a.m.									
9:00 a.m.									
11:00 a.m.									
1:00 p.m.									
3:00 p.m.									
5:00 p.m.									
7:00 p.m.									
9:00 p.m.									
11:00 p.m.									

6 Home Practice

Over the next week, track the activities you do in the calendar you just completed. Also track your emotions and rate the maximum intensity (from 0 to 5) that you may feel for each emotion. Next week we will see if one has an effect on the other.

Emotion	Intensity of Emotions (0-5)						
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Sad							
Bored							
Angry							
Anxious							
Happy							
Proud							
Other _____							

Write down your personal goal over the next week based on the skills discussed today:

Activities list for short-term targets

Check off 10 activities you are most interested in trying.

Sense of connection

- ☐ Talk about sports, my job or school with a friend.
- ☐ Play sports (e.g., basketball, soccer, swimming, bowling).
- ☐ Go to a sports event.
- ☐ Play a game with someone (e.g., board game, cards, pool).
- ☐ Coach someone.
- ☐ Go on outings (e.g., to the park, a picnic, a barbecue).
- ☐ Go to a fair, the zoo or an amusement park.
- ☐ Go camping.
- ☐ Attend a concert.
- ☐ Go to a party.
- ☐ Play party games.
- ☐ Go on a date.
- ☐ Ask friends to visit you or visit them.
- ☐ Introduce people who you think would like each other.
- ☐ Meet someone new.
- ☐ Have lunch with friends or co-workers.
- ☐ Hang out with friends at the park.
- ☐ Join a club or participate in a new activity at school.
- ☐ Join an advisory or working group at a local organization.
- ☐ Join a musical group.
- ☐ Participate in a traditional ceremony in your community.
- ☐ Act in a school play or with a local group.
- ☐ Learn new things from others (e.g. Elders, coaches, teachers).
- ☐ Hang out with relatives.
- ☐ Volunteer or help with a charity.
- ☐ Appreciate good things happening for your family or friends (e.g., make a congratulation card for a friend).
- ☐ Have an engaging conversation with people in class or at work.
- ☐ Give gifts.
- ☐ Help someone when they are in need (e.g., by talking to them or doing something for them).
- ☐ Compliment or praise someone.
- ☐ Talk on the phone.
- ☐ Attend a family reunion or get-together.
- ☐ Throw a party or get-together.
- ☐ Talk about good memories.
- ☐ Do something unexpected to surprise people.
- ☐ Go to a barber or hairstylist.
- ☐ Write letters, cards or notes.
- ☐ Ask for help or advice.
- ☐ Smile at people more often.
- ☐ Spend time with a romantic partner.
- ☐ Get in touch with an old friend.

Success

- ☐ Rearrange or redecorate your room or living space.
- ☐ Read an interesting book or article.
- ☐ Go to a lecture or listen to a webinar or talk online.
- ☐ Do something nice for a family member.
- ☐ Do home repairs.
- ☐ Do repairs on a vehicle (e.g., car, bike, motorcycle, tractors).
- ☐ Do carpentry.
- ☐ Do a puzzle or crossword.
- ☐ Write stories, novels, plays or poetry.
- ☐ Write a paper, essay or report.

- ☐ Work at your job.
- ☐ Learn a language.
- ☐ Play a musical instrument.
- ☐ Solve a personal problem.
- ☐ Make food or crafts to sell or give away.
- ☐ Do pottery, jewellery making, beading, knitting, sewing or another craft.
- ☐ Garden or do landscaping or yard work.
- ☐ Plan or organize an event.
- ☐ Compete in a sports event.
- ☐ Make a speech or do a presentation.
- ☐ Eat a balanced diet.
- ☐ Get exercise.
- ☐ Get a good night's sleep.
- ☐ Learn to do something new.
- ☐ Do a favour for someone.
- ☐ Read the newspaper.
- ☐ Find new music that you enjoy.
- ☐ Do housework, laundry or other cleaning.
- ☐ Care for houseplants.
- ☐ Babysit.
- ☐ Do volunteer work or some kind of community service.
- ☐ Work hard on assignments for school.
- ☐ Learn how to apply make-up.
- ☐ Learn how to code computer programs.
- ☐ Train a pet.

Enjoyment

- ☐ Read a novel, a comic, poetry or a magazine.
- ☐ Write in a diary or journal.
- ☐ Watch television.
- ☐ Think about something good for the future.
- ☐ Think about people you like.
- ☐ Take a bath or shower.

- ☐ Brush or wash your hair.
- ☐ Sing to yourself.
- ☐ Just sit and daydream.
- ☐ Listen to the sounds of nature.
- ☐ Listen to music.
- ☐ Watch the sky, the clouds or a storm.
- ☐ Pick wild foods or fruit, or collect rocks or driftwood.
- ☐ Wear clothes you feel comfortable and confident in.
- ☐ Make a purchase (e.g., a car, bike, phone).
- ☐ Look for flowers.
- ☐ Smell something nice like a candle or perfume or a flower.
- ☐ Say prayers.
- ☐ Brush your teeth.
- ☐ Go to the library.
- ☐ Surf the Internet.
- ☐ Play with a pet.

Multiple targets

- ☐ Be in nature (on a beach, by a stream, on the grass).
- ☐ Explore your own city or an unfamiliar one.
- ☐ Plan a trip or vacation.
- ☐ Buy things for yourself.
- ☐ Hang out at the beach.
- ☐ Do artwork, such as painting, sculpting, drawing or making a movie.
- ☐ Learn how to drive.
- ☐ Breathe fresh air.
- ☐ Smell a familiar smell.
- ☐ Write or listen to music.
- ☐ Be with animals.
- ☐ Explore something new in your environment.
- ☐ Make snacks.
- ☐ Dance.
- ☐ Put on makeup, fix your hair, etc.

- ☐ Sit in the sun.
- ☐ Take photos.
- ☐ Listen to jokes.
- ☐ See beautiful scenery.
- ☐ Prepare and eat a good meal or cook something new.
- ☐ Go to a community centre or other public space.
- ☐ Go on a hike.
- ☐ Visit a museum or exhibit.
- ☐ Go fishing.
- ☐ Go to the gym.
- ☐ Go to a book signing or movie screening.
- ☐ Watch a movie.
- ☐ Eat at a restaurant.
- ☐ Meditate or do yoga.
- ☐ Do exercise (e.g., swimming, running, biking, skateboarding, rollerblading).
- ☐ Go shopping.
- ☐ People watch.
- ☐ Take a walk.
- ☐ See a play or musical.

Note: Activities that target personal values will come later.

Power Up Behavioural Activation



Session 3

1 Review

How did it go tracking your mood through the week?

If you have not tracked your mood, use the table below to write down your moods (from 0 to 5) for the past four days.

Emotion	Intensity of Emotions (0-5)			
	3 days ago	2 days ago	Yesterday	Today
Sad				
Bored				
Angry				
Anxious				
Happy				
Proud				
Other				

How did scheduling your activities go?

Were you able to keep to your schedule? What got in the way or worked well?

If you forgot to complete your schedule or to bring it in, use the following grid to write down activities you did in the past four days:

Time	Activities			
	3 days ago	2 days ago	Yesterday	Today
7:00 a.m.				
9:00 a.m.				
11:00 a.m.				
1:00 p.m.				
3:00 p.m.				
5:00 p.m.				
7:00 p.m.				
9:00 p.m.				
11:00 p.m.				

Did you notice any patterns between your activities and your emotions this past week?

What are the four targets you are aiming for in mood-enhancing activities?

Aim to do at least one activity that meets each of the targets by the end of each day.

2 What Gets in the Way?

Which of the following thoughts about activities can get in the way of doing activities you enjoy?
What are some “balanced thoughts” that might be helpful?

Depressive thoughts about activities	Balanced thoughts
1. Doing activities won't help my mood.	
2. People won't believe I am depressed if I look like I am having fun.	
3. I don't deserve to do activities that I enjoy.	
4. If I have fun, it will eventually end, and that will lead to more sadness.	
5. If I do things that I enjoy, I will also have to expose myself to stressful events.	
6. I will be too concerned with thoughts like, “I should be having more fun” or “I could be having more fun.”	
7. I won't have enough energy.	

The examples of depressive thoughts on the left side of the chart above can be common, but are unlikely to be helpful. Remember that these depressive thoughts are beliefs and not facts. These beliefs can lead to avoiding activities you enjoy. If you never start an activity, there won't be a chance to challenge these depressive beliefs, and this can lead to more depression.

If you have additional depressive beliefs that you experience, try to think about balanced thoughts as well.

Depressive thoughts about activities	Balanced thoughts

3 Pros and Cons of Changing Routines

Changing up your routine can be difficult. We all fall into habits in how we spend our time. Perhaps shifting our activity is difficult because our current activities do something for us. Fill out the chart below as it relates to you, in the order of the numbers indicated in the boxes.

Action	Pros	Cons
Continuing my current routine	1. (Do this one first)	3. (Do this one third)
Changing my activities to better fit the "4 targets"	4. (Do this one last)	2. (Do this one second)

Does this help motivate you to change up your routine?

4 Personal Values and Increasing Activities That are Important to You in the Long Term

So far we have discussed how to engage in mood-enhancing activities in the short term. These strategies are good if you have bumps in low mood from day to day. But if you don't keep yourself motivated with bigger goals, it can be difficult to keep up a more active lifestyle in the long run. Before starting to set bigger goals, it can be helpful to identify our values.

What is the difference between a “value” and a “goal”?

What are some core values you would like to live by?

If you are struggling to come up with some values, consider the list below:

- Having a few close relationships
- Having a lot of friends
- Committing to self-growth
- Being spiritual
- Connecting to culture
- Helping other people
- Helping the environment
- Being true to yourself
- Doing exciting things
- Being knowledgeable
- Doing well at school
- Being honest
- Standing up for human rights and justice
- Being assertive
- Being respectful
- Learning new things
- Having a high-paying job
- Inspiring other people
- Having a sense of humour
- Being productive
- Being organized and on time
- Being independent
- Being physically fit and healthy
- Having a balanced lifestyle

Now choose a value you would like to spend more time focusing on and come up with three activities that would align with this value.

Value:

Activity 1:

Activity 2:

Activity 3:

Which activity will I start with?

When?

Where?

With who?

Is there anything else that can help me to get started?

5 Home Practice

In addition to working on increasing activities that align with your values, continue scheduling activities and tracking your mood as you did last week. This past week was only a peek into the relationship between your mood and your actions. Try to increase the activities that you really enjoy and that will likely have the greatest impact on your mood. Add the activities that fit your values to your schedule.

Write down your personal goal over the next week based on the skills discussed today:

Mood Tracker

Over the next week, rate the maximum intensity (from 0 to 5) that you may feel for each emotion, with 5 being the most intense.

Emotion	Intensity of Emotions (0-5)						
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Sad							
Bored							
Angry							
Anxious							
Happy							
Proud							
Other							

Time	Activities						
	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
7:00 a.m.							
9:00 a.m.							
11:00 a.m.							
1:00 p.m.							
3:00 p.m.							
5:00 p.m.							
7:00 p.m.							
9:00 p.m.							
11:00 p.m.							

* Remember to add the activities that fit your values to your schedule.

Power Up Behavioural Activation



Session 4

1 Review

Match the depressive thought with the letter corresponding to the appropriate balanced thought:

Depressive thoughts about activities	Balanced thoughts
1. Doing activities won't help my mood.	a. If I avoid stress, I also avoid doing things that are enjoyable. I will need to learn how to manage stress to also be able to experience pleasure — and the best way to do that is to get more experience doing activities that may seem stressful at first.
2. People won't believe I am depressed if I look like I am having fun.	b. Doing activities often brings more energy.
3. I don't deserve to do activities that I enjoy.	c. Deciding to do enjoyable activities is not about whether or not I deserve to do these activities; it is more about whether or not they will help me.
4. If I have fun, it will eventually end, and that will lead to more sadness.	d. There is no standard amount of “fun” to be had — everyone's experience is different, and there is no pressure to feel a certain way about an activity.
5. If I do things that I enjoy, I will also have to expose myself to stressful events.	e. Other people may have their own beliefs about what it looks like to be depressed. I know what I feel inside, regardless of what I look like on the outside; depression can look different for everyone.
6. I will be too concerned with thoughts like “I should be having more fun” or “I could be having more fun.”	f. Sometimes activities will help my mood, and sometimes they won't.
7. I won't have enough energy.	g. Pleasure comes and goes. Sadness also comes and goes. I may as well let myself enjoy fun times when I can.

How did it go with tracking your mood throughout the week?

If you have not tracked your mood, use the table below to write down the intensity of your emotions (from 0 to 5) for the past 4 days, with 5 being the most intense.

Emotion	Intensity of Emotions (0-5)			
	3 days ago	2 days ago	Yesterday	Today
Sad				
Bored				
Angry				
Anxious				
Happy				
Proud				
Other				

How did scheduling your activities go?

Were you able to keep to your schedule? Were you able to incorporate any new values-based activities? What got in the way or worked well?

If you forgot your schedule, use the following grid to write down activities you did in the past four days:

Time	Activities			
	3 days ago	2 days ago	Yesterday	Today
7:00 a.m.				
9:00 a.m.				
11:00 a.m.				
1:00 p.m.				
3:00 p.m.				
5:00 p.m.				
7:00 p.m.				
9:00 p.m.				
11:00 p.m.				

Are there any further patterns coming out of tracking your mood? What did you notice?

Are you starting to shift what you have been doing with your activities? Has it affected your mood?
If so, what do you think is causing this change in your mood?

Do you remember which value you chose to work on this past week? Write it here:

If you don't remember, choose one from the list below as you will need it for today's activity.

- Having a few close relationships
- Having a lot of friends
- Committing to self-growth
- Being spiritual
- Connecting to culture
- Helping other people
- Helping the environment
- Being true to yourself
- Doing exciting things
- Being knowledgeable
- Doing well at school
- Being honest
- Standing up for human rights and justice
- Being assertive
- Being respectful
- Learning new things
- Having a high-paying job
- Inspiring other people
- Having a sense of humour
- Being productive
- Being organized and on time
- Being independent
- Being physically fit and healthy
- Having a balanced lifestyle

2 Long-Term Goals and “Breaking it Down”

Having longer-term goals can help put your values into action.

What sorts of things get in the way of setting longer-term goals?

Now think of a longer-term goal that fits the value you selected above. (Remember that a goal should be something you can measure so that when you accomplish it, you will know.)

This goal may seem too big. It is important to break it down into smaller goals.

What steps do you need to do to achieve the longer-term goal?

1: _____

2: _____

3: _____

4: _____

5: _____

6: _____

Now take step number 1, and break it down further.

What is the first thing you need to do to complete step number 1?

When and where will you do it?

Will you need to ask anything from anyone else to do it?

Is this doable? Will anything get in the way? How will you tackle any barriers to this smaller step?

What would be the next thing you need to do to complete step 1?

A big long-term goal can seem overwhelming and unachievable. Breaking it down into smaller steps makes it seem much more manageable.

If you find yourself discouraged or unable to meet the goal, try to break it down further into even smaller steps.

Keep moving through the steps until you get there. Track your progress by checking off when you have completed the steps along the way. Celebrate smaller achievements.

3 Wrapping Up

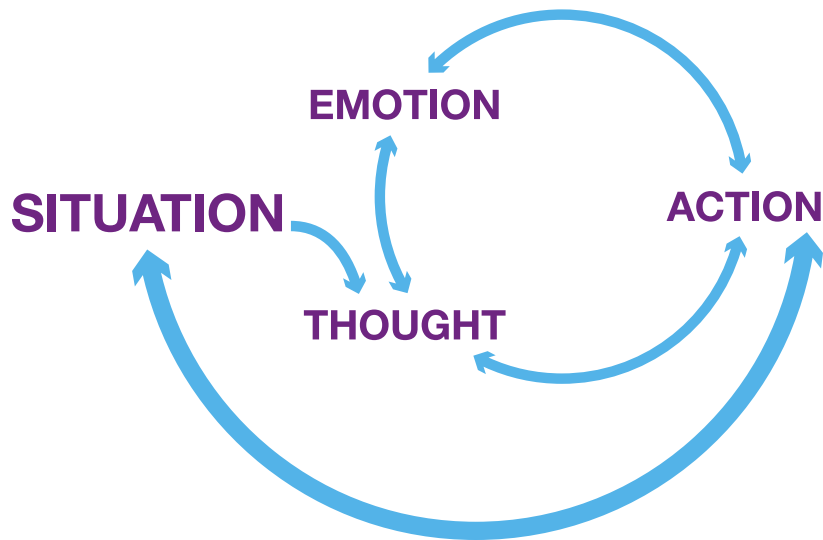
Look at the list of skills we have discussed in this module. Put a '✓' in each column to rate the extent to which you have used the skills in your life.

Skills	Skill Use				
	Haven't thought about using it	Thought about using it, but did not use	Used it, but not helpful	Used it, and it was somewhat helpful	Used it, and it was really helpful
Labeling events, emotions, thoughts and actions					
Noticing downward spirals					
Moving towards an upward spiral					
Naming and rating the intensity of moods					
Scheduling activities					
Targeting closeness, accomplishment, pleasure and importance in activities					
Using "balanced thoughts" about activities to get around depressive thoughts					
Doing activities that fit values					
Working towards long-term goals and "breaking it down"					



1 Thoughts and emotions

We have control over what thoughts we have. The thoughts we control can change the emotions we experience.



You will always have thoughts from time to time that can lead to negative emotions. The skills learned here can be used to manage these thoughts, to increase the control you have over your emotions.

2 Facts versus beliefs

First, it is important to know the difference between a fact and a belief.

Facts are what we can observe through our five senses: "I see...", "I hear...", "I feel...", "I smell...", "I taste...". Facts can also be what you think or feel internally — provided you start by saying, "I think..." or "I feel..."

The content of what you think or feel isn't a fact — it is just a thought or a feeling. But it is a fact that you think or feel it. According to this definition, which of the following can be facts and which are beliefs?

Statement	Fact	Belief
"I can hear my dog barking"	☐	☐
"My dog is anxious"	☐	☐
"I feel angry"	☐	☐

Statement	Fact	Belief
"You are angry"	☐	☐
"I am a safe driver"	☐	☐
"I passed my driver's test and don't have any traffic tickets"	☐	☐
"These French fries taste salty"	☐	☐
"French fries taste good"	☐	☐
"Joey doesn't like me"	☐	☐
"Joey spoke to me loudly"	☐	☐
"I feel lonely"	☐	☐
"Nobody cares about me"	☐	☐
"Therapy is fun"	☐	☐
"I like coming to therapy"	☐	☐

Beliefs involve some personal interpretation of the facts.

Our mood can affect our beliefs and our beliefs can affect our mood.

For example, Clara was on Instagram and noticed a bunch of pictures of her friends smiling and eating at a restaurant. If Clara is happy when she sees the pictures, she might think "I am glad my friends are having a good time!" or "My friends seem happy in this picture" — and remain happy. Whereas, if Clara were sad she might think, "how come they didn't invite me? I guess they don't want me around" and become more sad.

3 Thought traps

There are common patterns in how depression can trap our thinking, making it more likely that depression will stick around or get worse. Understanding these traps can remove power from the beliefs that aren't helpful for you.

Here are common ways depression can trap someone's thinking:

- **The negative filter:** In this trap, someone may only pay attention to facts that support their negative beliefs and ignore facts that go against their beliefs. When people struggle with depression, they tend only to pay attention to negative things that happen.
- **Polarized thinking:** Someone may only see things as "all good" or "all bad" — there is no room in between.
- **Overgeneralization:** Someone takes a small piece of information and assumes that it represents all other similar situations. One negative event means that the same outcome will keep happening over and over. Look for words like "always" and "never" — these usually mean that overgeneralization is happening.

- **Jumping to conclusions:** Someone may interpret a situation based on little information.
- **Catastrophizing:** Focusing on the “what ifs?”. This is the tendency to predict that the worst possible event will happen in the future.
- **Personalization:** “It’s all because of me.” Events that happen (whether positive or negative) often have many different causes. People with depression tend to think that they have a bigger role in negative events than they actually do.
- **Emotional reasoning:** Feelings = truth. This is where we mistake our emotion-driven belief for a fact. For example, feeling guilty about your role in an event does not directly mean you have done something wrong.

4 Balanced thoughts

It is really important to be able to create balanced thoughts in order to counteract these thought traps. See the “Balancing Your Thoughts” worksheet (pg. 43). These are steps that you can use:

Step 1: Identify the situation. Be specific: Where were you? What time was it? Who was there? What was said?

Step 2: Name the emotion (e.g., sad, anxious, angry) and rate its intensity from 0 to 5.

Step 3: Identify your “train of thought.” We typically have several thoughts (or beliefs) that pop up with any situation. List your thoughts that seem to come automatically.

Step 4a: Identify your “reflex thought.” This is the thought that leads to your strong emotion.

Step 4b (optional): Identify the need (e.g., physiological need, security, relationships, self-esteem, sense of identity, sense of control) that is being threatened by this thought. This can help make sense of your emotion.

Step 5: List evidence for and evidence against this reflex thought. Go back to facts for this part.

Step 6: Take one fact from the “evidence for” column and one fact from the “evidence against” column, and connect the two with the word “AND.”

Step 7: Rate the intensity of your emotion again — did it decrease?

Try these steps with the following examples:

- Sam was working at the clothing store as a cashier. There was a long line-up. The next customer in line came up and said “You know, you really need to be more efficient. I’m not coming back here again — you’ve wasted my time.” Sam noticed a train of thought including “I am bad at this job,” “This woman is annoying,” “I don’t like this job,” “I am too slow,” “I can’t do anything right.” They noticed feeling anxious, angry and sad.
- Taylor was at the gym using a weightlifting machine. A staff member approached them with a stern look on his face, leaning forward and telling Taylor loudly that they needed to get off the machine because “You’re doing it wrong and it’s not safe.” Taylor had lots of thoughts, including “I made him angry,” “I messed up again,” “Other people at the gym are judging me,” “I shouldn’t be here,” “I should just go home,” “I can’t do anything right.” Taylor felt embarrassed and sad.

BALANCING YOUR THOUGHTS

SITUATION:

EMOTION:

TRAIN OF THOUGHTS

REFLEX THOUGHT:

NEED:

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Reflex Thought

EVIDENCE FOR

EVIDENCE AGAINST

Create a balanced thought. Write down one **fact** that supports your reflex thought and one **fact** that contradicts it; then put the word "AND" in between these two facts.

5 Home practice

Try creating balanced thoughts with a situation you might have run into recently — or try it out this week if you run into a strong emotion driven by a “reflex thought.”

Write down your personal goal over the next week, based on the skills discussed today:

BALANCING YOUR THOUGHTS

SITUATION:

EMOTION:

TRAIN OF THOUGHTS

REFLEX THOUGHT:

NEED:

camh | Cundill Centre for Child and Youth Depression

Reflex Thought

EVIDENCE FOR

EVIDENCE AGAINST

Create a balanced thought. Write down one **fact** that supports your reflex thought and one **fact** that contradicts it; then put the word "AND" in between these two facts.

Reboot Cognitive Restructuring



Session 2

1 Review

Which of the following statements could be a fact and which would be a belief?

Statement	Fact	Belief
Most sparrows can fly	☐	☐
The teacher is angry today	☐	☐
I like ice cream	☐	☐
That person always lies	☐	☐
I think Instagram is really cool.	☐	☐
There are more than four people in the room.	☐	☐
It is after 3:00 p.m.	☐	☐

Which thought trap goes with which scenario?

Thought traps	Scenarios
1. Negative filter ☐	a. "Tom and Dina were walking down the hall together — they must be dating."
2. Polarized thinking ☐	b. "My teacher was acting differently today — I think it was because of the question I asked earlier."
3. Overgeneralization ☐	c. "I am angry with my dad — it means that he did something to intentionally hurt me."
4. Jumping to conclusions ☐	d. "The forecast calls for scattered showers with breaks of sun — the whole day is ruined."
5. Catastrophizing ☐	e. "Jenna is horrible — she gave me the worst look today."
6. Personalization ☐	f. "I was late for class today — my teacher will surely call my parents to have me grounded."
7. Emotional reasoning ☐	g. "Charlie said she didn't like my shoes — it must mean she doesn't like me."

What types of thought traps did you notice this past week?

Consider the following example:

Rebecca was bored on a Sunday afternoon. She tried texting three of her classmates, but after a few hours no one had answered. She thought, "I don't have any friends."

She noticed this was a "reflex thought" and decided to list "evidence for" and "evidence against" this thought.

Evidence for	Evidence against
• I have been texting my classmates this afternoon and no one is answering. • I am often bored on Sunday afternoons. • Hannah didn't say hi to me in class on Friday.	• Evan and I were joking together on Friday. • Last Saturday, I went to the mall with Keira. • Erin was texting me yesterday. • On Sundays, people are often busy with different activities.

What is a balanced thought that Rebecca can make from this?

2 More strategies to change your thinking

After identifying the situation, “reflex thought” and emotion, here are some other options for how to change your thinking. These are alternative options to “Creating a Balanced Thought” discussed last session. First look through the examples below for each option and then you have an opportunity try them out in your real-life situations.

Option 1. Brainstorm and assess

List other ways of interpreting the situation. “What else could be going on?” Try to keep an open mind.

After brainstorming, list evidence for and against for your reflex thought, and also for three of the other beliefs that you want to explore.

Consider the following example:

Clara was on Instagram and noticed a bunch of pictures of her friends smiling and eating at a restaurant. Her reflex thought is, “They didn’t invite me, because they don’t like me”. She notices feeling quite a lot of sadness about this.

Other than her reflex thought, what else could be going on? Choose up to three other interpretations to assess the evidence for and evidence against each possibility.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Option 2. “Act-as-if”

An “act-as-if” belief is what you will assume to be true, at least temporarily, so that you can carry on until you know more facts. Using the evidence and your own judgment, choose an explanation that would be the most helpful as an “act-as-if” belief.

If Clara behaves as though all her friends don’t want to hang out with her, she may call them to accuse them and push them away. Or she may avoid them, leading to feelings of isolation. If she acts as though they didn’t invite her because it was a last-minute arrangement (rather than because “they don’t like me”), then she would be more likely act friendly with them. When she hung out with them again, she might notice they still smiled and laughed with her — providing more evidence against the reflex thought.

Option 3. Play detective

Get more facts. Try to be open and curious — not suspicious or accusatory. Seek out ways to get facts that will help you know what’s going on. Try out “experiments” to test out your beliefs.

As Clara looks through the pictures more thoroughly, she notices that her ex-boyfriend is at the dinner; and she looks through her calendar and notices that it is his birthday today. In talking to one of her closer friends, Clara finds out that her ex-boyfriend has said that he is still finding the break-up difficult. Later that evening, Clara texts one of her friends to invite her hang out the following weekend. She does this to test her reflex thought. Her friend texts back “for sure!” Clara realizes that this response does not fit her belief that her friends don’t like her

Use the “Changing Your Thoughts” worksheet on page 52 to guide you through these steps for your own real-life examples. You can use the worksheet in session, try it for home practice or both.

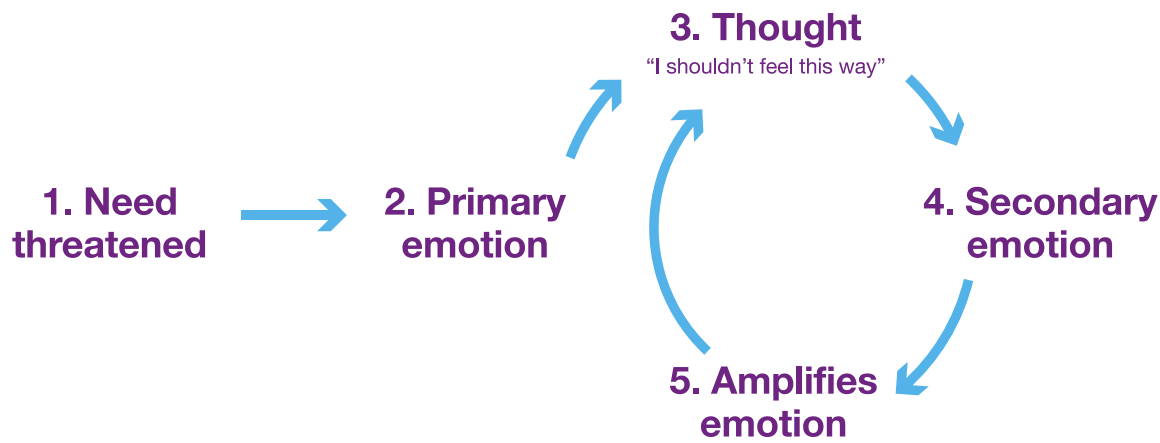
3 Self-validation

Validation means communicating to someone that some part of their experience makes sense to you.

For those who have done the “problem solving” skill set, you may remember that emotions are there to meet our needs (physiological, security, relationships, self-esteem, sense of control and sense of identity).

In our culture, we are often told that emotions don’t make sense, which can be invalidating.

For example, if you are sad about not being able to hang out with your friend on the weekend (primary emotion of sadness because your “relationships” are threatened), someone might say “don’t be so sad — there will be other weekends, so stop sulking.”



The indirect message might be “Your sadness doesn’t make sense.” You might then feel even more sad because your sadness doesn’t make sense to you or to others. You end up feeling sad about feeling sad (secondary emotion). Meanwhile, your need for connecting with people and your sense of control are on the line.

In this situation your needs are threatened — and so sadness does make sense.

Self-validation is a tool that you can use to help make sense of these experiences. Self-validation can simply be thinking to yourself, “My emotion makes sense.” This takes away the secondary emotion and so can decrease the intensity of the sadness.

4 Practicing changing your thoughts

Choose some of the common situations below and use the “Changing Your Thoughts” worksheet to work through the different strategies that have been discussed.

- Phil was texting a guy he recently met at school with whom he is hoping to hang out with more. He sent two messages in the morning saying “Hey” and “We should hang out this weekend.” It is three hours later and he hasn’t heard back. He notices a train of thought: “He doesn’t want to hang out with me,” “No one wants to hang out with me,” “I don’t have any friends,” “I will always be alone.” He notices feeling sad and then thinks “I’m so sensitive — I shouldn’t feel this way.”
- Renita has missed some school due to being depressed. One afternoon, her mother says to her, “I’m really worried that you’re not getting to school — I just don’t want you to get behind.” Renita notices a train of thought: “My mom is always on my back,” “I am stupid — I’ll never get these credits,” “I am a disappointment,” “I am failing at life,” “Oh no, I’m getting angry again.”. Then she notices a feeling of numbness and emptiness.
- Ravi was hanging out at home after school. His father came in the front door, slurring his words and stumbling around the room. His father yelled at him for not doing his chores and told him to go to his room. Ravi was startled and went to his room — and noticed this train of thought: “My dad is drunk again — this is hopeless,” “I am a bad son,” “This will never end,” “I can’t seem to get it right.” He noticed feeling angry and sad.
- Sam was in class when they needed to go to the bathroom. They raised their hand and asked the teacher to go. The teacher said “Not now, Sam.” Sam noticed this train of thought: “The teacher doesn’t trust me,” “He’s transphobic,” “I never get a break,” “I must have done something wrong,” “Why me?”, “Why do I get so riled up?” They notice feeling shame and anger.

5 Home practice this week

Over the next week, try each of the following:

- Brainstorming
- “Act-as-if” thoughts
- Playing detective
- Self-validation.

Notice if your mood improves with these strategies.

Write down your personal goal for the next week, based on the skills discussed today.

Changing Your Thoughts

INSTRUCTIONS



Describe

- a) The situation—use only facts and be specific: where? when? who was there? what was said? what happened?
- b) Your emotion—if there were many emotions, list the most prominent one; how intense was it on a scale of 0 to 5?
- c) Your need—which need was threatened? food/water? sense of safety? relationships? self-esteem? sense of control? sense of identity?



Explore your options

- a) Identify your reflex thought—this is the thought that automatically comes to mind, provoking the strong emotion you listed in section (1).
- b) Brainstorm other possible ways to interpret the situation; be open to many possibilities.



Assess

- a) The reflex thought—what is the evidence for the reflex thought? What is evidence against? Use only facts.
- b) Choose another three possible interpretations you brainstormed in section (2) and list evidence for and against these.

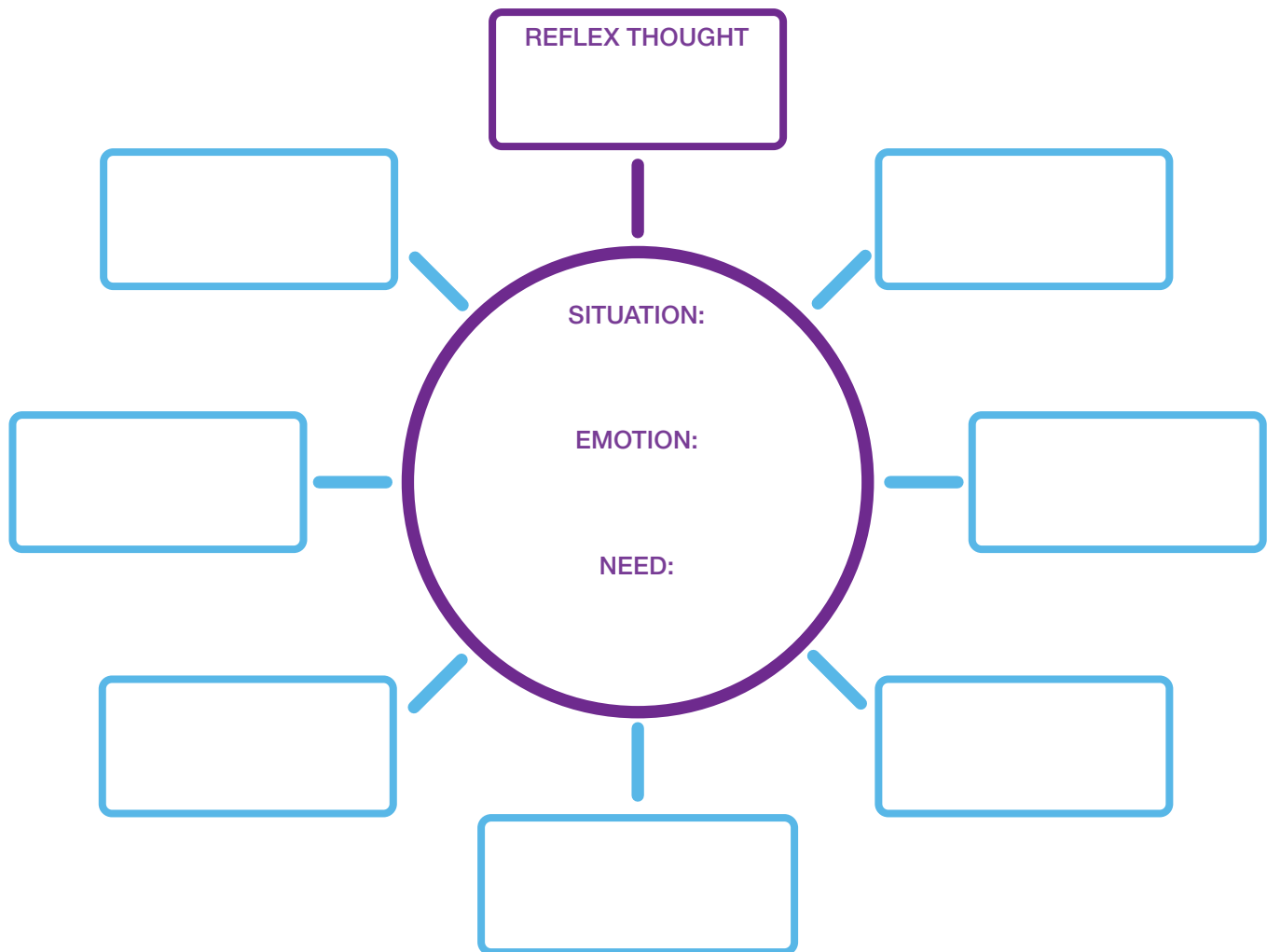


Take action

Choose any of these:

- a) Choose an “as-if” belief that would be most helpful to take on.
- b) Play detective—get more information.
- c) Create a balanced thought—state one piece of evidence for your reflex thought, then state one piece of evidence against it; put the word “AND” in between them.
- d) Reflect—did your emotion change after any of these steps? If not, try a different strategy.

Changing Your Thoughts



BELIEF ONE
(REFLEX THOUGHT)
EVIDENCE FOR

AGAINST

BELIEF TWO
EVIDENCE FOR

AGAINST

BELIEF THREE
EVIDENCE FOR

AGAINST

BELIEF FOUR
EVIDENCE FOR

AGAINST

Changing Your Thoughts

OPTIONS FOR WHAT TO DO NEXT

1

Choose an “act-as-if” thought. Which belief would be the most helpful to try on “as if it were true” until you have more information? How would your actions change if you take on this “act-as-if” thought?

2

Play detective. Do you need to get more information? How will you go about getting it?

3

Create a balanced thought.

Write down one fact that supports your reflex thought and one fact that contradicts it; then put the word “AND” in between these two facts.

4

Reflect. Has changing your thinking helped your mood? Are your needs met? If not, try a different thought or a different skill to change your mood.



1 Review

Choose a time this past week that you had a strong emotion.

Work through the situation starting with:

- Identifying the situation, emotion and train of thoughts
 - Identifying the reflex thought leading to the strong emotion, and identifying the need being threatened by this reflex thought.
-
-
-

Now choose any one or more of the following strategies to see if it would help reduce the intensity of the emotion:

- Create a balanced thought (using evidence for and against the reflex thought).
 - Brainstorm other ways the situation could be interpreted (also listing evidence for and against alternative beliefs)
 - Use an “act-as-if” thought that might be more helpful to work from.
 - Play detective: get more information, run an “experiment.”
 - Self-validation (“my emotion makes sense”).
-
-
-

2 Core beliefs

There are common core beliefs in depression that can make life hard. Core beliefs are strong — they often have been there for a while and may be based on messages you received when you were younger or may be due to messages the depression has been giving you for some time, over and over again.

They are still beliefs — and not facts. This is important to note, as it removes some of their power.

Often, “reflex thoughts” are very much related to the themes of core beliefs. Repeated use of the strategies we have already talked about can chip away at these core beliefs.

Consider the following common core beliefs and then come up with more balanced thoughts. Try to stick to facts (no interpretations, judgments, or predictions). See if using the balanced thoughts as “act-as-if” beliefs helps chip away at the core beliefs.

Depressive core beliefs	Alternative balanced thoughts
I am unlikeable	
I am not good at anything	
I don't measure up.	
The future is hopeless.	
People can't be trusted.	
People will leave me.	
I am a bad person.	

If you have any core depressive beliefs that you experience, try to think about balanced thoughts as well.

Depressive core beliefs	Alternative balanced thoughts

3 Hearing and “taking in” positive thoughts

We often aren’t used to hearing and “taking in” positive feedback; sometimes we may not be used to giving it, either. Many people are quick to point out flaws in others, with the intention of making their lives better; however, this focus on negatives can instead be discouraging.

Write down the positive comments people have said about you over the past week (even your therapist):

4 Home practice this week

Over the next week, try to notice your strong emotions, and then choose one of the following strategies:

- Identify the core belief that the feeling is coming from, and use the balanced thought list to counteract it.
- Practice “taking in” positive thoughts about yourself — and watch out for “thought traps” taking over.

Write down your personal goal over the next week based on the skills discussed today:

Reboot Cognitive Restructuring



Session 4

1 Review

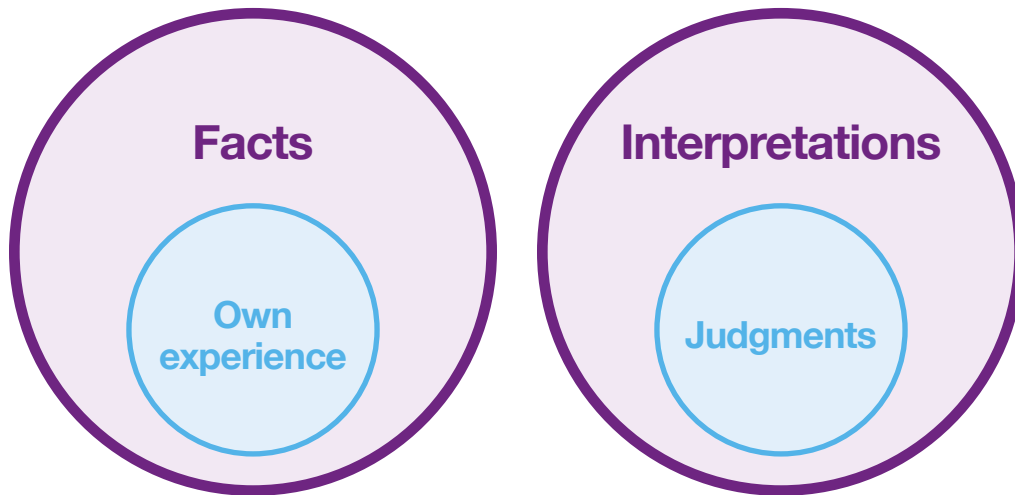
Match the depressive core belief to the more balanced, alternative thought:

Depressive core beliefs	Alternative balanced thought
1. I am unlikeable	a. The future is uncertain. Things change all the time. One small change in my life can lead to bigger changes. One small change that is positive could lead to bigger changes that are positive.
2. I am not good at anything	b. Relationships come and go with everyone. I will need to enjoy them while they are here and cope with it if they end. If people leave, it does not reflect on my self-worth; the circumstances didn't allow for it this time. With each relationship that happens, I learn something new. Relationships that end make room for new ones to come.
3. I don't measure up	c. I am skilled at some things and not skilled at others. I can also learn and practice new things so that I become more skilled.
4. The future is hopeless	d. I have done things I regret. I have done the best I could with what I had. I do the best I can with what I have. I am taking the time to learn how to do better. Sometimes, I do things that I am proud of.
5. People can't be trusted	e. I can set my own standard for what is meaningful in my life.
6. People will leave me	f. Some people will like me and some people won't. No one is hated by everyone. No one is loved by everyone. I can also learn how to act in a way so that I am true to myself and people will still want to be around me.
7. I am a bad person	g. Some people can be trusted — depending on the person and what I am trusting them with. I will need to trust some people sometimes to get by; I will also need to be careful who I trust and when I trust them.

2 Letting go of judging thoughts

In the first session of this skill set, we discussed how facts and beliefs are different.

All judgments are a type of belief or interpretation — they are never facts.



For this concept, it is helpful to think of judgments as including any of the following phrases:

- something is “good” or “bad”
- something “should” or “shouldn’t” be
- something is “right” or “wrong”

Judgments tend to intensify emotions. Reframing the judgement as situational facts and your own experience can help regulate your emotions.

Try this: For each of these situations, which thought would lead to more anger? Circle whether each thought is describing a fact or belief.

1. Jordan is angry with Meshal after Meshal refused to help him with his homework. Jordan might have one of two types of thoughts:

a. “Meshal is such a jerk!”

Fact or Belief

b. “I am angry with Meshal.”

Fact or Belief

2. Maria got 50% on a test — she was hoping for 70%. Which thought will lead to less intense emotion?

a. “I didn’t do as well as I had hoped.”

Fact or Belief

b. “I am so stupid — I can’t seem to get it right.”

Fact or Belief

The judgments that we make treat our beliefs as though they are facts. Judgments can make the situation we are going through seem to have more impact than it actually does. This can also lead to stronger emotions.

Instead of using judgements, the following phrases can help us to think differently about the situation so the emotions do not become so intense:

- I “like” or “don’t like” something.
- I *think* something is “helpful” or “harmful.”
- I *think* something is “dangerous” or “safe.”
- I *feel* anxious when my teacher calls on me in class.

When you use the phrases above, this can change something from being a judgment to being a fact. You are stating your experience about a situation. “Helpful”/“harmful” and “dangerous”/“safe” tend to be words that don’t intensify emotions as much — and still help you move forward.

Remember that the judgments you make about others and the judgments you make about yourself come from your unique perspective and the personal set of standards you have developed in your mind. You may find that letting go of judgments about others helps your own self-esteem.

Try this: Circle which of the following are judgments and which are facts? If it is a judgment, how could you say the same thing without judgment?

My sister is so annoying.

Judgment or Fact

I am bored in therapy.

Judgment or Fact

I don’t think it is safe to meet people on the internet.

Judgment or Fact

You shouldn’t judge.

Judgment or Fact

I should be happier than I am.

Judgment or Fact

I don’t like the way my teacher talks to me.

Judgment or Fact

It's not right that I have another assignment to do this week.

Judgment or Fact

Those shoes are awesome.

Judgment or Fact

I find that some CBT skills are helpful for me, while others are not.

Judgment or Fact

3 Targeting anxious thoughts

Some people find these strategies helpful when their mind is racing or “stuck in a loop”:

- **Thought stopping:** When you have a negative thought, imagine yelling “STOP!” Then tell yourself, “I’m not going to think about this any more; it’s not helping me.” Some people like to imagine a STOP sign as they do this.
- **Set aside “worry” time:** Set a specific time to allow yourself to have all the negative thoughts your brain will have. During that time, don’t do any other activities, like eating or watching TV. If you catch yourself having negative thoughts outside that specific time, say to yourself “I’ll save that to think about later.”
- **Change the movie in your mind:** If you get the “what ifs?” and start to worry about a future stressful situation, imagine yourself being in that scenario and coping with it really well. Change the movie in your mind from one where you fall apart to one where you are mastering the situation.

4 Wrapping up

Look at the list of skills that we have discussed in this module. Put a checkmark in the appropriate column to rate the extent to which you have used each skill in your life.

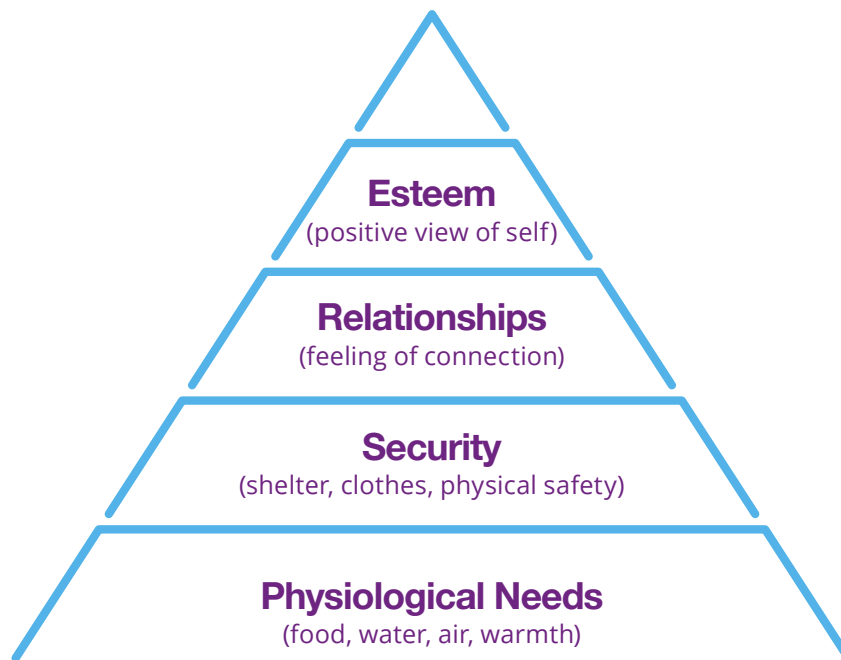
Skills	Skill Use				
	Haven't thought about using it	Thought about using it, but did not use	Used it, but not helpful	Used it, and it was somewhat helpful	Used it, and it was really helpful
Identifying reflex thoughts					
Brainstorming alternative interpretations					
Listing evidence for and evidence against					
Using "act-as-if" thought					
Using balanced thinking					
Creating own balanced thought					
Playing detective (got more information)					
Self-validating					
Challenging depressive core belief					
Taking in Positive Feedback from Others					
Letting go of judgment					
Targeting anxious thoughts					



1 Emotions and Needs

One major reason we have emotions is to help us meet our needs.

In the 1940s, a psychologist named Abraham Maslow described a “hierarchy of needs,” and how people’s motivation to fulfill these needs can affect how they act. Included in this hierarchy are:



There are two other needs that other theorists have talked a lot about:

_____ and _____

Typically, a strong uncomfortable emotion indicates that one of the above six needs is being threatened.

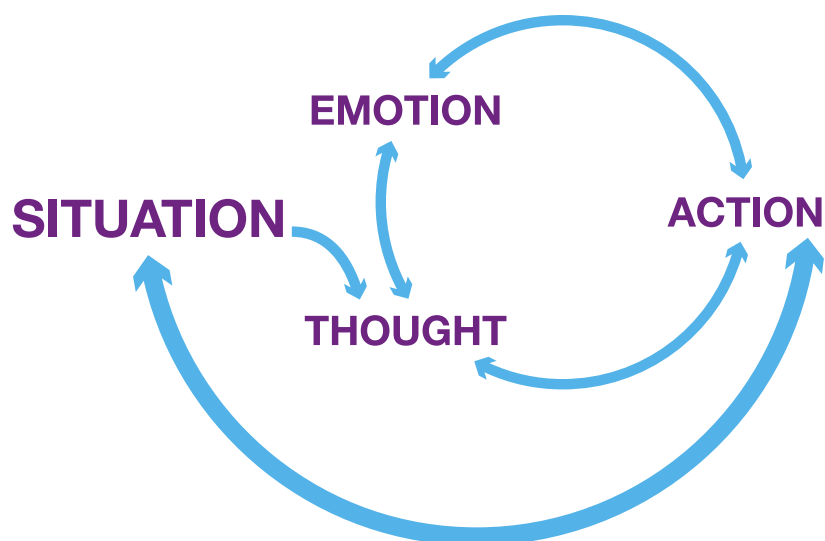
Can you think of a time in the past week where you had a strong emotion?

What needs were threatened at that time?

Emotion: _____

Need: _____

2 Problem Solving: Why Bother?



Consider the above diagram.

- A stressful situation may come up that threatens a need (e.g., a conflict with a friend threatens a relationship)
- ...which can lead to a thought (e.g. “she doesn’t like me”)
- ...which can lead to an emotion (e.g. sadness)
- ...which can lead to an action (e.g. avoiding your friend).

Problems are situations where your needs are threatened. If you can change the situation so that your need is met, the emotion won’t be so strong. Problem solving is a way to change your situation in order to, eventually, change your emotion.

3 Beliefs About Problem Solving

People with depression tend to have negative beliefs about the problems they face. These beliefs can get in the way of problem solving. Which of the following thoughts can get in the way of problem solving for you? Can you think of balanced thoughts that might be helpful?

Depressive thoughts about problems	Balanced thoughts
I am unable to solve problems.	
If I think about my problems, my emotions become more intense.	
My problems cannot be solved. It is hopeless.	
I didn't cause my problems, so I shouldn't have to solve them.	
I don't have the energy to solve problems.	

If you experience additional depressive beliefs, try to think about any balanced thoughts about these as well.

Depressive thoughts about problems	Balanced thoughts

4 Defining the Problem

Defining a problem is an important step in trying to solve it. If the nature of the problem is unclear or if you don't understand what the problem is, it is hard to move toward trying to solve it.

If you're trying to define a problem you are having with another person, clearly and specifically describe what the other person is doing/saying that creates the problem for you. Here are some steps to keep in mind when defining a problem.

What to do when defining a problem

Describe what the other person is doing or saying that's creating a problem for you. Use only facts to describe the problem:

- Who was there?
- What was said? What did you see happen?
- Where were you?
- When was it?
- If it is a pattern, use the most recent time it came up to describe the pattern.

Identify your **need**:

- Which of the six needs were threatened? It is important to know, because an effective solution will meet your needs.

Identify your **emotion**:

- What emotion did you notice when the situation happened?
- How intense was this emotion? Rate the intensity on a scale of 0-5, with 5 being the most intense.
- Was there a mix of emotions? Rate each additional one (0-5). Which was most intense?

How to do it

- Be **specific**. Rather than say "It was in the afternoon," say "It was at 4:00 p.m. when I got home from school."
- Be **brief**. If there is too much detail, you can get lost in the process.
- **Don't judge**. Avoid name-calling, accusing or blaming others. Try not to describe the problem using flaws in the other person; for example, "You're lazy."

You will eventually need to communicate your problem to another person using these steps.

Are these examples using the steps? **Circle “yes” or “no” and describe the reason for your answer.**

Example 1: “I know you want me to be safe and that you try to take care of me. My problem is that I want to stay out until midnight on weekends to party with my friends, but my curfew is 11:00 p.m. This bothers me because I have to leave parties early, and I miss out on the fun.”

Yes / No

Example 2: “My problem is that you are too strict about curfew!”

Yes / No

Example 3: “You don’t text me back when I text you. I wish you weren’t so lazy about it.”

Yes / No

Example 4: “I’m upset when you tell me that you are embarrassed to have your friends over and see that I am not doing well. It makes me feel even more guilty about being depressed.”

Yes / No

5 Practicing Defining and Communicating the Problem

Using what we have learned so far, take four problems that you have struggled with recently (or work with your therapist to choose them) and fill out the diagrams below. Once you have filled it out, practice communicating the problem to your therapist.

Situation:

Emotion:

Need:

Situation:

Emotion:

Need:

Situation:

Emotion:

Need:

Situation:

Emotion:

Need:

6 Home Practice

Over the next week, try each of the following:

- When you notice one of the depressive thoughts you reviewed today come up for you, try to use an balanced thought that you have checked off to replace with the unhelpful belief to see if it helps your mood
- When you are feeling a strong emotion, try to define the problem:
 - › Describe what the other person is doing or saying that's creating a problem for you.
 - › Identify your need.
 - › Identify your emotion.
 - › Be specific and brief and don't judge.
- During the coming week, identify several problems that you would like to work on. Then, practice defining the problems by writing them down on the next page and using the ideas discussed in session.

Write down your personal goal over the next week based on the skills discussed today:

Situation:

Emotion:

Need:

Situation:

Emotion:

Need:

Situation:

Emotion:

Need:

Situation:

Emotion:

Need:

Level Up Problem Solving



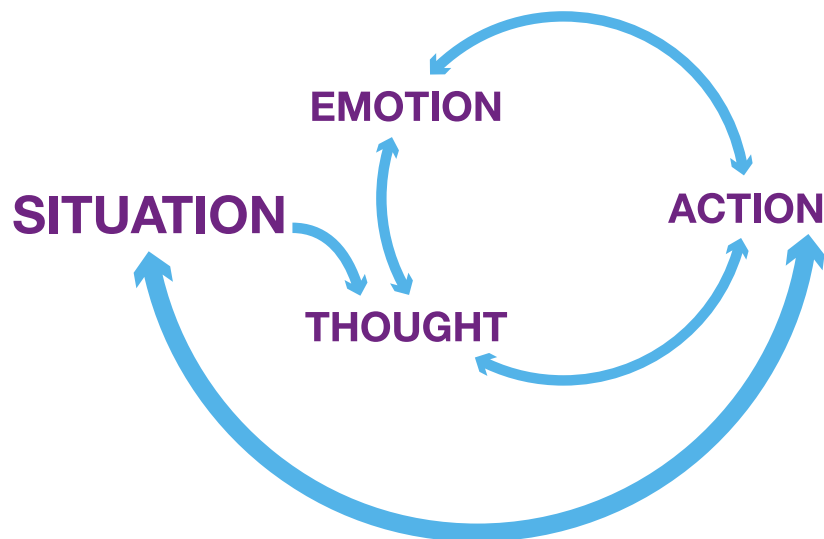
Session 2

1 Review

What are the six needs that our emotions drive us to meet?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Which part of the diagram does problem solving address?



What are the three steps of defining a problem?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are three helpful concepts to keep in mind when defining a problem?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Think of a problem that you experienced recently. Use the three steps (and the three concepts) to define that problem below:

Situation:

Emotion:

Need:

2a Brainstorming Solutions

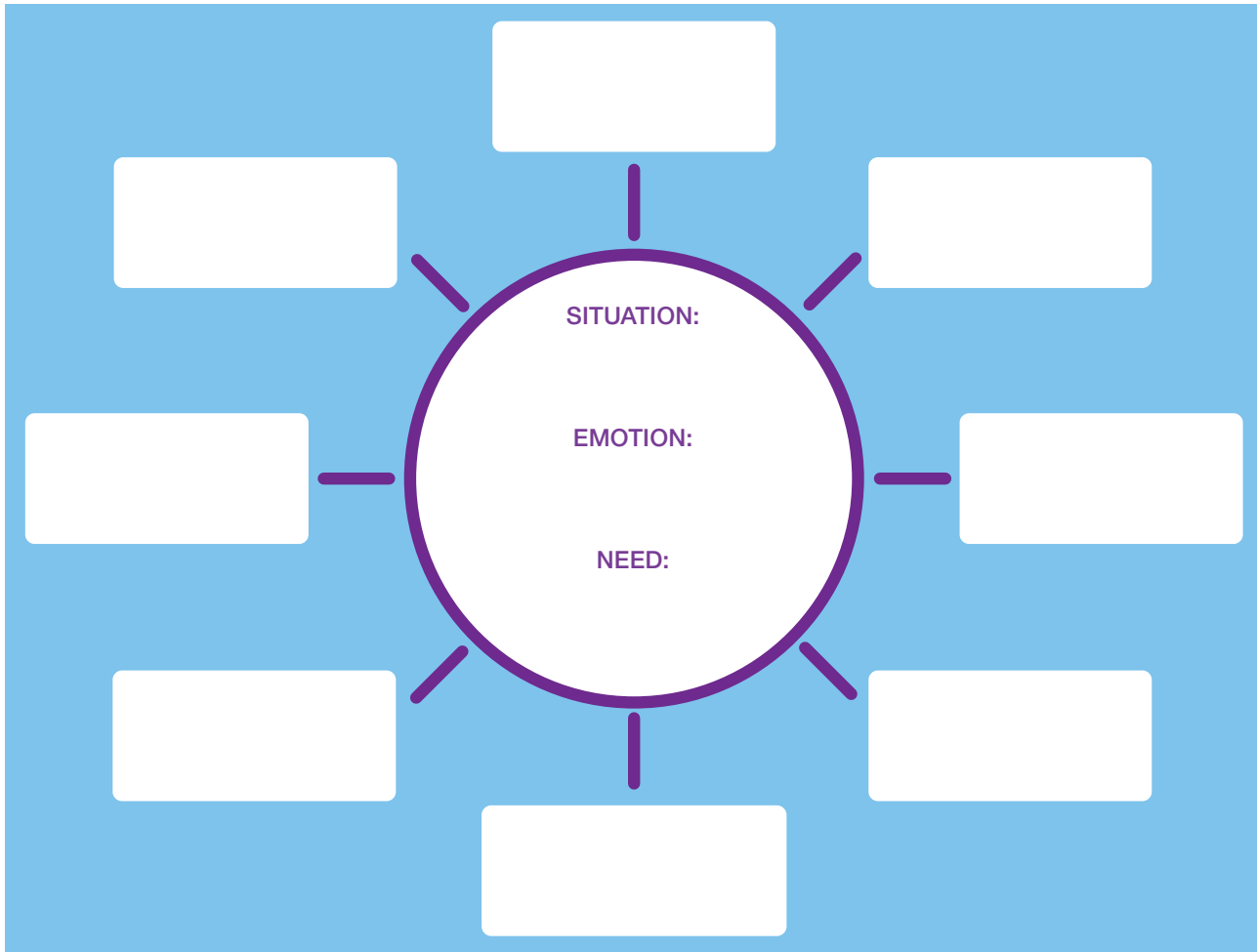
When people have a strong emotion, it can often create tunnel vision — where the person has a narrow perspective on what to do next. This can get in the way of finding the most helpful way through the problem.

After defining the problem, it is really important to think about all possible options for ways that you can get your needs met. Sometimes, just brainstorming and realizing that there are many options to resolve the problem can decrease the intensity of the emotion.

Here are some things to keep in mind to make the brainstorming stage more effective:

1. List as many possible solutions as you can.
2. Try not to be critical about any solution yet. Keep your mind open to come up with many possible solutions.
3. Be creative about what other solutions might be possible.

Use the graphic below to begin brainstorming solutions for the problem that you are working through. If you are struggling to come up with solutions, ask a friend or trusted adult to help. Internet searches might help. If the problem is not time sensitive, sometimes setting the problem aside and coming back to it the next day can help too.



2b Elimination

Make sure that you are done the brainstorming phase before moving on. It is important to have an open mind during brainstorming and then begin thinking more critically during the elimination phase.

“Elimination” is really crossing off solutions that are unreasonable or unrealistic. For example, if you put “fly to the moon” or “trip the other person” as a solution in the brainstorming phase, consider crossing off those solutions. You should try to have at least three or four realistic solutions remaining.

Return to the worksheet to begin eliminating solutions that would not be possible.

3 Assess Pros and Cons

In order to fully assess which solution will be most helpful in changing the situation, list the pros and the cons of the remaining solutions in relation to how they meet your needs.

If you have trouble creating a list, think of how that solution might meet some of your six needs or the needs of others. Try to keep points specific, brief and non-judgmental.

SOLUTION ONE	SOLUTION TWO	SOLUTION THREE	SOLUTION FOUR
PROS	PROS	PROS	PROS
CONS	CONS	CONS	CONS

4 Final Steps

1. Select a solution

After listing pros and cons, choose a solution on the worksheet that you think will best meet your needs (not just the one need threatened, but a good balance of all of them).

- When you are making your selection, try first going with the solution that you feel best about. The number of pros and cons isn't as relevant as the importance of each pro and con to meeting your needs.
- If you have trouble choosing, rate the importance of each pro and con on a scale of 1–5 and then add up the numbers to see how the totals for each solution compare.

Depending on the challenge you are facing, there may be many possible solutions for you to try.

Solution selected: _____

2. Reflect on the solution

For the solution you chose, again ask yourself — will this help me meet my needs?

3. Detect barriers

Is there anything that might get in the way of carrying out your solution? Here are some examples of barriers and ways to try to overcome them:

- Forgetting to carry out the solution? Think of ways to be reminded.
- Low motivation? Go back to your pros and cons and remind yourself why you are doing this.
- Emotions that are too strong? First try other CBT strategies to settle your emotions, or wait until the emotions have settled with time.
- Depressive thoughts? Try using balanced thoughts.

Potential barriers to carrying out the solution:

1. _____

2. _____

Ways to overcome these barriers:

1. _____

2. _____

4. Make a plan and try it out

Once you have chosen your solution(s), write down a plan as to when, where, how and what will take place to carry out your solution using the worksheet.

After you try the solution, ask yourself, did it meet my needs? If not, try a different solution on your list.

Problems can be solvable, but not always. As you're trying to solve a problem, use other CBT strategies to manage the situation or to manage the emotion in those situations.

1. When will you do it? _____

2. Where will you do it? _____

3. Who will be there? _____

4. How will you do it? (step-by-step) _____

5 Home practice

Use the "Problem Solving" work sheets on the following pages this week on another problem you are working through; it can be a long-standing problem or one that comes up through the week.

Problem Solving

INSTRUCTIONS



Describe

- a) The situation—use only facts and be specific; where? when? who was there? what was said? what happened?
- b) Your emotion—if there were many emotions, list the most prominent one; how intense was it on a scale of 0 to 5?
- c) Your need—which need was threatened? food/water? sense of safety? relationships? self-esteem? sense of control? sense of identity?



Explore your options

- a) Brainstorm—other possible actions you can take to meet your needs; be open to many possibilities.



Assess

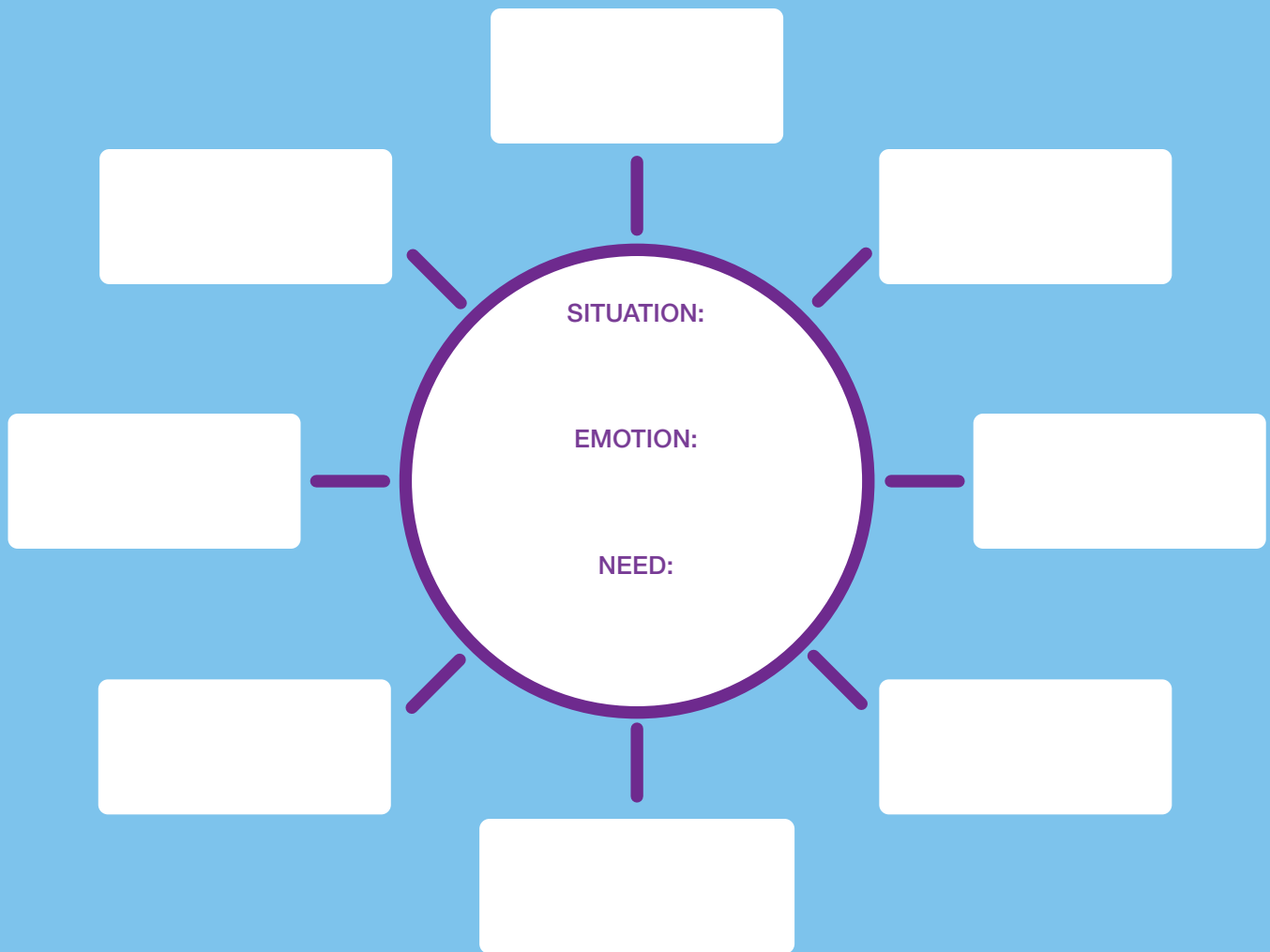
- a) Choose up to four of the brainstormed solutions and list pros and cons of each.



Take action

- a) Select a solution.
- b) Reflect if it will meet your needs.
- c) Detect any barriers to your solution before you carry it out; work through these.
- d) Write down your plan (this makes it more likely you will follow through) and carry it out.

Problem Solving



SOLUTION ONE

PROS

CONS

SOLUTION TWO

PROS

CONS

SOLUTION THREE

PROS

CONS

SOLUTION FOUR

PROS

CONS

Problem Solving

NEXT STEPS

1

Select. Which solution did you choose?

2

Reflect. Will this meet your needs (not just one, but overall)?

3

Detect barriers. Is there anything that could get in the way of carrying out your solutions? How will you deal with this?

4

Details. Now that you have identified your plan:

When will you do it?

Where will you do it?

Who will be there?

How will you do it, step-by-step?

Level Up Problem Solving



Session 3

1 Review

What are the steps in problem solving?

- Define the problem:
 - › Describe the _____ using only the facts (who is there, what was said, what did you see happen, where were you, when was it?)
 - › Identify your _____ (e.g., physiological, security, relationships, esteem, sense of control and identity)
 - › Identify your _____ (e.g., anxiety, sadness, anger, boredom, guilt, shame, jealousy, envy, etc.)
- _____ solutions without judgment. (There are no good or bad solutions.)
- When you are done step 2 _____ solutions that you know are completely unrealistic.
- List _____ and _____ of the remaining solutions, particularly in how they relate to your _____.
- _____ a solution (or a set of solutions) and try it out. Remember to base your selection on how likely the solution is to help you to meet your needs.
- _____ on whether this solution will meet your needs.
- _____ any barriers that may get in the way and work through them ahead of time.
- Make a specific _____ about how you would do it:
 - › What will you do?
 - › When will you do it?
 - › Who will be there?
 - › How will you do it?

2 Collaboration

Some problems you can manage on your own. When problems involve another person (e.g., friend, teacher, caregiver), you may decide to work with that person to try to come to a solution that at least partially meets both of your needs. Working this out together will likely reduce your tension, and improve your mood. Here are some steps to consider:

Step 1: Define the problem

- **Describe the situation** using only facts (e.g., what do you see? hear?)

- **Identify your needs** verbally, to the other person: Saying “I need food” or “I need water” is straightforward; but stating your other needs directly can seem awkward to the listener. For example, “I need shelter”. Come up with natural-sounding ways of saying the following:

› **I need shelter:**

› **I need physical safety:**

› **I need relationships:**

› **I need a sense of control:**

› **I need self-esteem:**

› **I need a sense of identity:**

- **Identify your emotion** — verbally, to the other person (e.g., “I get sad when this happens”).
- **Identify the other person’s needs and emotions:**
 - › Listen to what the other person is saying.
 - › Ask them questions about their needs and emotions.
- **Summarize: State your needs and the other person’s needs back-to-back and invite the other person to problem-solve.**

Consider the following scenarios to practice defining the problem collaboratively with your therapist:

- Steve’s boss has asked him to work the late shifts at the shop, which means staying until 10:00 p.m. Steve has to be at school for basketball practice at 7:00 a.m., and is worried that he won’t be able to get enough sleep.
- Mr. Kipling is expecting an assignment to be handed in on time, but Sophie hasn’t started it because she’s been having difficulty concentrating while she is depressed.
- Kara’s mother is concerned about her wearing clothes that are appropriate for the weather, but Kara wants to feel comfortable wearing whatever she wants to fit in with her friends.

Work with your therapist to define one of the problems listed above. One person will identify their own needs and the other person will act as the other person in the situation. After you’ve worked through one example, switch roles and work on another example so you get more experience defining the problem.

Here are additional steps that you can take when problem solving collaboratively:

Step 2a: Brainstorm solutions

Work with the other person to generate solutions together.

- Don't criticize the others' solutions.
- Be open to new possibilities.

Step 2b: Elimination

If there are solutions you generated that you both completely agree are not reasonable, cross them off your list.

Step 3: Assessment

Work with the other person to individually rate how each solution meets or threatens your needs.

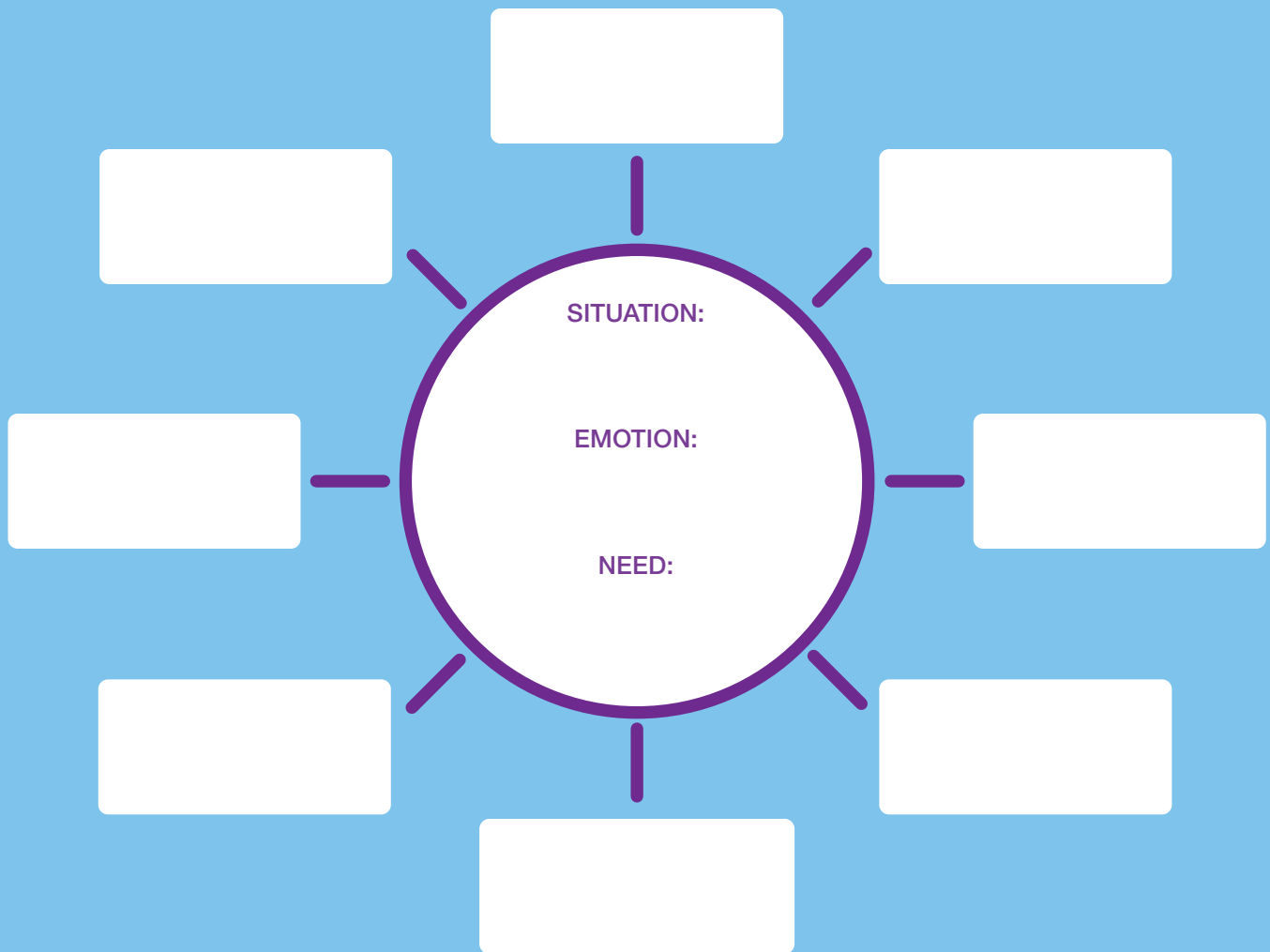
- You can simply use a "+" or "-" sign to show that it either meets or does not meet your needs.
- Or use numbers to indicate the strength of the need. Rate the intensity on a scale of 0–5, with 5 being the most intense.
- Note, that the evaluation part of collaborative problem-solving is quite different than when doing problem-solving on your own: you are no longer listing pros and cons as you did with individual problem-solving.

Step 4: Choose a solution and carry it out

- Find a solution that optimizes each of your needs.
- You should each be willing to "make the first move" and/or make a change in your behaviour.
- Write down the details on how this will take place:
 - › What will you each do?
 - › When will you each do it?
 - › Who will be there?
 - › How will you each do it?
 - › What barriers might there be to your plan? How can you work through these together?

Use the "Collaborative Problem-Solving" worksheet on the following pages to start thinking more about collaboration.

Collaborative Problem Solving



SOLUTION ONE

PERSON A

PERSON B

SOLUTION TWO

PERSON A

PERSON B

SOLUTION THREE

PERSON A

PERSON B

SOLUTION FOUR

PERSON A

PERSON B

Collaborative Problem Solving

NEXT STEPS

1

Select. Which solution did you choose?

2

Reflect. Will this meet your needs (not just one, but overall)?

3

Detect barriers. Is there anything that could get in the way of carrying out your solutions? How will you deal with this?

4

Details. Now that you have identified your plan:

When will you do it?

Where will you do it?

Who will be there?

How will you do it, step-by-step?

3 Home Practice

Try out collaborative problem solving this week. If a family member is willing to do it with you — on a relatively small problem — do it with them. If not, try it out with a trusted friend. Even just doing some of the steps, if you aren't able to do them all, can be helpful.

Write down your personal goal over the next week based on the skills discussed today:

Level Up Problem Solving



Session 4

1 Review

Match the depressive thought with the more helpful balanced thought.

Depressive thoughts about problems	Balanced thoughts
1. ☐ I am unable to solve problems.	a. It does take energy to solve problems, but saves energy in the long-run.
2. ☐ If I think about my problems, my emotions become more intense.	b. I can learn how to solve problems.
3. ☐ My problems cannot be solved. It is hopeless.	c. I may not have caused my problems, but I still need to solve them.
4. ☐ I didn't cause my problems, so I shouldn't have to solve them.	e. Emotions can be particularly strong when I am facing my problems, but I will likely feel better if I can solve them.
5. ☐ I don't have the energy to solve problems.	f. Some problems can be solved and some can't. If they can't be solved, there are other skills I can use to cope.

What is a more natural way to say: "I need self-esteem. When you insult me, I feel sad"?

Solving problems involves:

- defining the problem (situation, emotion, need)
- brainstorming solutions
- eliminating solutions that are completely out of the question.

What is the next step if you are solving problems individually?

What is the next step if you have a problem with someone else?

(this involves collaborative problem solving)

2 Carrying Out Your Plan

Once you have chosen your plan, some things might get in the way of carrying it out. Research has shown that the following techniques will increase your chances of success:

1. Write it down.
2. Imagine yourself carrying out the plan.
3. Rehearse it.

3 Acceptance: Turn “Oh no!” to “Oh well”

Sometimes, you may not be able to solve a problem in the moment. There may be too many barriers, or emotions may be too intense. One strategy to manage this situation is to use acceptance. **In this case, acceptance means “acknowledging the facts for what they are.” It does not mean you like the facts or that you give up on changing the situation in the future.** Only accept facts that have occurred in the past or the present — the future hasn’t happened yet — so it is not yet a fact.

There are five ways to approach a problem:

1. Solve it. (Problem solve.)
2. Change the way you think about it. (See other module, “Reboot Your Thinking: Cognitive Restructuring.”)
3. Accept it. (See below.)
4. Continue to suffer.
5. Make things worse.

When to use acceptance:

1. When you have tried problem solving, but you are stuck.
2. When you have tried to change your thinking patterns, but you are stuck.
3. When emotions are too intense to problem-solve or try other strategies to change your thinking, and you are stuck. .

The other options (“continue to suffer” or “make things worse”) are not great, so it is important to keep acceptance as an option.

Step 1: Notice you are fighting the facts.

“Fighting the facts” is a thought pattern that can worsen your mood. These types of thoughts tend to add fuel to the fire of your emotions.

These thoughts might be: “Why me?” “It’s not fair.” “It shouldn’t be this way.”
“If only things were different.” “Oh no!”

Step 2: Identify the fact to accept.

Remember — during this process, don’t accept beliefs, judgments or predictions about the future — only the facts.

Step 3a: Change your thoughts.

While thinking about the fact you identified, start having the thought “it is what it is”,
“I don’t like it, but I accept it” or “oh well”. Or just describe the facts to accept over and over.

and/or

Step 3b: Change what your body is doing.

Some people find it helpful to pair the following: (1) Think of the fact to be accepted and (2) sit in an accepting posture with a slight smile and relaxed hands. These actions send a message to your brain that promote acceptance.

and/or

Step 3c: Change your actions.

Act as though you have accepted the facts, even when you haven’t fully. This can help shift your acceptance even further.

You might find that doing all three (i.e., change thoughts, body position, actions) helps the most.

Step 4: Repeat.

Acceptance is not a one-time thing, but needs to be practiced over and over. In more intense situations, the process can lead to a wave of intense emotion, but then a sense of calm.

4 Practice

Go through the following example with your therapist:

Ian has been really looking forward to going to an amusement park with Kelly and Sharron on Saturday. It has been a while since they all connected. But on Saturday morning, both Kelly and Sharron texted him to tell him that they are both sick and can’t go.

Step 1: He notices getting on a thought loop: “Why does this always happen to me, I never get to have fun.” “I wish I was able to go.” “It’s not fair that this happened.”

Step 2: His reflex is to go to thoughts like: “They bailed on me. That’s so mean” and “They don’t like me” though Ian catches himself: these are beliefs, not facts. He then identifies the facts of the situation. “I was hoping to go to the amusement park with Kelly and Sharron, and they have texted me, saying that they are sick.”

Step 3a: He says to himself, “It is what it is” and “I don’t like that they texted me to say that they are sick and can’t go, but I accept it.”

Step 3b: He notices his muscles are tense and takes time to relax his face and hands as he continues to focus on the thought: “I was hoping to go to the amusement park with Kelly and Sharron, and they have texted me, saying that they are sick.”

Step 3c: He then asks his brother to hang out with him and to go to the park to play catch (a behaviour that is incompatible with going to the amusement park).

Consider the following situations. How could you use problem solving (collaborative or individual) and/or the acceptance skill to address them?

- Jake has been working hard on a large group science project at school, but the three other group members don’t seem to be taking it as seriously. He is anxious that he won’t get a good mark. What can Jake do?
- Emily clearly told Michael she didn’t want to go to the movies with him when he asked her. But he keeps on asking her, and she really does not want to go. What can Emily do?
- It is Sunday afternoon; Alex has an assignment due for school the next day that they haven’t started working on. Also, their mother is asking them to clean their room and their friend wants to go hang out on the park. Alex is also feeling overwhelmed and tired from depression. What can Alex do?
- Joshua is excited that a new videogame, Wham-Blam-3000, is coming out today. It is the first time he has been excited about anything in a while, but his parents won’t let him play it because they are worried he is spending too much time on the console. What can Joshua do?
- Maddison has struggled a lot with low mood and anger. Her parents are worried about her safety and so have not let her spend time at home alone. What can she do?
- Jamal would like to stay out until midnight on Friday night for a party at his friend’s place, but his mother won’t let him go. What can he do?
- Olivia and Emma having been dating for three months when Olivia tells Emma that she wants to stop dating. What can Emma do?
- Christopher’s friends, Kylo and Shea, tell him that they are finding that his emotions are too much for them to handle and they no longer want to spend time with him. What can Christopher do?
- Isabella is finding that Andrew, her friend from class, keeps coming to her with his problems, which is overwhelming her. What can she do?

- Daniel’s brother, William, keeps coming into his room to use Daniel’s computer. Daniel wants his privacy. What can he do?
- Ashley has a part-time job. They prefer the pronoun “they” and not “she”; however, their boss continues to refer to them as “she.” What can they do?
- It is Wednesday and Ravi has an assignment due on Friday, but he’s way behind because he’s been depressed so has had a hard time concentrating. His teacher is known to be pretty strict with deadlines and docks marks for every day assignments are late. What can he do?
- Samantha is shopping with her friend, Ethan. Ethan asks her to help distract the cashier while he steals a shirt that he really wants. What can Samantha do?
- Grace has been working for two weeks at a local fast food chain and wants to impress her boss. The boss has recently asked her to start taking later shifts — from 6:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. She goes to school every day and so is worried she won’t get enough sleep. What can she do?
- Tyler struggles with depression and is looking to meet new friends. He recently met James at school and they are getting along. One Saturday afternoon, James invites Tyler to “get wasted” with him but Tyler doesn’t want to because he knows that alcohol can make his depression worse. What can he do?
- Abigail overhears some of the guys on her new coed sports team making sexual comments, which make her uncomfortable. What can she do?
- Nick’s father tends to say pretty hurtful things to Nick when he drinks, but knows he wouldn’t say things like this when he is sober. What can Nick do?

5 Wrapping up

Look at the list of skills that we have discussed in this module. Mark a '✓' in each column to rate the extent to which you have used them in your life.

Skills	Skill Use				
	Haven't thought about using it	Thought about using it, but did not use	Used it, but not helpful	Used it, and it was somewhat helpful	Used it, and it was really helpful
Linking emotions to needs					
Considering balanced thoughts when problem solving					
Defining the problem					
Brainstorming solutions					
Weighing pros and cons					
Following through on strategies for your solution					
Describing an interpersonal problem to another person					
Collaboratively problem solving					
Acceptance					

Multiplayer Communication and Relationships



Session 1

1 Social skills 101: Getting started

Four skills to keep in mind in social situations:

- Maintain regular eye contact.
- Smile during the interaction.
- Say positive things (about yourself, life and the other person).
- Tell the other person about yourself.

Activity

Start a conversation with your therapist.

After you and your therapist have had a conversation, offer each other constructive feedback about the social skills that were used by answering the following questions:

Which skills did I use?

Which did I do well?

What is one way I could use the skills more effectively?

2 Social interaction and spirals

Take turns reading each statement:

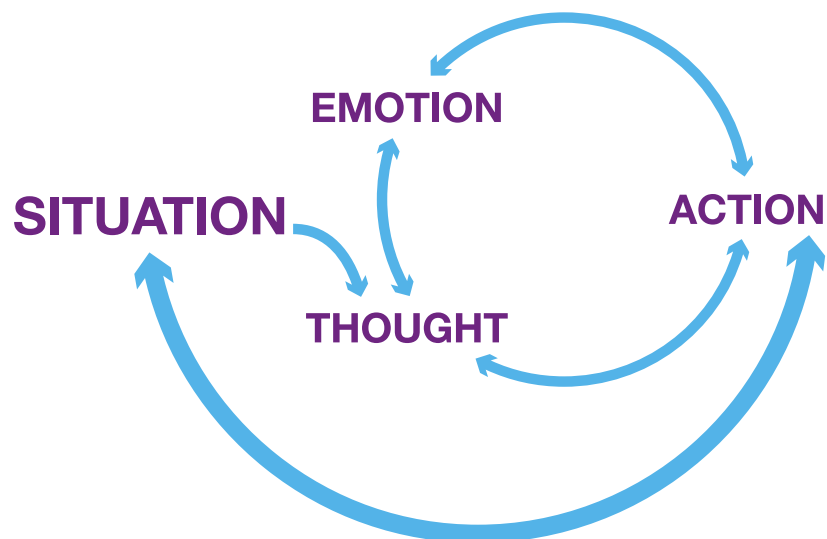
- The amount and quality of our social interactions can affect our moods.
- Our moods can affect the amount and quality of our social interactions.
- This relationship can lead to a “downward spiral.”

To change the pattern to an “upward spiral” it is important to participate in social interactions, even when you don’t feel confident or feel like interacting.

You can use your sessions with your therapist to practice social interactions.

3 Beliefs about relationships

Remember that our thoughts can affect our emotions:



In the table below, put a check mark next to the depressive thoughts that you find get in the way of starting or navigating relationships. In the right column, write down balanced thoughts that you think would be most helpful to you when you come across a depressive thought.

Depressive thoughts about relationships	Balanced thoughts
I will be rejected.	
I can't stand being alone.	
They won't like me.	
They will judge me.	
They won't see me as interesting.	
They will think I am anxious.	
I will run out of energy to keep up the conversation.	
I am attracted to him/her/them, and I shouldn't be.	

If you have any additional depressive thoughts about starting or navigating relationships that aren't listed in the table above, put them in the left column of the table below, along with any balanced thoughts in the right-hand column.

Depressive thoughts	Balanced thoughts

These types of depressive thoughts are common in depression. Remember that they are beliefs and not facts and are not helpful in shifting your mood. These beliefs can make you avoid social interactions; if you never start an interaction, there will never be a chance to disprove these beliefs. Avoiding experiences that could be positive for you can lead to more depression and more feelings of loneliness.

4 Starting conversations

Knowing how to start and end a conversation is an important skill.

In a social situation, one way to join a conversation is to position yourself as part of the circle. If you are part of a conversation group and someone is standing behind you, open up the circle for them as well.

Timing and context are key factors in whether or not the conversation will start off smoothly.

Put a ✓ beside situations that are good times to start conversations with another person and an ✕ beside situations that are not as likely to be successful:

- ☐ The other person is focused on reading a book.
- ☐ The person smiles at you.
- ☐ You are standing in a long line with the person.
- ☐ The person is sleeping.
- ☐ The person seems really upset about something.
- ☐ The person asks if you like going to the movies.
- ☐ A friend introduces you to the person.
- ☐ The person is texting.
- ☐ The person is looking at the ground.
- ☐ The person is petting your dog.

Put a ✓ beside situations that are good times to join in a conversation with a group of people and an ✕ beside the ones that are not likely to be successful:

- ☐ People are talking about specific rules of basketball and famous basketball players.
- ☐ People are talking about a movie you have seen.
- ☐ People are standing close together, talking quickly, with no gaps in the conversation.
- ☐ People are talking about the weather.
- ☐ People are relatively far apart and not making much eye contact with each other.
- ☐ There are a lot of pauses in the conversation.
- ☐ People in the group say hi to you as you walk by.

Some people struggle with knowing what to say in a conversation. Asking a question, stating a fact or telling a story is often a good way to go. It's best if you talk about a topic that people have already been discussing, so it's really important to listen first.

The types of questions you start a conversation with can also affect your success.

Put a ✓ beside questions that are more likely to lead to a good conversation.

- ☐ How old is your dog?
- ☐ Do you know when the next bus comes?
- ☐ Do you know what you are going to do after you graduate?
- ☐ Did you see the baseball game last night?
- ☐ Have you thought of volunteering?
- ☐ What did you think of English class today?
- ☐ Did you know your shirt is dirty?

Now, you can try all of these skills together in an activity.

Put a ✓ beside situations where you are likely to be able to start a good conversation and then put an example of a conversation starter in the space provided.

Put an × beside the situations that are not likely to be successful. In the space provided, write down why you don't think starting/entering into a conversation would be a good idea in this context.

- ☐ Someone on the bus is reading a magazine that you like.

- ☐ Someone is arguing with the cashier at the store.

- ☐ Someone is waiting for the bus, wearing a t-shirt of your favourite band.

- ☐ Someone brought a guitar to a coffee shop.

- ☐ Someone asks for directions with a foreign accent.

- ☐ You see someone on the street that you kind of recognize from school.

Imagine your week ahead and think of questions you might ask to start a conversation with people in your life.

List some possible conversation topics below:

5 Home practice

Over the next week, try each of the following:

- Practice the social skills discussed today with other people.
- Try an alternative belief you have checked off to see if it helps your mood.
- Start a conversation using the strategies discussed.

Write down your personal goal over the next week based on the skills discussed today:

Multiplayer Communication and Relationships



Session 2

1 Review

Based on the material so far, name four basic social skills that can be used with other people:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Match the depressive thought with a potentially more helpful balanced thought:

Depressive thoughts about activities	Balanced thoughts
1. ☐ I will be rejected.	a. Some people will like me and some people won't; this is a fact for everyone.
2. ☐ I can't stand being alone.	b. Another person may judge me. Their judgments may have more to do with their own ideas about themselves rather than me.
3. ☐ They won't like me.	c. Sometimes having a conversation I really like gives me more energy. If I decide I need to end the conversation, I will do so politely.
4. ☐ They will judge me.	d. I may appear anxious in front of the other person; that is pretty common. The other person might be anxious meeting me too. The best way to overcome anxiety is to keep pushing through it.
5. ☐ They won't see me as interesting.	e. There are some things about me that are interesting. I can learn ways to introduce myself to people by speaking about these more interesting things. I can also show interest in the other person — typically people like to be asked questions about themselves.
6. ☐ They will think I am anxious.	f. I may be rejected, or I may not. The only way to know is to at least try to connect with others. If I am rejected, it may not be because of me. It may be more about the other person, or the timing might not be right. I will cope.
7. ☐ I will run out of energy to keep up the conversation.	g. Being romantically attracted to other people is normal and common — lots of people have a lot of different types of people they are attracted to. It is nothing to be ashamed of. But it is still important that I manage that attraction in a way that is going to be most helpful for me.
8. ☐ I am attracted to him/her/ them, and I shouldn't be.	h. Being alone is hard. Learning how to manage being alone will help me be more confident in relationships.

2 How to leave a conversation

Some people don't like starting a conversation out of fear they won't know how to end it without getting overwhelmed or making the other person feel bad.

How do you end a conversation?

- **If you are in a group of three or more**, just stepping out, saying you have to leave and smiling, are fine.
- **If it is just you and one other person**, you will need to say something to end the conversation. "It was nice talking to you" or "It was nice to meet you" and "I'm going to go get some food" or "I want to catch this person before they leave" are some ideas.

Do you or your therapist have other ideas about what to say to end a conversation?

3 Social skills: The expansion pack

Sometimes depression or sadness can lead people to behave in ways that may shut down interactions. Consider the following situation:

Jenna smiles very little, and she looks at the floor instead of at you. She usually sits slouched over, rather than looking interested and alert. She speaks slowly and softly, which makes it difficult to listen to her for long. She frequently plays with a paper clip or rubs her hand on her leg while you are talking to her. She often fails to show interest in people and gives the impression that she would rather be left alone.

All of this makes you feel as if you don't want to be around Jenna. You would rather be with someone who enjoys spending time with you.

Practicing communication skills can help our interactions with other people. Here is a list of skills that may help you in your conversations with others. Which do you think you could start working on?

You might not be able to practice everything, or you might not be comfortable with trying certain things yet. **Choose two or three communication skills from the list to focus on first.**

- ☐ Smile and have a relaxed facial expression that conveys warmth.
- ☐ Make eye contact.
- ☐ Join in conversations.
- ☐ Sit up straight in a chair or stand up straight.

- ☐ Comment on positive things about a situation.
- ☐ Gesture with your hands to express enthusiasm (e.g., describe things with your hands or wave)
- ☐ Ask questions and show interest in others.
- ☐ Respond to questions.
- ☐ Tell people about things you are looking forward to.
- ☐ Speak with a strong, confident voice.
- ☐ Try not to speak too quickly or too slowly.
- ☐ Try not to cry unless you are around close friends or family.
- ☐ Don't judge others.
- ☐ Pay attention to others.
- ☐ Other: _____

4 Engage: Hear people out

Communication involves someone sending and receiving information. The communication can be verbal or non-verbal (e.g., eye contact, tone of voice, posture).

There are three ways you can respond to someone who is giving you information:

1. Irrelevant response

Have a conversation with your therapist. Each person should choose their own topic to discuss— and stay on their topic. Responses must have nothing to do with what the other person is saying. You will each be speaking and listening intermittently as you would in a regular conversation.

What was that like as the speaker? As the listener?

2. Partial listening

Now have a conversation where you respond with only partially related answers — and try and steer the conversation to what you want to talk about.

What was this one like as the speaker? As the listener?

3. Engaging

Communication works best when there's engagement. Here are different examples for engaging responses that can be used in conversations:

- **Non-verbal cues** (e.g., eye contact, smiling, nodding)
- **Verbal cues** (e.g., "Mmm-hmm," "That's cool")
- **Restate** the person's message in your own words if you need to clarify what they are saying.
- Use **empathic statements** if someone is upset:
 - › "I can see why you would be upset."

- › “Lots of people would feel the way you do.”
- › “That sucks!”
- › “It makes sense that you feel confused!”

- **Hold off** responding:

- › Avoid talking about your own ideas until the other person sees you have understood their message or there is a break in the conversation.
- › Don’t show approval or disapproval.

Review the example below:

You are listening to your friend discuss struggles she is experiencing with her music teacher. Her struggle includes three messages. After each message, check the response that would be an example of engagement.

Message 1: “I keep messing up in music class. Mr. Smith keeps pointing out all the things I do wrong. I think I am going to fail.”

- ☐ “That’s ridiculous. You’re not going to fail.”
- ☐ “Maybe you should practice more.”
- ☐ “It’s stressful to have your mistakes pointed out.”

Message 2: “Yeah — I think it’s hopeless. He obviously really likes the way Jordan plays — but not me.”

- ☐ “It sounds like you don’t believe it’s worth trying in music class.”
- ☐ “You’ll feel better next week. Don’t worry.”
- ☐ “Let’s go get lunch.”

Message 3: “I try so hard, and he doesn’t seem to care. Do you know what that’s like?”

- ☐ “No, I don’t even like music.”
- ☐ “If you don’t like it, just drop out.”
- ☐ “I have felt unappreciated for my work before — it’s a horrible feeling.”

Try this with your therapist. One person makes three statements about him/her/themself. The statements should be about something that has meaning to them. The other person then makes an engaging response for each statement. Then switch.

Answer the following questions:

1. Check three examples of engaged listening:

- ☐ Repeat the speaker’s words exactly, using the same tone.
- ☐ Restate the speaker’s message in your own words.
- ☐ Indicate that you “get” at least a part of the other person’s experience, and then repeat back what they are saying in your own words.
- ☐ State whether you agree or disagree with their message.

**2. What are some communication mistakes that are often made by people who are listening?
Check all that apply.**

- ☐ Not giving the person speaking your full attention.
- ☐ Relating the conversation to something the speaker doesn't know about.
- ☐ Thinking about your replies instead of paying attention to the speaker.
- ☐ Making assumptions about the speaker's feelings even when the speaker hasn't made any specific statements about his or her feelings.

5 Home practice

This week, try:

- ending conversations politely
- using more skills to be friendlier in your conversations
- using engaging skills when you talk to people– notice how the other person responds.

Write down your personal goal over the next week based on the skills discussed today:

Multiplayer Communication and Relationships



Session 3

1 Review

Which conversation skills did you practice this past week?

- ☐ Smiling and having a relaxed facial expression
- ☐ Making eye contact
- ☐ Joining in conversations
- ☐ Sitting up straight in a chair or standing up straight
- ☐ Commenting on positive things about a situation
- ☐ Using your hands to express positive emotion
(e.g. talking with your hands, waving or describing things with your hands)
- ☐ Asking questions and showing interest in others
- ☐ Speaking in a loud, confident voice
- ☐ Trying not to speak too quickly or too slowly
- ☐ Talking about what you are looking forward to
- ☐ Avoiding crying unless you are around close friends or family
- ☐ Responding to questions
- ☐ Not judging others
- ☐ Paying attention to others.
- ☐ Other: _____

What are some ideas to keep in mind when engaging with others?

2 Responding without judgment

It is important to distinguish between an **engaging response** and a **judging response**.

Engaging responses restate the message from the person speaking and allow opportunities for you to clarify what they are saying. It encourages the person speaking to expand on their message and talk more.

Judging responses tend to increase emotions and shut down the conversation.

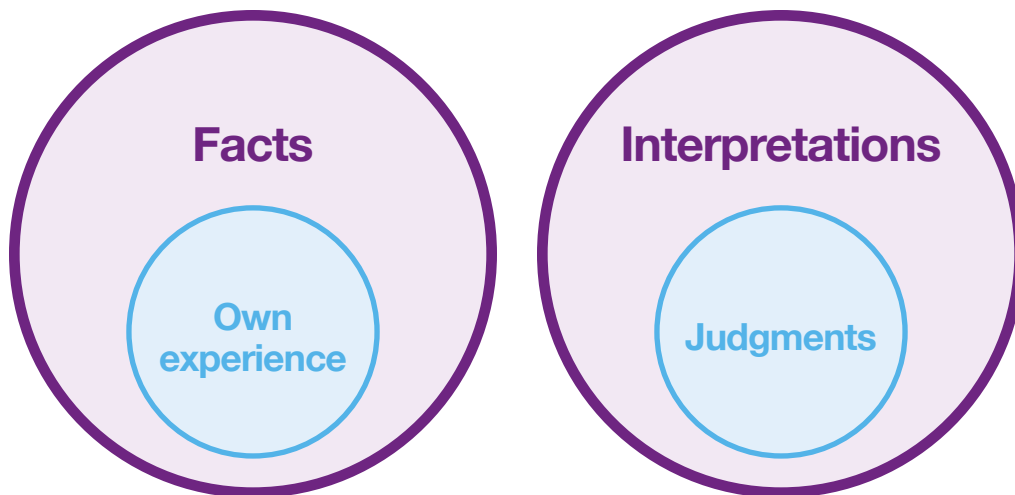
First let's understand the difference between a **fact**, an **interpretation** and a **judgment**.

Facts are things we observe with our five senses. If you are observing something that is real, most people will agree on what it is (e.g. "Sara is wearing a coat."). Also note that your own emotional experiences are considered facts. For example, statements like "I am angry" or "I am happy" are not typically up for debate.

Interpretation is what our mind does to understand facts or information we observe (e.g. "Sara must have been cold").

Judgment is when you interpret something as "good or bad," or as something that "should or shouldn't be" or that is "right or wrong" (e.g. "Sara should have worn a sweater.")

It can be useful to reframe judgments as "I like it/don't like it," "I think it is helpful/unhelpful," "I think it is safe/dangerous." This reframing can help to show that this is your own emotional experience or your own interpretation of the information.



Look at the following examples. Circle the letter corresponding to the engaging (non-judging) response.

Example 1: "I have been going to this school for three years, and I can't seem to make friends."

- A. "That sounds pretty frustrating, especially when you feel that it's gone on for a long time."
- B. "It's pretty hard to have fun without friends. You should really work on that. There are lots of things you could do to learn how to make friends."

Example 2: “I really wanted to go on a date with Lily, but it took two weeks before I got up enough courage to ask her out. I couldn’t believe it when she said yes! But then I was so anxious about it that I cancelled last minute.”

A. “What?! You should have just gone!”

B. “That sucks. I find dating makes me anxious too.”

Example 3: “I hate math. Mr. Pascal is really putting a lot of pressure on me with my homework.”

A. “Yeah — he is such a bad teacher.”

B. “Yeah — I find he puts a lot of pressure on students. I don’t like how he does that.”

Example 4: “I heard that Matt was talking to Bryn again after they broke up. I’m nervous that he is leading her on.”

A. “I can see why you’d be worried.”

B. “That’s so wrong. They shouldn’t be talking again.”

3 TMI? Letting people know what you think and feel

Telling other people about yourself (self-disclosure) is important for building relationships, even though at times it may feel safer to keep things to yourself. At the same time, revealing too much about yourself too quickly can make others overwhelmed, making it more difficult for them to bond with you.

Do you tend to under-share? Or over-share? Appropriate self-disclosure is an important communication tool.

Identify the following as true or false by circling the correct answer below each statement:

1. Self-disclosure means honestly telling how you feel about what is going on.

True or False

2. Appropriate self-disclosure means telling every intimate detail of your entire life.

True or False

3. Hiding your reactions to another person’s behaviour is a good way to improve your relationship with that person.

True or False

4. Self-disclosure involves taking a risk.

True or False

5. You should be self-disclosing at all times in all relationships.

True or False

6. Self-disclosure should be a two-way street — it is helpful if both people in a relationship participate in the process.

True or False

7. The purpose of self-disclosure is to try to make the other person improve his or her behaviour.

True or False

8. It's best to wait until several stressful situations have built up before you discuss them.

True or False

9. The most helpful way to express your feelings is to describe the other person's behaviour that you are responding to and state how you feel.

True or False

Indicate which of the following are helpful self-disclosures. Place a ✓ by the statements that can be helpful self-disclosures.

1. ☐ "Leave me alone."
2. ☐ "I'm hurt by what you did to me."
3. ☐ "You are too controlling."
4. ☐ "I get the sense you are angry. Are you?"
5. ☐ "My friends aren't the same anymore."
6. ☐ "I get upset when you yell at me."

4 Asking for what you need

There are four types of communication. A simple way to understand them is to think of whether or not they meet your needs and/or threaten the needs of other people in the short term.

Communication style	Own Needs	Others' Needs
Aggressive	Likely to be met	Threatened
Passive	Unlikely to be met	Not threatened
Passive-aggressive	Unlikely to be met	Threatened
Assertive	Likely to be met	Not threatened

Being assertive is the ideal; it helps ensure that everyone's needs are taken into consideration. In short, being assertive means either:

- Asking for what you want (i.e., your goal in the conversation)

or

- Saying "no" to a request

...without **judgments** or **threats**.

To increase the chances that your assertion will be successful, there are a few steps to consider. The acronym **GOALS** might help you remember.

Step 1: Get straight to the facts. Describe only what you see or hear, not what you are thinking yet.

Step 2: Use an “I” statement to describe your **Own experience** of the situation: either the emotion (“I feel...”) or the thought (“I think...”).

Step 3: Ask for what you want...OR... say “no.”

Step 4: If the other person does not follow through with your request, **Loop back to the first three steps calmly and firmly.** Don’t let yourself be distracted if they respond with their own judgments.

Step 5: Once they follow through with your ask or respect your “no,” **Show gratitude.**

If the other person follows through with what you want, be sure to smile and say “thank you”. Be sure that the other person feels appreciated.

Remember: Avoid **judgments** and **threats** as you do this. Confident body language is important as well:

- Have your back straight and shoulders down and back.
- Use appropriate eye contact.
- Use a confident and loud enough voice.

Rehearse (in your mind or by practicing with a friend) ahead of time — this may make it more effective.

5 Home practice

This week, try to practice:

- engaging without judgments
- self-disclosure statements
- assertive communication (GOALS).

Write down your personal goal over the next week based on the skills discussed today:

Multiplayer Communication and Relationships



Session 4

1 Review

Which skills did you practice last week?

- ☐ Engaging without judgments
- ☐ Self-disclosure statements
- ☐ Assertive communication.

Which of the following are judging statements and which are non-judging?

Statement	Judging	Non-judging
That movie was the worst.	☐	☐
I don't like country music.	☐	☐
Lisa is not acting the way I expected her to.	☐	☐
I think it will be helpful for me to attend therapy sessions.	☐	☐
Peter shouldn't be judging people so much.	☐	☐

What are the GOALS steps in assertive communication?

1. Get straight to the _____.
2. Use an "I" statement to describe your _____ of the situation: either the emotion ("I feel...") or the thought ("I think...").
3. _____ for what you want OR say _____ to a request without judgments or threats.
4. If the other person does not follow through with your request, _____ back to the first three steps calmly and firmly.
5. Once they follow through with your ask or respect your "no," _____.

2 Tricky interpersonal situations

Remember the skills we have learned in this section so far:

- social skills
- alternative thinking
- how to start a conversation
- how to end a conversation
- engaging
- non-judging statements
- self-disclosure
- assertive communication

Consider the following situations. How can each person use the skills listed above to address the dilemma?

- Jenna is attracted to Russell. They attend math class together. She is not sure how to approach him to ask him out. What can she do?
- Yannick and Sara have been dating for two months. Yannick wants to take the relationship to the next level, physically, with Sara. Sara is not so sure. What can Sara do?
- Petra is transgender. Their classmates, Tim, Kwan and Alex, were eating lunch beside Petra in the cafeteria. Tim made a transphobic comment, at which Kwan laughed. What can Alex do? What can Petra do?
- Yin's mother is struggling with depression, and this really affects Yin's mood. Her mother refuses to see someone for help. What can Yin do?
- Vivian has recently identified that she is attracted to girls more than guys. She wants to be able to tell her friends and family, but is not sure what to say and when to say it. What can she do?
- Stephen was on Instagram when he noticed that his friend posted a picture of him that he did not want other people to see. How can he manage this?
- You recently held a small party with your closest friends. Trish, who is sometimes included with your circle of friends, noticed the pictures on Instagram. She replies with a comment on one of the pictures that she is upset she was not invited. How can you respond?
- Paul is an introvert who used to want to stay at home and read or do homework on weekends rather than go out. But over time, he has found that he gets lonely being alone so much. He decides he wants to start doing more things on the weekend, but is not sure who to ask or what to do. What can he do?

3 Wrapping up

Look at the list of skills we have discussed in this module. Mark a '✓' in each column to rate the extent to which you have used them in your life.

Skills	Skill Use				
	Haven't thought about using it	Thought about using it, but did not use	Used it, but not helpful	Used it, and it was somewhat helpful	Used it, and it was really helpful
Using social skills					
Using "balanced thoughts" about communication and relationships to get around depressive thoughts					
Using skills to end conversations					
Engaged listening					
Responding without judgment					
Using self-disclosure					
Using assertive communication					