

CARIBOU+ CBT Group Manual for Youth

A Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy
Intervention for Adolescents
with Depression or Anxiety

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Power Up Behavioural Activation and Exposure



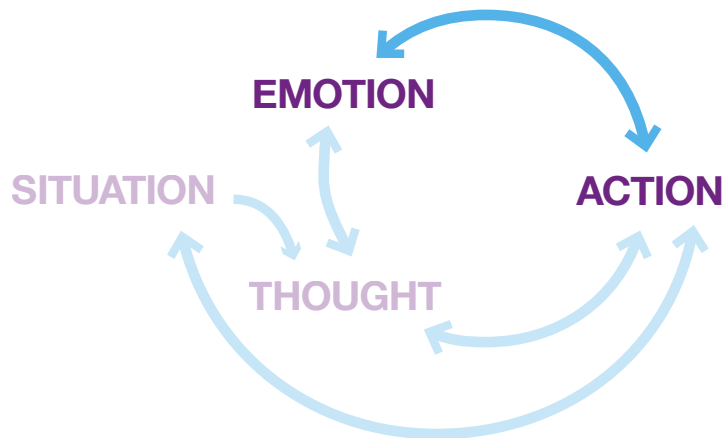
Session 1

Naming and Rating Emotions

1 Mood Cycle

The concept behind Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is that your emotions are affected by the situation you are in, as well as your thoughts (cognitions) and actions (behaviour). For example, working on a challenging assignment (**SITUATION**) might lead to the **THOUGHT**, “I can’t do this”. This thought can lead to frustration (**EMOTION**). This frustration can lead to looking for something else to do, like checking social media on your phone (**ACTION**), where you see a picture of your friends having a good time (new situation). Then the chain continues.

Later on, it will also be explained how this chain of events can go in the reverse direction. In this module, for example, we will explore **how our actions can affect our emotions** in ways that we might find helpful. 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

2 Noticing and Naming Your Emotions

Naming your emotions is an important first step in being able to change your emotion. Some people find it hard, while others find it easy. Each emotion can be described as a combination of body sensations, thought patterns, changes in energy and urges to act in specific ways.

See the example below that describes what people often experience in **anxiety**. Some people call this the “fight or flight” response.

Thoughts

Describe characteristics of thoughts that go with this emotion.



Sensations

Draw the body sensations that go with this emotion.

- Dizzy
- Headache
- Jaw clenched
- Throat tight
- Muscles tight
- Breathing fast
- Heart beating fast
- Sweating
- Stomach upset
- Palms sweat
- Jittery
- Pacing



Energy

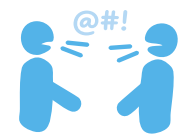
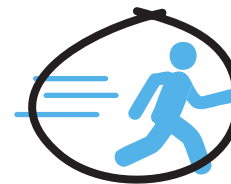
Does energy go up or down with this emotion?

Often energy goes high – sometimes I shut down

Actions

Does the emotion make you want to approach, run away from, confront, or isolate from other people?

I feel like avoiding and running away from others



Activity: With a partner, use the remaining diagrams to map out your experience with one of the following emotions:

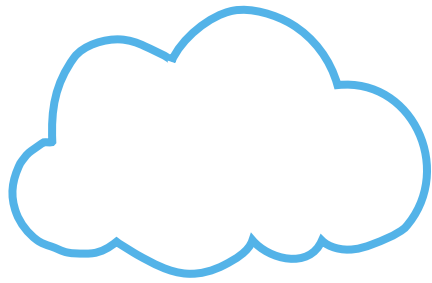
- Sadness
- Anger
- Happiness

If these are easy for you, try to map out more complex emotions like:

- Pride, boredom, jealousy, envy, guilt, shame, emptiness and love.

Thoughts

Describe thought patterns that go with this emotion.



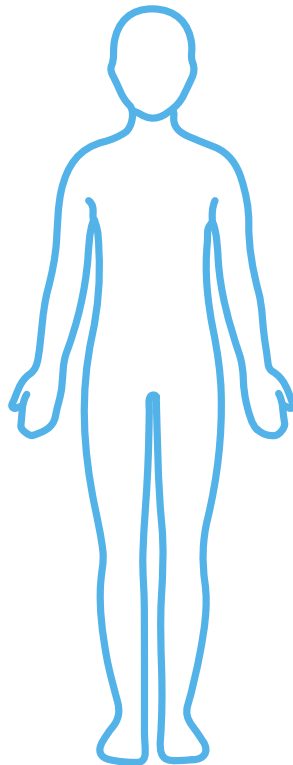
Energy

Does energy go up or down with this emotion?



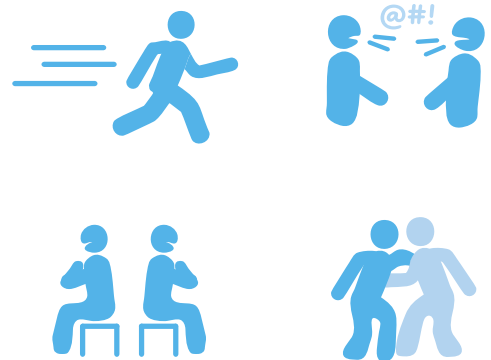
Sensations

Draw the body sensations that go with this emotion.



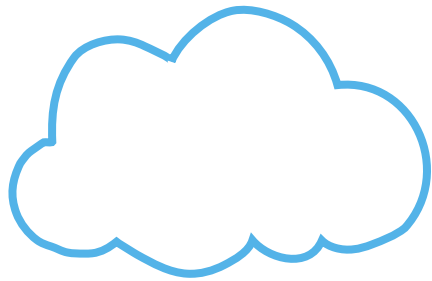
Actions

Does the emotion make you want to approach, run away from, confront, or isolate from other people?



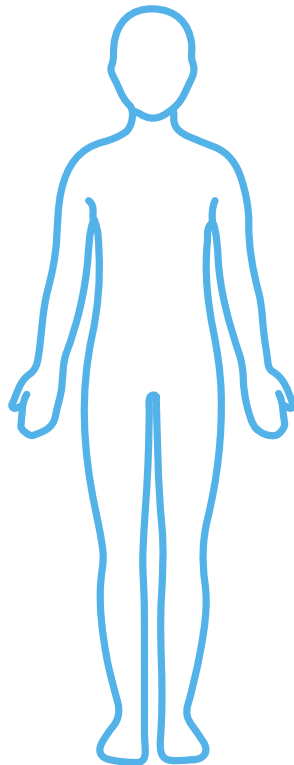
Thoughts

Describe thought patterns that go with this emotion.



Sensations

Draw the body sensations that go with this emotion.



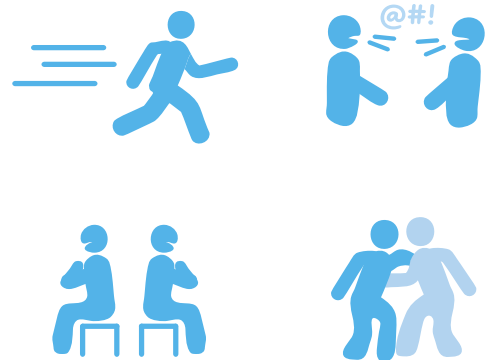
Energy

Does energy go up or down with this emotion?



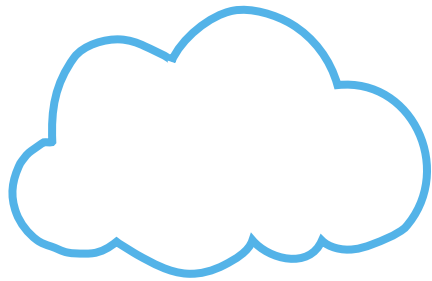
Actions

Does the emotion make you want to approach, run away from, confront, or isolate from other people?



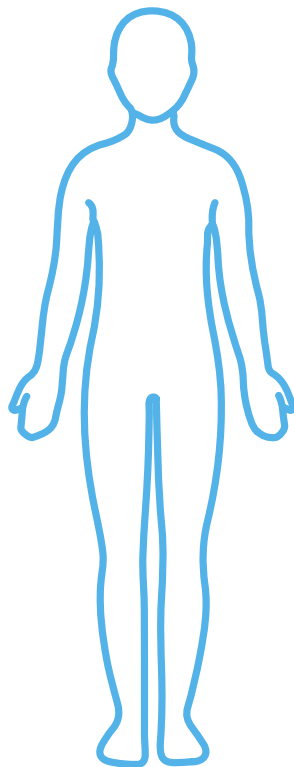
Thoughts

Describe thought patterns that go with this emotion.



Sensations

Draw the body sensations that go with this emotion.



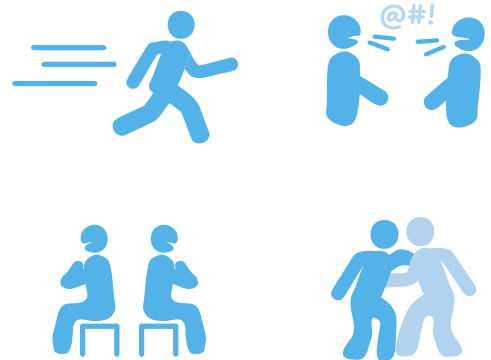
Energy

Does energy go up or down with this emotion?



Actions

Does the emotion make you want to approach, run away from, confront, or isolate from other people?

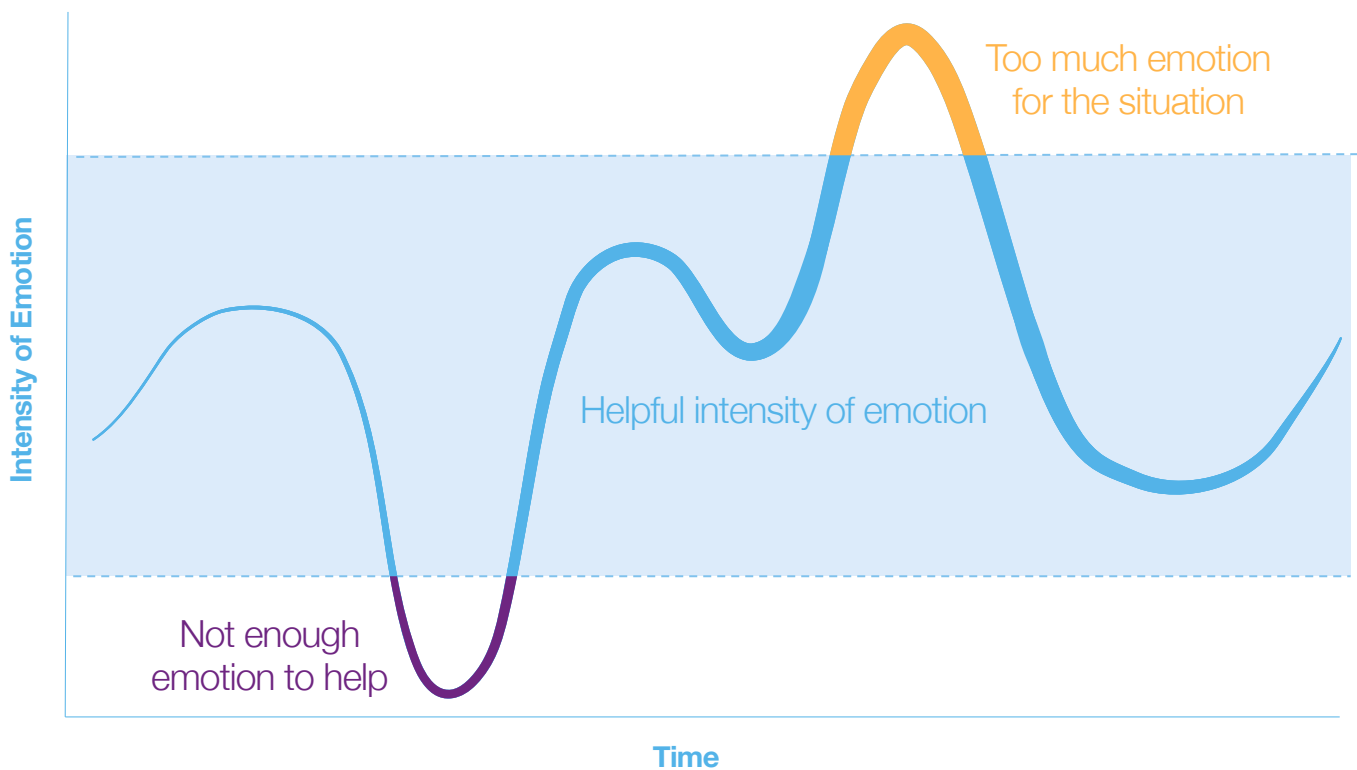


3 Rating the Intensity of Your Emotions

Finding a helpful intensity of emotion

Emotions, even the uncomfortable ones, can be helpful for us. For example, if you had a test coming up at school and you didn't have any anxiety about it, you probably wouldn't study and would be unlikely to get the grade you were hoping for. But if you have too much anxiety, you might find it really hard to concentrate when studying. There is a helpful amount of anxiety to have in this situation. Sadness can also be helpful. It has a role in being able to empathize with others, to reflect on what is important to us, or to pull back in problem situations where we need to think through solutions. But too much sadness can lead to over-isolating or avoiding problems all together.

Look at the diagram below to see how the intensity of our emotions is important.



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 low intensity in sadness (i.e. only slightly sad), you might **use a different strategy** than if you are at a high intensity (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 too intense.

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

Rating sadness and anxiety

A “zero” will represent the least amount of sadness you have ever felt. At “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/greatest amount of sadness you have ever felt.

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

Similarly, can you think of a time when your anxiety was at “zero” (i.e. no anxiety)?

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

Rating happiness

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

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

A “five” represents the most/greatest amount of happiness you have ever felt. At “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 “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.

4 Home Practice

This week, 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 _____							

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

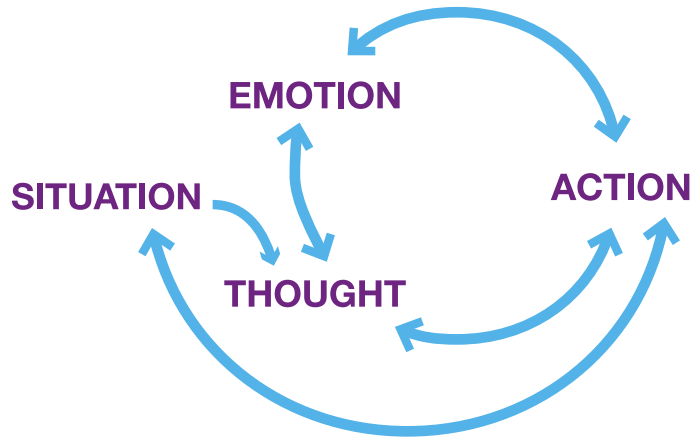
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Session 2

Finding Balance in Activities

1 Review



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

Ricky has a math test tomorrow. He tried studying in his room, but didn't understand the new material. He said to himself, "What if I fail?" and then felt discouraged and panicky. He went to the basement to play video games instead. His brother was there and noticed that Ricky seemed tense. His brother asked "what's wrong?" and Ricky didn't answer.

How did it go tracking your emotions? What are the downsides of tracking your emotions? 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 emotions 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 Emotion Spirals

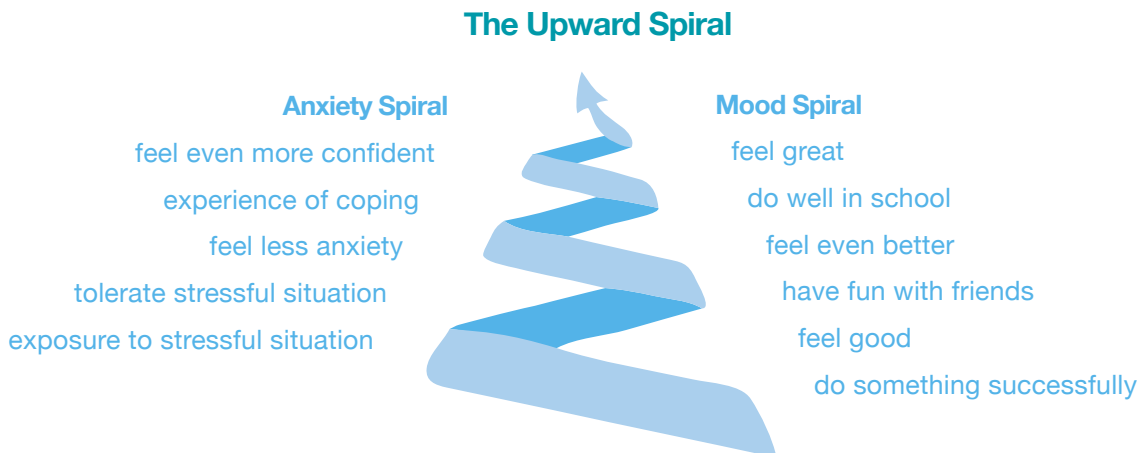
This module will help you learn skills to change your emotions by making changes in your actions.

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. A similar spiral can happen with anxiety. When we feel anxious, we are more likely to avoid situations. The avoidance makes us anxious about the next time a stressful situation arises, in part, because we never gave ourselves the chance to learn how to manage the stress.



Do you recognize this downward spiral in yourself?

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. Similarly, when we feel confident, we are more likely to learn how to manage stressful situations. This can lead to improvement in anxiety. Read this diagram **from bottom to top**.

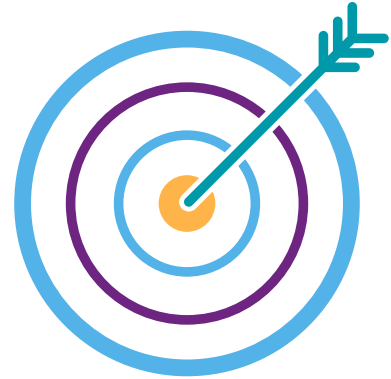


What are some things that cause an upward spiral for you?

3 Increasing Activities to Improve Your Mood and Decrease Anxiety

To promote upward spirals in 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., serving your community, taking part in traditions, caring for the environment
 (Note: We will explain and expand on "Personal Values" in the next session)



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 (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 (p. 19). List activities you are currently doing in the appropriate petal.

Take a look at the “Finding Balance in Your Activities — Future” worksheet (p. 20). List at least 10 new activities you think might help improve your mood or anxiety 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 (p. 21).

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

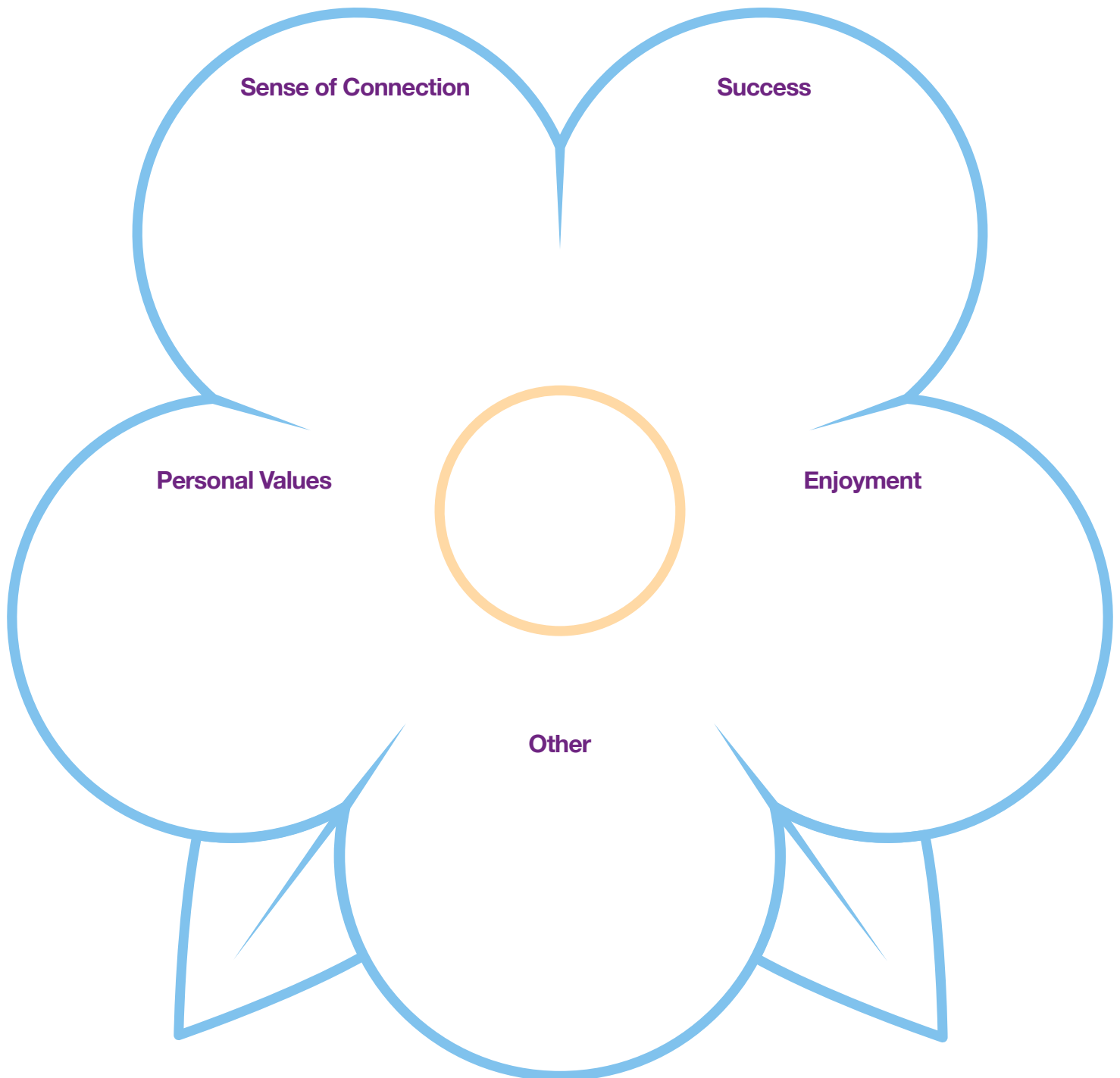
Which would be a medium level of difficulty to start doing?

Which would be the hardest to start doing?

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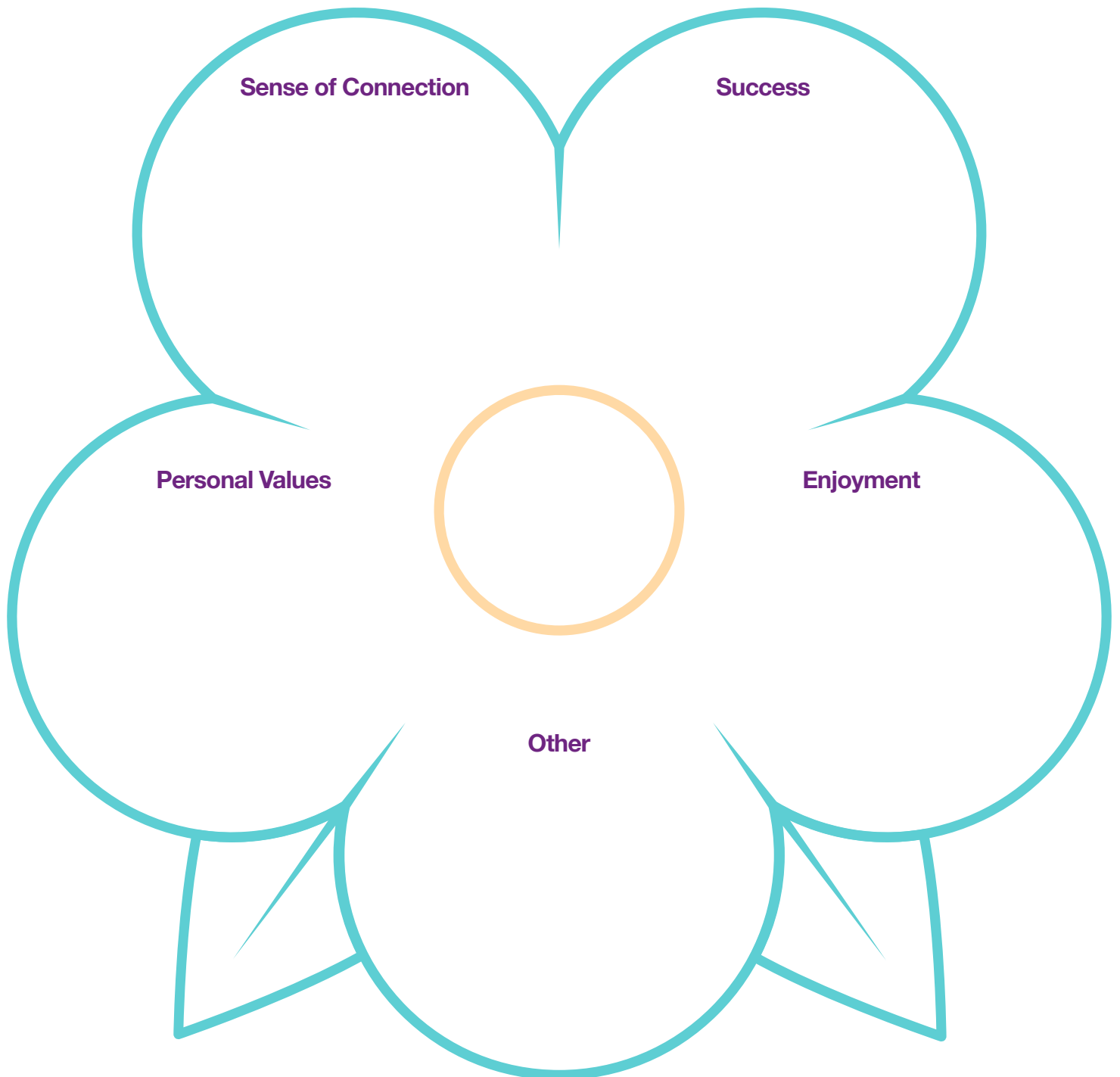
Finding Balance in Your Activities – Now



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Finding Balance in Your Activities – Future



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 a 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.

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 emotions 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 mood or anxiety.

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

Try to increase the activities that meet the four targets 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:

Power Up Behavioural Activation and Exposure



Session 3

Long-Term Goals and Facing Fears

1 Review

Did you notice a time this past week when you started to go into a downward spiral (with mood or anxiety)?

Were you able to do something to move yourself to an upward spiral?

Think about the four targets we discussed last week:

- Sense of Connection
- Success
- Enjoyment
- Personal Values

Were you able to balance these four targets this past week?

2 Personal Values in Action

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
- Being a learner
- 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



Why bother with identifying values?

Doing activities that fit with our values can improve our mood and anxiety in the short-term and can prevent us from going into downward spirals. In the long term, one of the main things that contributes to low mood and high anxiety is not living according to our values. It often leaves us feeling uncomfortable and stuck. The first step is to think about what your values actually are! Not your parents’ or your friends’ values, but yours. What are some of the values you want to live by?

Activity:

Think about values you want to live by and then breakout into smaller groups and share with each other. Did anything surprise you? What are some activities you can try that are aligned with values? Come back and share with the larger group.

3

Long-Term Goals and “Breaking it Down”

Now that you identified some of your values, choose a value you would like to spend more time on in the long term.

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.

4 Exposure

Avoidance

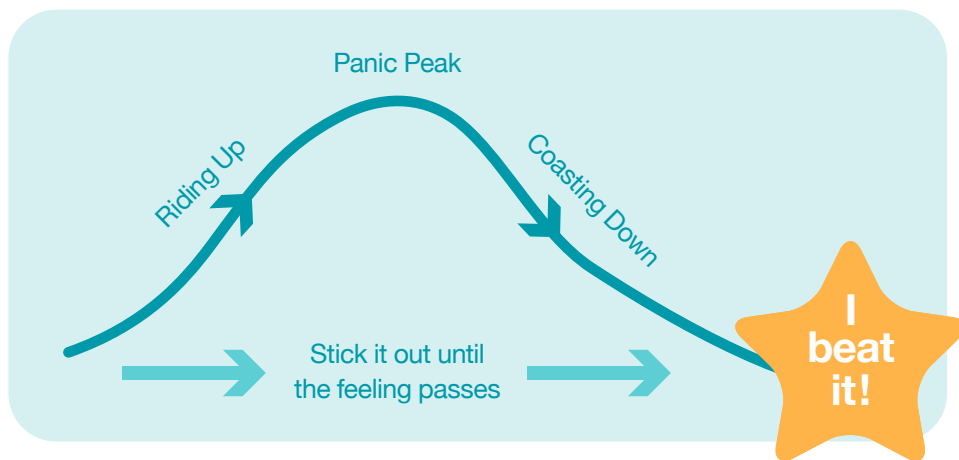
When something feels hard or scary, it makes sense that we would want to avoid it. Why? Because avoiding scary things makes us less anxious in the short term! But in the long term, avoidance actually maintains our anxiety because:

- Our brain continues to believe the feared situation is too overwhelming and we cannot handle it.
- Our brain does not get a chance to learn that we can get through the feared situation.
- We do not get a chance to practise skills to cope with anxiety.

The opposite of avoidance is exposure! In other words, facing our fears in a slow and planned way can help us move from a downward spiral of anxiety to an upward spiral of confidence.

Ride the Wave

What if we resist that urge to escape the feared situation and sit in the situation with the anxiety? This is what is meant by “exposure”. It is hard to sit with it, but our anxiety starts to decrease naturally over time — our brains can’t stay at a 5/5 anxiety forever. It eventually passes and our brain learns to be more confident the next time we’re in the situation. It’s not easy (even if it seems simple on the surface) and will take some practice.



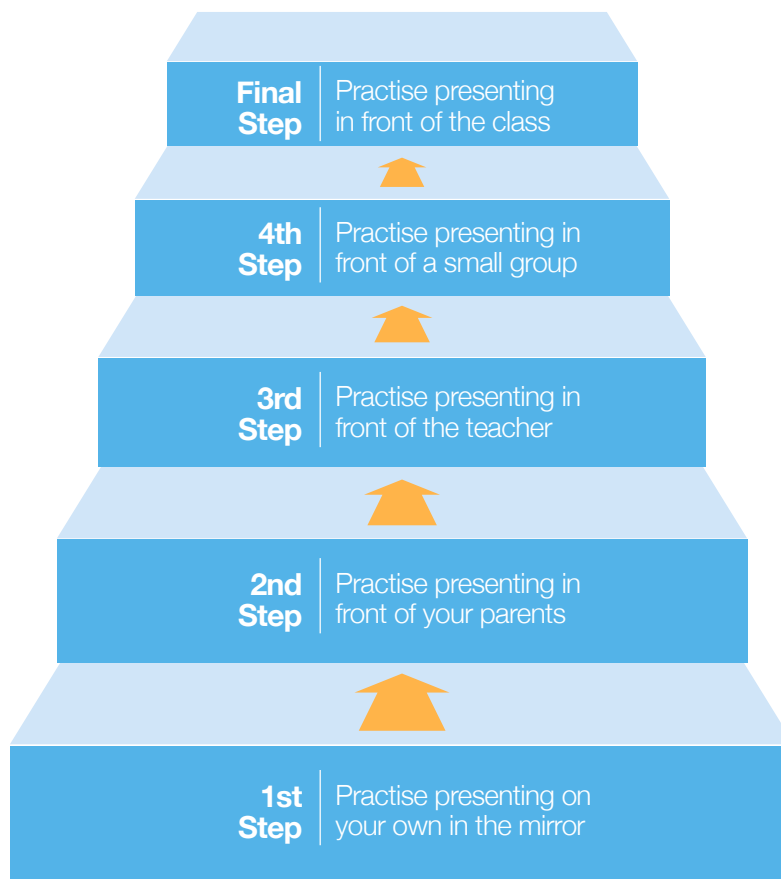
A Stepwise Approach to Exposure

If you were scared of heights, starting exposure by going to the top a tall building and looking down probably wouldn't help your anxiety! Why? Because doing the scariest thing first is overwhelming. It is more effective to plan small steps towards slowly facing your fears.

- Start by thinking of a situation that causes you 5/5 anxiety.
- Then think of situations that are similar, but cause less anxiety.
- Next, rank the situations in order of how much anxiety they cause, like an “anxiety staircase” (see image below).
- Then, intentionally put yourself in the situation that causes you the least fear (the 1st step) and allow the anxiety to come and go by riding the wave.
- Once you've learned how to feel more confident at the first step, move up the staircase to the next most anxiety-provoking situation and repeat.

Example:

Giving a presentation gives Saadia 5/5 anxiety and her goal is to be able to give a presentation in front of the class. Her anxiety staircase might look like this diagram (read it from bottom to top):



Saadia starts with the 1st step and notices the anxiety rise to 4/5 and fall. She continues to do the 1st step over several days. When peak anxiety is a 2/5 and she feels more confident at the 1st step, she moves on to the 2nd step and challenges herself a little bit more. Taking it step by step, she can eventually get to her goal without being completely overwhelmed. At any given step, it may take days or weeks before she's ready to move to the next one. If she's overwhelmed with moving up a step, she can pull back a bit to an exposure activity that's still somewhat challenging, but doable. Eventually, she is able to present in front of her class with only 2/5 anxiety.

Here are some strategies to help with riding the wave of anxiety:

- **Self-Validation.** Without judgment, acknowledge that it makes sense to feel some anxiety in the feared situation.
- **Imagine a wave.** Instead of fighting the feelings or worries, let them come and go. Remind yourself that the intensity of anxiety will eventually pass.
- **Use relaxation exercises.** Breathe deeply, listen to soothing music, visualize a peaceful place.
- **Distract yourself from the urge to escape.** Distraction is different from complete avoidance: you are still physically present with the feared situation, but your attention is drawn elsewhere to help tolerate it. Some examples include:
 - › invite a friend to have a conversation about something distracting
 - › count backwards from 100
 - › name as many places as you can that start with the letter “A”.

5 Home Practice

This week either:

1. Try out the first steps towards a long-term goal that fits with your values, or
2. Try out the first steps of an “anxiety staircase” as part of an exposure plan that fits for you.

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

Power Up Behavioural Activation and Exposure



Session 4

Breaking Down Barriers

1 Review

Were you able to work towards your long-term goal this week? How did it go?

Were you able to face any fears this week? How did it go?

2 What Gets in the Way?

Sometimes, our beliefs can make it hard to change our activities. Which of the following thoughts can get in the way of doing exposure exercises or activities you enjoy? What are some “balanced thoughts” that might be helpful?

Activity: With a partner, choose one or two of the negative thoughts and write down more balanced thoughts for the situation. Here are some questions that can help you come up with more balanced ways of thinking:

- What is a way to think with more self-compassion?
- What would you say to a friend?
- What’s a more realistic way of thinking?
- What’s a more helpful way of thinking?

Negative thoughts	Balanced thoughts
1. Doing activities or exposure won’t help my emotions.	
2. People won’t believe I am struggling 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 or anxiety.	
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 to do exposure or activities.	
8. Exposure will be too overwhelming for me.	

The examples of depressive and anxious thoughts on the left side of the chart above can be common, but are unlikely to be helpful. Remember that these depressive and anxious 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 and anxious beliefs, and this can lead to more difficulties.

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

Negative thoughts	Balanced thoughts

3 Getting Unstuck: How to motivate yourself to change routines

Changing up your routine to be more active or face your fears 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" or challenge my anxiety through exposure	4. (Do this one last)	2. (Do this one second)

Does this help motivate you to change up your routine?

4 Wrapping Up

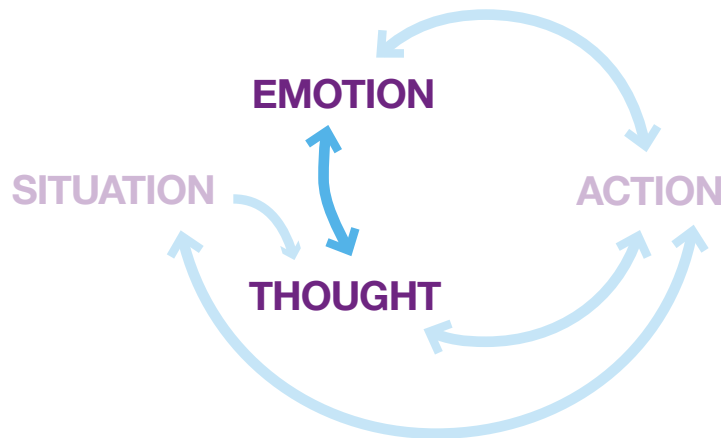
Look at the list of skills we have discussed in this module. Put a '✓' in each column to rate the extent to which you have used the skills in your life.

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					
Naming and rating the intensity of moods					
Noticing downward spirals					
Moving towards an upward spiral					
Targeting connection, success, enjoyment and values in activities					
Working towards long-term goals and "breaking it down"					
Exposure Activities					
Using "balanced thoughts" about activities to get around negative thoughts					
Pros and Cons of changing routines					



1 Thoughts and Emotions

Our situation, thoughts, emotions and actions are all interconnected. We have some control over what thoughts we have and pay attention to. The thoughts we control can change the emotions we experience.



Our emotions can affect our beliefs and our beliefs can affect our emotions .

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.

From time to time, you will have thoughts 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 an internal experience. For example, “I am having racing thoughts right now” or “I am feeling anxious”.

Beliefs involve some personal interpretation of the facts. For example, “I am anxious and that must mean I am in danger”.

According to these definitions, which of the following can be facts and which are beliefs?

Statement	Fact	Belief
"I can hear my dog barking"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"My dog is anxious"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"I feel angry"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"You are angry"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"I am a safe driver"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"I passed my driver's test and don't have any traffic tickets"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"These French fries taste salty"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"French fries taste good"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"Joey doesn't like me"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"Joey spoke to me loudly"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"I feel lonely"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"Nobody cares about me"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"Group is fun"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"I like coming to group"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3 Thought Traps

There are common patterns in how anxiety and depression can trap our thinking, making it more likely that anxiety or 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 to pay attention only to the negative things that have happened in the past. When people struggle with anxiety, they tend to predict that only negative things will happen in the future.
- **Polarized thinking:** Someone may only see things as "all good" or "all bad" — they may have a difficult time seeing things as 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. This is very common for people who struggle with anxiety.
- **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; or feeling panicked about a situation does not necessarily mean you are in immediate danger.

4 Discussion Activity

For this activity, there is the option to break out into smaller groups (or pairs) or stay together as a large group. Share with your group (or partner) a time in the past week where you may have been caught in a thought trap. Can you name which type of thought trap it was?

With your group (or partner), talk about some options to think differently:

- What is a way to think with more self-compassion?
- What would you say to a friend who was having this thought?
- Is there a way to think about the situation more accurately?
- What’s a more helpful way of thinking?

5 Home Practice

Notice your thought patterns over the next week and see if you notice any times you are caught in a thought trap. Try naming the specific type of thought trap(s) you notice. Try some strategies used in the breakout session to think differently and see if that changes your mood.

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

Reboot Cognitive Restructuring



Session 2

Thinking it Through

1 Review

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

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

Which thought trap goes with which scenario?

Thought traps	Scenarios
1. Negative filter <input type="checkbox"/>	a. "Tom and Dina were walking down the hall together — they must be dating."
2. Polarized thinking <input type="checkbox"/>	b. "My teacher was acting differently today — I think it was because of the question I asked earlier."
3. Overgeneralization <input type="checkbox"/>	c. "I am angry with my dad — it means that he did something to intentionally hurt me."
4. Jumping to conclusions <input type="checkbox"/>	d. "The forecast calls for scattered showers with breaks of sun — the whole day is ruined."
5. Catastrophizing <input type="checkbox"/>	e. "Jenna is horrible — she gave me the worst look today."
6. Personalization <input type="checkbox"/>	f. "I was late for class today — my teacher will surely call my parents to have me grounded."
7. Emotional reasoning <input type="checkbox"/>	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?

2 Balanced Thoughts

It is really important to be able to create balanced thoughts in order to counteract thought traps. See the “Balancing Your Thoughts” worksheet. 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 4: Within your “train of thoughts”, identify the one thought that leads to your strongest emotion. We will call this your “reflex thought”.

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?

In breakout groups (or pairs), try the above 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:

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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.

3 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 in the last section. Look through the examples below for each option to help understand how they might work.

Option A. Brainstorm and assess

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

Once you brainstorm other possible ways to think about the situation (i.e. interpretations), see if you can identify which is the most realistic. To help with identifying the most realistic perspective, you can list “evidence for” and “evidence against” for the “reflex thought” as well as up to three other interpretations.

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 B. “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 more likely be 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 C. 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 to 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 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.

Remember you have many options when faced with thought traps: (1) Examine the thought with “evidence for” and “evidence against”, (2) Create a balanced thought, (3) Brainstorm alternative ways of thinking, (4) “Act-as-if” a more helpful thought were true, and (5) Play detective. Which is your favourite strategy so far?

4 Practising Changing Your Thoughts

In break out groups (or pairs), choose some of the common situations below and use the “Changing Your Thoughts” worksheet (p. 49) to try out 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 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

Over the next week, try each of the following:

- Examining “evidence for” and “evidence against” a reflex thought
- Creating a balanced thought
- Brainstorming
- Using “act-as-if” thoughts
- Playing detective
- Examining the thought

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.

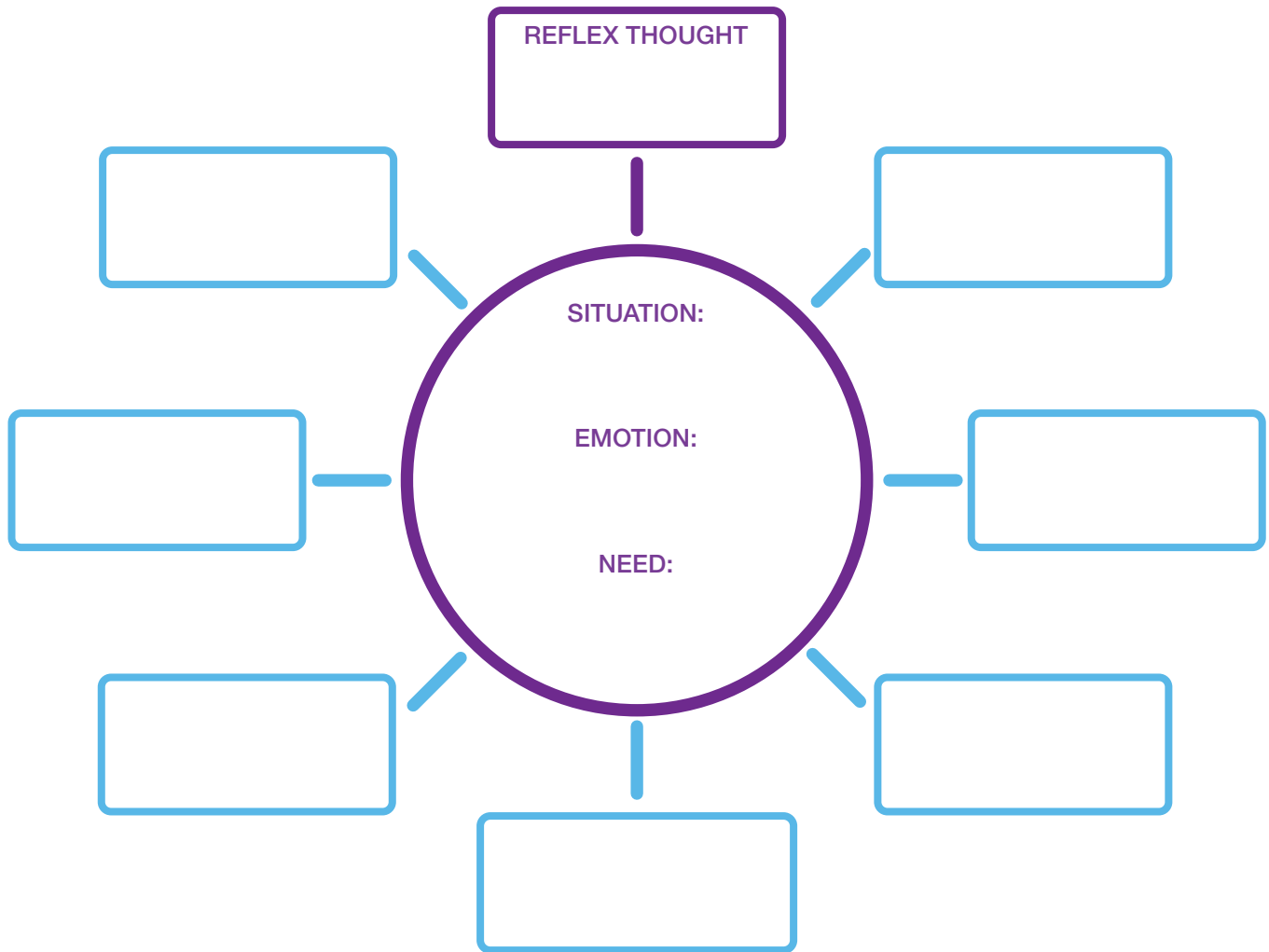


Take action

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)	BELIEF TWO	BELIEF THREE	BELIEF FOUR
EVIDENCE FOR	EVIDENCE FOR	EVIDENCE FOR	EVIDENCE FOR
AGAINST	AGAINST	AGAINST	AGAINST

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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.

Reboot Cognitive Restructuring



Session 3

Core Beliefs and Taking in the Positive

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
- Creating lists of “evidence for” and “evidence against” the 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.”

2 Core Beliefs

There are common core beliefs in anxiety and/or 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 anxiety and/or 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, as a group, 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.

Another strategy to create an alternative balanced thought is to ask yourself:

- What is a way to think with more self-compassion?
- What would you say to a friend who was having this thought?
- Is there a way to think about the situation more accurately?
- What’s a more helpful way of thinking?

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.	

The following core beliefs often are associated with anxiety:

Anxiety core beliefs	Alternative balanced thoughts
The world is dangerous.	
I will lose control.	
Uncertainty is unbearable.	
I can't trust myself.	

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.

It is particularly challenging to allow the positive feedback to be received when depressive or anxiety-based core beliefs are working to fight against the feedback. Hearing and allowing yourself to believe positive feedback is a skill and takes practice.

In group, you can practise giving and receiving positive feedback in an exercise guided by the group facilitators.

Write down the positive comments people in this group have said about you:

4 Home Practice

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.
- Practise “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

Letting Go of Judgments and Targeting Anxious Thoughts

1 Review

Match the depressive core belief to the more balanced thought:

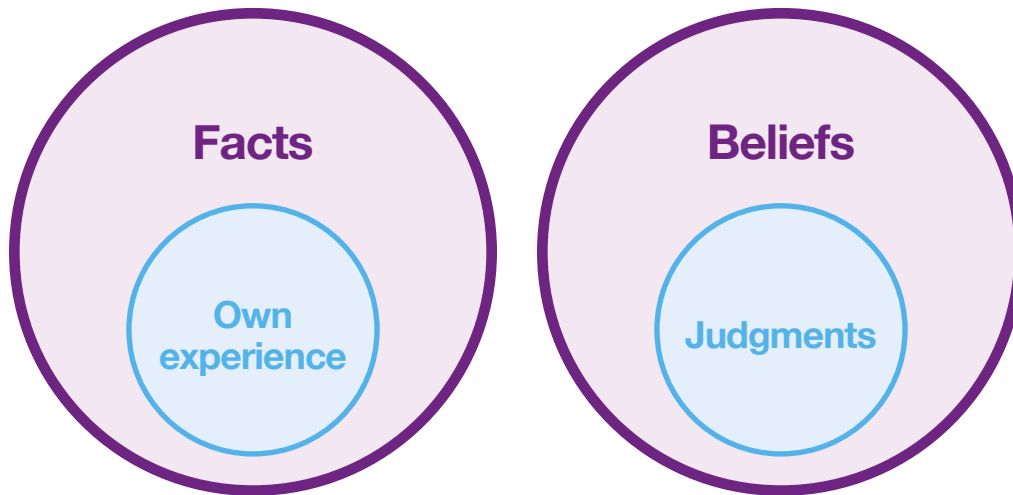
Anxiety core beliefs	Alternative balanced thoughts
1. The world is a dangerous place <input type="checkbox"/>	a. As long as I have at least partial control of the situation, I can be okay.
2. I will lose control <input type="checkbox"/>	b. Not knowing what comes next can be scary, but I can cope with most things that come my way. If I don't cope, I can learn from the experience.
3. Uncertainty is unbearable <input type="checkbox"/>	c. I can learn when to trust my judgment and when I might need to reassess it.
4. I can't trust myself <input type="checkbox"/>	d. Some situations are safer than others.

Depressive core beliefs	Alternative balanced thoughts
1. I am unlikeable <input type="checkbox"/>	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 <input type="checkbox"/>	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 <input type="checkbox"/>	c. I am skilled at some things and not skilled at others. I can also learn and practise new things so that I become more skilled.
4. The future is hopeless <input type="checkbox"/>	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 <input type="checkbox"/>	e. I can set my own standard for what is meaningful in my life.
6. People will leave me <input type="checkbox"/>	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 <input type="checkbox"/>	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 — 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 judgment 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 Judgment**
- b. “I am angry with Meshal.” **Fact or Judgment**

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 Judgment**
- b. “I am so stupid — I can’t seem to get it right.” **Fact or Judgment**

The judgments that we make treat our beliefs as though they are facts. This can also lead to stronger emotions than is helpful for the situation.

Instead of using judgments, 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 in breakout groups or pairs: 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. **Fact or Judgment**

I am bored in the CBT group. **Fact or Judgment**

I don’t think it is safe to meet people on the internet. **Fact or Judgment**

You shouldn’t judge. **Fact or Judgment**

I should be happier than I am. **Fact or Judgment**

I don’t like the way my teacher talks to me. **Fact or Judgment**

It’s not right that I have another assignment to do this week. **Fact or Judgment**

Those shoes are awesome. **Fact or Judgment**

I find that some CBT skills are helpful for me, while others are not. **Fact or Judgment**

3 Targeting Anxious Thoughts

Some people find the following strategies helpful when managing anxiety. Try some out to see if they are a fit for you.

- **Reassess the danger:** People struggling with anxiety often assess a situation to be much more dangerous than it is. They either predict that something dangerous will happen that is much more unlikely than is realistic, or they assess that any potential danger in a situation will be more severe than is realistic. Ask yourself:



- › How likely is it that I will be faced with the dangerous situation I am predicting?
- › If it does happen, how severe would it really be?

Use the skills discussed in Session 2 of this module to help work through these questions.

Example:

Nico was hoping to ask a group of 4 friends he knows from school to hang out after class to play board games. He was really nervous about this, anticipating that he would stutter, his friends would laugh at him, and say “no way”. He also predicted that his friends would stop talking to him all together and think “Nico’s too needy”.

He then asked himself: “How likely is it going to happen the way I am imagining it?” He reflected that when he has asked his friends to play cards during lunch, they joined in. He also asked himself “If it does happen, how severe would it really be?” He remembered that one of his friends is really friendly and often up to hanging out, so if some were to say “no”, it would be unlikely that all four would be uninterested. Remembering these things helped reduce his anxiety.

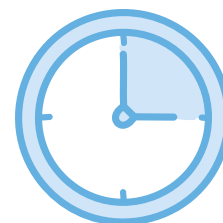
- **Increase your confidence in your ability to cope:** If you get the “what ifs?” and start to worry about a future stressful situation, imagine yourself being in that scenario and coping with it really well. Make a detailed plan for how you will cope. Change the movie in your mind from one where you fall apart to one where you are mastering the situation.



Example:

Nico imagined himself stuttering when asking his friends to join him for board games after class (the “what if” scenario). He then imagined himself saying to his friends “let me start again, I am just a bit nervous”, and imagined himself taking a breath and following through with his request (coping well). He imagined all his friends saying “no way” (“what if” scenario); then imagined himself thinking “well, I guess they would rather be doing other things” and signing up for the board game club at school where he might meet people with similar interests (coping well). He notices his anxiety go down as he practises this skill.

- **Set aside “worry time”:** Set a specific time (e.g. 7 p.m.) 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 during my ‘worry time.’”



4 Wrapping Up

Look at the list of skills that we have discussed in this module. Put a '✓' 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 thought traps					
Listing evidence for and evidence against					
Creating own balanced thought					
Brainstorming alternative interpretations					
Using "act-as-if"					
Playing detective (getting more information)					
Challenging depressive core belief					
Taking in positive feedback from others					
Letting go of judgments					
Targeting anxious thoughts					

Level Up Problem Solving

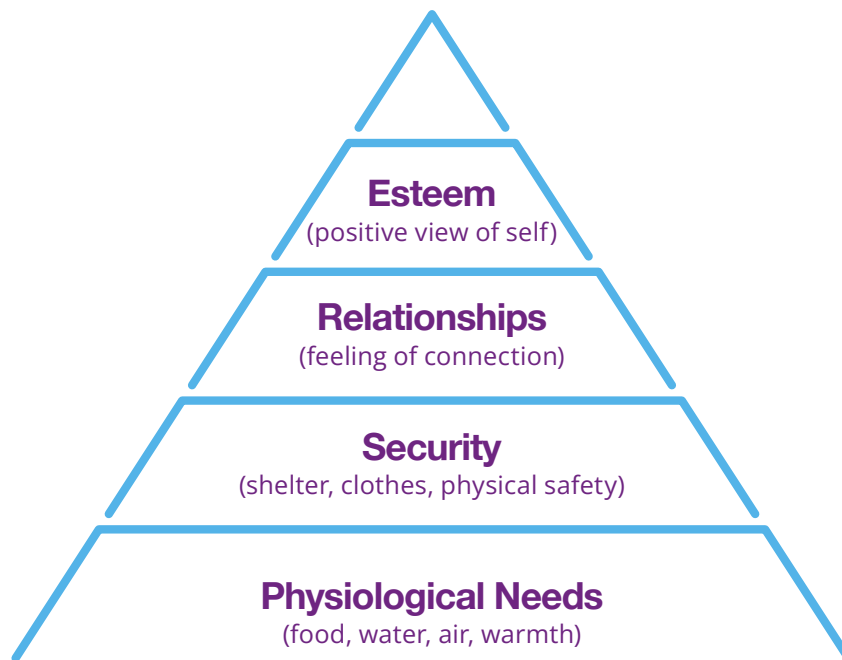


Session 1 Self-validation and Defining Problems

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 What is Self-validation?

Self-validation means acknowledging to yourself that part of your experience makes sense.

In our culture, we are often told that emotions don't make sense, which can be invalidating. The messages we have received from other people can become part of our own beliefs about emotions.

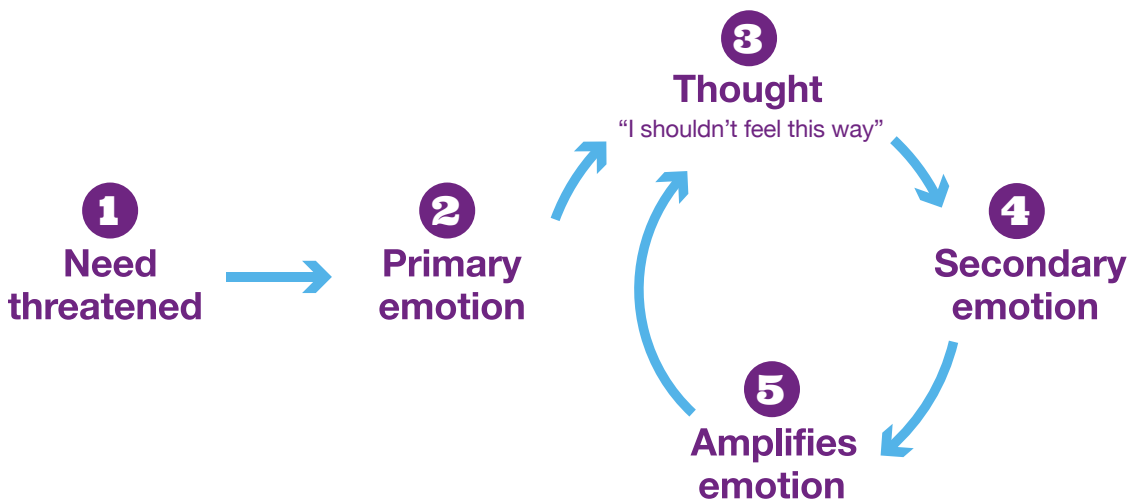
Imagine the following situation:

You were supposed to go to a friend's cottage this weekend. At the last minute, your friend got the flu and the weekend was cancelled. You're feeling sad, but you don't want to feel this way! So you try saying to yourself, "It's just one weekend, don't be a baby about it."

How would this make you feel? What happens when we invalidate our emotion?

- Our emotions don't go away — in fact, often they escalate!
- We may be more likely to get stuck in a depressive or anxious downward spiral

For a deeper understanding, look at the diagram below. When one or more of your needs are threatened (e.g. relationship needs), you will likely have a PRIMARY emotion (e.g., sadness or anxiety). If you have an invalidating thought (e.g. "I shouldn't feel this way"), it can lead to a SECONDARY emotion (e.g. shame or embarrassment). This can then amplify the PRIMARY emotion so that you feel even more sad.



What would happen if instead you said to yourself, “It makes sense that I’m feeling sad because I was so looking forward to connecting with my friends”. This is a SELF-VALIDATING thought.

How would this make you feel? What happens when we self-validate?

- There is no more shame about feeling sad, and you are just left to manage the unamplified PRIMARY emotion.
- You are less likely to get stuck in a depressive or anxious downward spiral.
- It is easier to cope with the emotional experience.

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.

3 How to Self-validate:

Here are the steps to help self-validate:

1. **Identify the emotion** – e.g. “I am feeling sad”
2. **Identify the need being threatened** – e.g. Need for relationships
3. **Articulate why the emotion makes sense** – “It makes sense that I’m sad, because it’s important for me to spend time with friends”

A good phrase to remember for self-validating statements is:

“It makes sense that I feel _____ (EMOTION) because _____ (NEED)”

Here are some more examples of self-validating statements:

Situation #1: You were invited to a party this weekend and don’t have anything you want to wear.

Self-Validating Statement: “It makes sense that I feel **anxious** because I want to feel good about how I look (**esteem**).”

Situation #2: You didn’t get the grade you hoped for on your final math exam.

Self-Validating Statement: “It makes sense that I feel **disappointed** because doing well in school is important to my sense of who I am (**identity**).”

Situation #3: You want to go to a friend’s birthday this weekend and stay out until midnight, but your parents want you to be home by 10 p.m.

Self-Validating Statement: “It makes sense that I feel **angry** because I want to be able to make decisions for myself (**control**).”

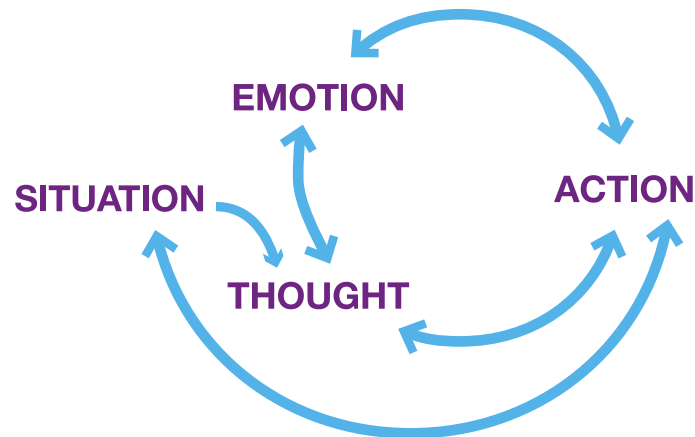
***Important Note:** It is often helpful to validate the emotion and not the behavior. Feeling angry makes sense in this situation, but getting into a screaming argument with your parents (i.e. aggressive behaviour) might not be helpful in meeting your needs.

4 Breakout Activity

In breakout rooms of 2-3 people, identify a recent situation where you had a strong emotion and self-validation could have been helpful. Practise a self-validating statement using the format:

“It makes sense that I feel _____ (EMOTION) because _____ (NEED)”.

5 Defining Problems



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 simply 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 to eventually change your emotion.

The first step in Problem Solving is defining the problem. A great way to define a problem is to use the self-validation skill we just discussed; where you describe the SITUATION, EMOTION and unmet NEED without any judgments. The next session will go through this in more detail.

6

Home Practice

Over the next week, try each of the following:

- Notice when you have an intense EMOTION and try to self-validate by identifying the NEED that is being threatened. Notice whether it changes your emotional experience.

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

Level Up Problem Solving



Session 2

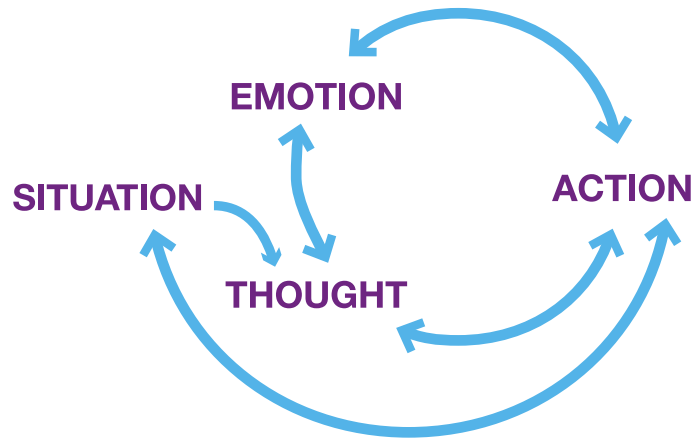
Individual Problem Solving

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?



Describe a SITUATION this past week where a NEED was threatened, and you experienced a strong EMOTION.

SITUATION: _____

EMOTION: _____

NEED that was threatened: _____

Now rephrase this in a SELF-VALIDATING statement:

2 Beliefs About Problem Solving

People with depression and anxiety 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?

Activity: Using the existing chart of negative beliefs about problem solving, go into breakout rooms of 2-3 people and come up with some more balanced thoughts.

Some questions that can help come to a balanced thought include:

- What is a way to think with more self-compassion?
- What would you say to a friend who was having this thought?
- Is there a way to think about the situation more accurately?
- What's a more helpful way of thinking?

Negative thoughts	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 negative beliefs, try to think about any balanced thoughts about these as well.

Negative thoughts	Balanced thoughts

3 Defining Problems: Revisited

Remember that defining the problem is an important first step to problem solving. Helpful problem definitions briefly describe the situation, emotion and unmet need, without judgments.

For each of the following, indicate which are helpful problem definitions. 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

4 Brainstorming Solutions

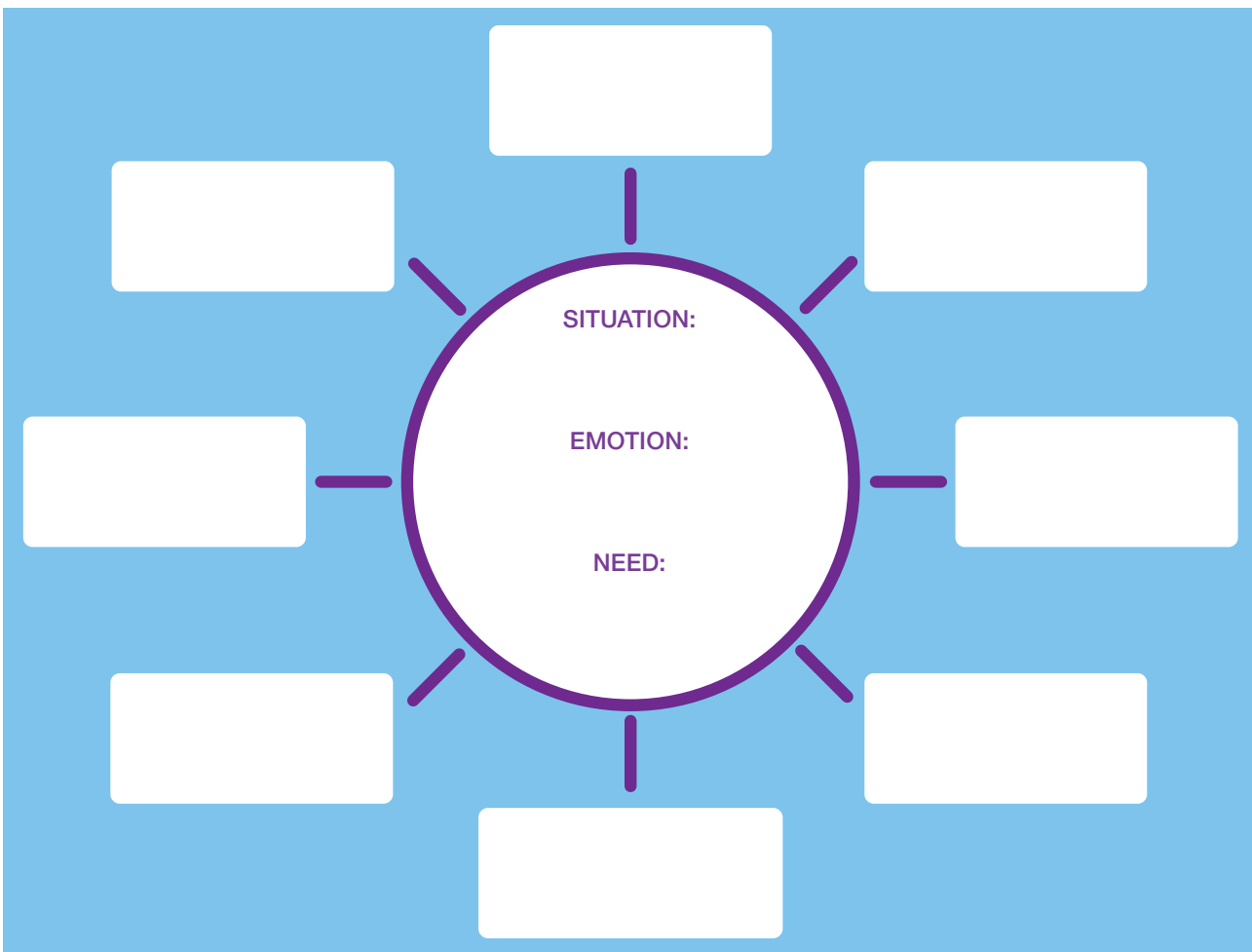
After defining the problem, it is really important to think about all possible options for ways that you can get your needs met. Sometimes, just brainstorming and realizing that there are many options to resolve the problem can decrease the intensity of the emotion.

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.

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.



5 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 the most 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. If you found that you crossed off all the solutions, go back to the brainstorming step. See if a friend or family member can help you with thinking of more possible solutions.

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

6 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

7 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) _____

8 Home Practice

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

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

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

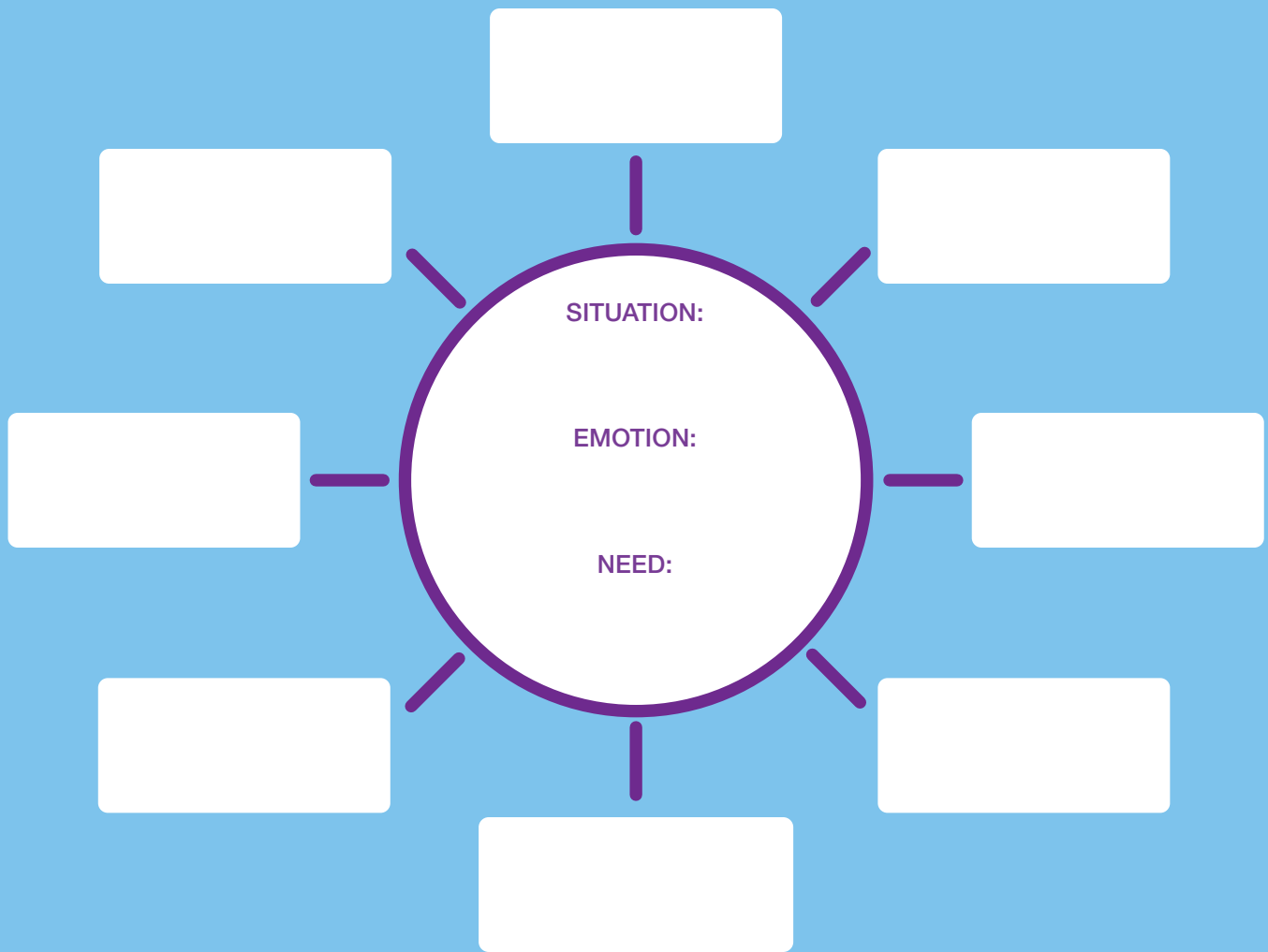
- a) Choose up to four of the brainstormed solutions and list pros and cons of each.



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	SOLUTION TWO	SOLUTION THREE	SOLUTION FOUR
PROS	PROS	PROS	PROS
CONS	CONS	CONS	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:

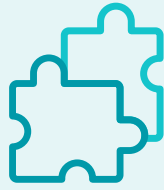
When will you do it?

Where will you do it?

Who will be there?

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

Level Up Problem Solving



Session 3

Collaborative Problem Solving

1 Review

What are the steps in problem solving?

- Define the problem:
 - › Describe the _____ using only the facts (who was 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: Communicate Your Perspective

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”. As a group, 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”).

3 Collaboration: Taking the Other Person’s Perspective

When you are in conflict with another person and emotions are high, it can be easy to jump to conclusions and assume the worst (e.g., They are trying to hurt me, they don’t care about my feelings).

Consider the following questions:

- Can you describe recent examples where this has happened with you?
- Does this make it easier or harder to solve a problem?
- Does this reduce or intensify emotions?

One way to improve collaboration, is to practise the skill of perspective taking.

Remember, taking someone else's perspective does not mean that your feelings aren't valid (it is still important to self-validate!). Instead, perspective taking is about acknowledging that another person's feelings are also valid, and is a way to support collaborative problem solving.

How to Take Someone Else's Perspective:

1. Imagine what they might be thinking/feeling.
2. What are possible explanations for the other person's behavior? What is your most compassionate interpretation of what might be going on for them?
3. Can you be kind and gentle in your approach with the other person? Can you assume that there are understandable reasons for their behavior? (This step can be tough. Discuss in the group how or why you might try this approach.)
4. Empathize with and validate the other person, either in your head or to them directly! Consider using statements such as:

"I can see why you would feel _____."

"It makes sense that you feel _____."

In breakout rooms of 2-3 people, identify a problem that you have had with another person. Can you think of the perspective of the other person and come up with a validating statement such as "It makes sense that they feel _____ (EMOTION) because _____ (NEED)"? Discuss how this might help you collaboratively solve problems alongside the other person.

4 Collaboration: Putting It Together

Now 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 practise defining the problem collaboratively in pairs:

- 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 a partner 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.

5 Collaboration: Next Steps to Find a Solution

Here are additional steps that you can take when problem solving collaboratively. Note, they are very similar to individual problem solving, but you are going through each step alongside the other person.

Step 2a: Brainstorm solutions

If they are willing, work with the other person to generate solutions together.

- Don't criticize the other person's 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.

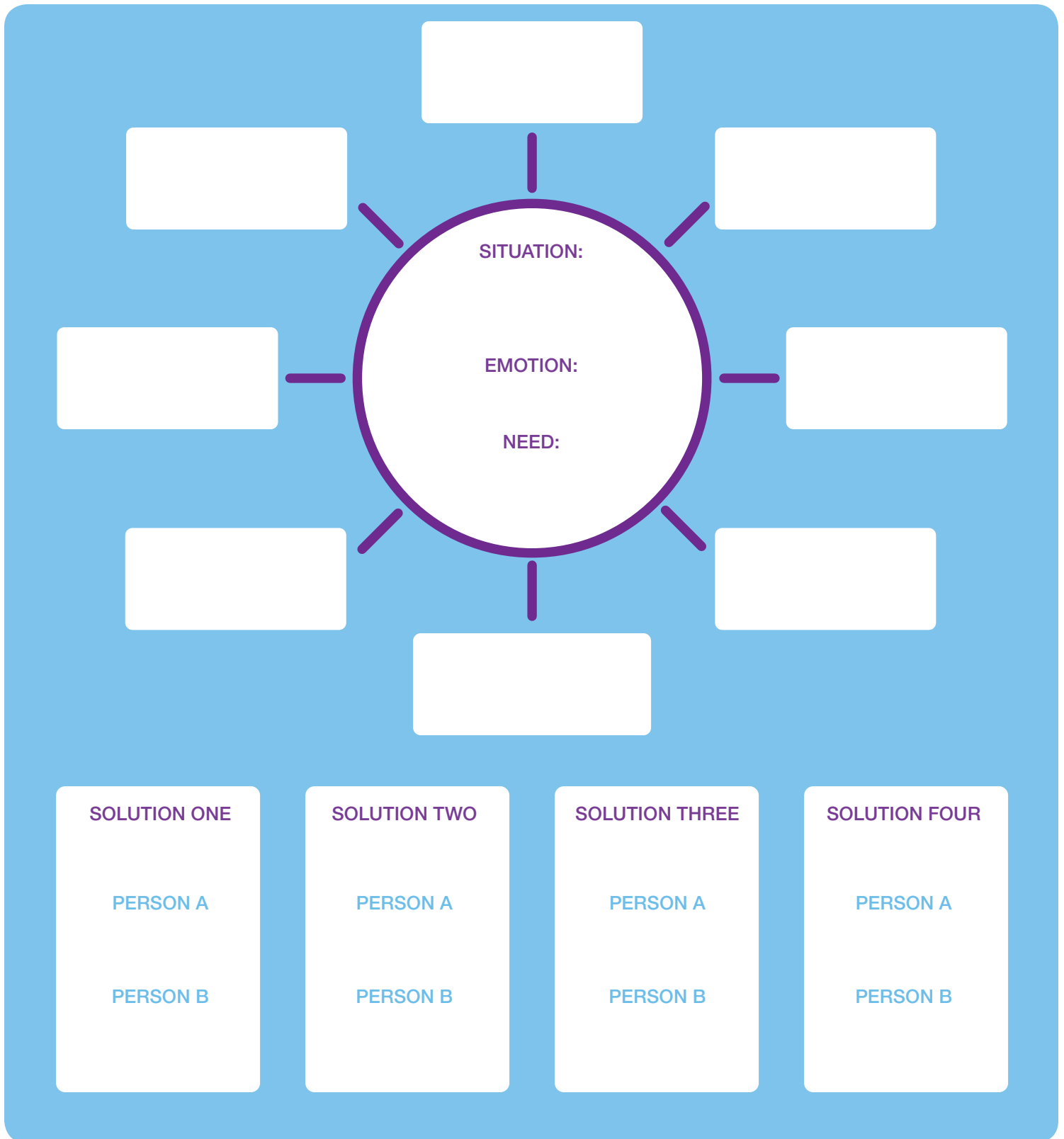
- You can simply use a "+" or "-" sign to show that it either meets or does not meet your needs.
- Or use numbers to indicate the strength of the solution in meeting the need(s). For example, rate the strength on a scale of 0-5, with 5 being the strongest ability to meet the need(s).
- Note that the evaluation part of collaborative problem solving is quite different than when doing problem solving on your own. In collaborative problem solving, 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



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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?

6

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 Acceptance

1 Review

Match the depressive thought with the more helpful balanced thought.

Depressive thoughts about problems	Balanced thoughts
1. <input type="checkbox"/> I am unable to solve problems.	a. It does take energy to solve problems, and it can save energy in the long-run.
2. <input type="checkbox"/> If I think about my problems, my emotions become more intense.	b. I can learn how to solve problems.
3. <input type="checkbox"/> My problems cannot be solved. It is hopeless.	c. I may not have caused my problems, and I still need to solve them.
4. <input type="checkbox"/> I didn't cause my problems, so I shouldn't have to solve them.	d. Emotions can be particularly strong when I am facing my problems, and I will likely feel better if I can solve them.
5. <input type="checkbox"/> I don't have the energy to solve problems.	e. 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?

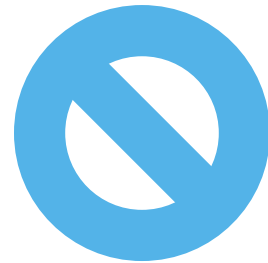
(this involves collaborative problem solving)

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

Sometimes it can be really challenging to solve problems, maybe because you encounter a problem that can't necessarily be solved (e.g., Your good friend moves away, or you break your foot) or your emotions are too intense to go through the steps. It can be tempting to reject the situation (or pretend it's not happening) to avoid a low mood or high anxiety.

What happens when we don't accept (or reject) situations?

- Rejecting a situation does not change or improve the situation.
- Rejecting a situation can turn pain into suffering (where emotions are experienced more intensely and taking all of your energy and attention).
- Refusing to accept a situation can keep us stuck in negative emotions like unhappiness, anger, shame, sadness or bitterness.



When we encounter a problem that we cannot solve, we may choose to turn to the skill of acceptance. **Acceptance is acknowledging a situation for what it is.** To be clear, acceptance is not giving up, approving of the situation, or being against future change! It is accepting things you cannot currently change instead of going into a downward spiral. Sometimes, acceptance actually gives us a greater ability to solve problems in the future.

Here is a simple example of practising acceptance:

My summer camping weekend got rained out. At first I thought “why me”, “this is not fair”... Then I made the decision to accept the situation and said to myself, “it is what it is!”. This allowed me to make the most out of my camping situation rather than staying unhappy. We got rain jackets and did activities under a tarp. It was great!

Here are more detailed steps for acceptance:

Step 1: Notice you are rejecting the facts.

“Rejecting 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 practised over and over. In more intense situations, the process can lead to a wave of intense emotion, but then a sense of calm.

3 Practising Acceptance

Go through the following example as a group:

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:

He notices thoughts, such as: "They bailed on me. That's so mean" and "They don't like me". Ian catches himself and realizes that 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 has nothing to do with going to the amusement park).



Step 4:

He notices that sometimes his mind goes back to "Why me?" and then goes through the above steps again.

4 Choosing a Strategy When Facing Problems

Remember, if you can solve a problem, you should do that first! If not, try reframing your thoughts about the problem to help improve your mood or anxiety (see the Cognitive Restructuring module). If neither of those is working, then you may want to think about acceptance as a first step to avoid a downward spiral.

What would you choose to do in the below scenarios: problem solve, reframe your thoughts, or practise acceptance?

1. If I am in a situation where I'm late to work, what would I choose to do?

2. If I were in a situation where I was mad about being left out of a social event over the weekend, what would I choose to do?

3. If I were in a situation where a friend of mine had just moved away, what would I choose to do?

4. If I were in a situation where someone I have been dating for a few months broke up with me, what would I choose to do?

5. If I were in a situation where I wanted to go to a party but my parents wouldn't let me go, what would I choose to do?

6. If I had a part time job and kept getting scheduled to work late shifts, what would I choose to do?

Activity: In breakout rooms of 2-3 people, each person can try to identify a situation where they could practise acceptance. How do you think acceptance would help in this situation? Come back and share with the group.

5 Home Practice

Notice this week when you start "rejecting the facts". Try out the steps for acceptance and notice if it changes your emotional experience of the situation.

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

6 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
Self-validating					
Considering balanced thoughts when problem solving					
Defining the problem					
Brainstorming solutions					
Weighing pros and cons					
Communicating your needs to another person					
Taking the perspective of another person					
Collaboratively problem solving					
Practising Acceptance					

Multiplayer Communication and Relationships



Session 1

Communication Skills and Beliefs about Relationships

1 Social Interaction and Spirals

This module is about communication skills and navigating relationships. Why do you think this is something we're talking about in a CBT group for depression and anxiety?

Take turns reading each statement:

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



Consider the following situation:

Jenna struggles with low mood and anxiety. As a result, she struggles to make eye contact. She usually sits slouched over, and speaks slowly and softly. Other people may interpret these behaviours to mean that she would rather be left alone.

Jenna ends up feeling even more lonely and anxious and is stuck in a "downward spiral".

She starts to recognize this. Even though she doesn't feel like it and is nervous about what may happen, Jenna seeks out a friendly classmate named Kayla. Jenna starts talking to Kayla about simple things, like music. Jenna starts to make some eye contact and smiles when Kayla makes a joke. Jenna notices her mood start to improve a bit, and feels more relaxed. The next day, Jenna initiates another conversation with Kayla and they talk some more. She notices feeling more confident in approaching other classmates. An "upward spiral" has started taking hold.

Which parts of Jenna’s experience can you relate to? Is Jenna’s behaviour understandable given her struggles? In what ways is her behaviour helpful? In what ways is her behaviour not helpful?

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. What are things that other people do in conversations with you that make you feel good about the interaction and want you to engage with them more?

We can use this group to practise social interactions.

2 Communication Skills

Practising communication skills can help our interactions with other people and move us to an upward spiral.

Here is a list of skills that may help you in your conversations with others. They may seem simple on the surface but take a lot of energy when feeling anxious or sad. Which do you think would be helpful to start working on? You might not be able to practise 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.
- Speak at the right pace.
- Let go of judgments about others.
- Pay attention to others.
- Other: _____

In Breakout groups of 2-3 people:

- Identify 1 or 2 skills you want to practise.
- Either use one of the provided conversation starters or talk about something of your own choosing.
- Be intentional about using the skill(s) you identified in a three minute conversation with the people in your group.

Potential Conversation Starters:

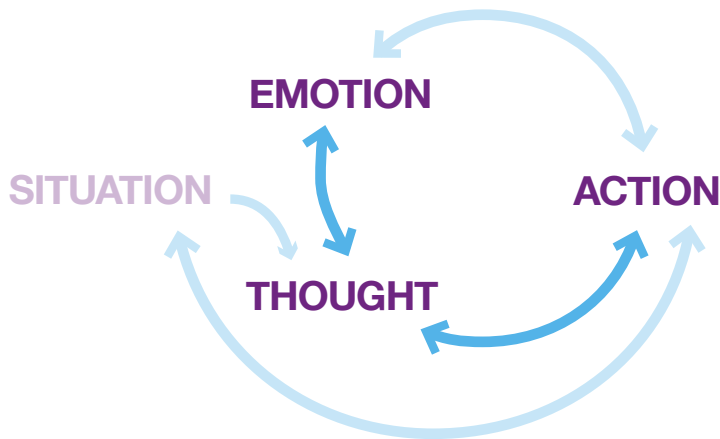
- Talk about your plans for an upcoming weekend.
- Talk about what social media platform you like the most.
- Talk about music or a TV show you like.

When coming back to the larger group, share:

- What do you think you did well?
- What might you want to continue working on?
- What do you think your partner did well?

3 Beliefs about Relationships

Remember that our **thoughts** can affect our **emotions** and the **actions** we take. This applies to social situations as well. Having balanced thoughts about relationships can improve the way we interact with others.



Go into breakout rooms of 2-3 people. Using the chart on the next page regarding negative beliefs about relationships, come up with some more balanced thoughts,

Some questions that can help come to a balanced thought include:

- What is a way to think with more self-compassion?
- What would you say to a friend who was having this thought?
- Is there a way to think about the situation more accurately or objectively?
- What's a more helpful way of thinking?

Negative 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 them, and I shouldn't be.	

If you have any additional negative 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.

Negative thoughts about relationships	Balanced thoughts

These types of negative thoughts are common in depression and anxiety. Remember that they are beliefs and not facts. Challenging these beliefs can help you engage in more social interactions; and even allow for more experiences to disprove these beliefs.

4 Home Practice

Over the next week, try each of the following:

- Practise the social skills we discussed today with other people.
- Try an alternative belief you have checked off to see if it helps your mood.

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

Multiplayer Communication and Relationships



Session 2 The Art of Conversation

1 Review

Based on our discussion so far, name four communication skills that can be used with other people:

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

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

Negative thoughts about activities	Balanced thoughts
1. <input type="checkbox"/> I will be rejected.	a. Some people will like me and some people won't; this is a fact for everyone.
2. <input type="checkbox"/> 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. <input type="checkbox"/> 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. <input type="checkbox"/> 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. <input type="checkbox"/> 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. <input type="checkbox"/> 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. <input type="checkbox"/> 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. <input type="checkbox"/> I am attracted to 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 Starting Conversations

In this session, we are discussing starting, joining, and leaving conversations.

Here are some questions for discussion in group:

- Which of those three things do you have the hardest time with?
- What makes it hard?
- What worries might get in the way?

There are two questions to consider when starting a conversation:

1. Is it a good time to start a conversation?

Sometimes negative thoughts or worries we have get in the way of recognizing good times! Look for potentially good times to start conversations, including:

- Another person smiles at you.
- You are standing in a long line near another person.
- Another person asks you a question.
- A friend introduces you to a new person.
- A person is petting your dog.
- The first week of school in a new class where few people know each other.
- You are part of a group that meets weekly (e.g. an extracurricular club).

As a group, can you think of any other good times to start a conversation?

2. What are good things to talk about when starting a conversation? Here are some potential examples:

- Ask the person a question about themselves (e.g., "How old is your dog?")
- Ask the person a question about a common activity (e.g., "What did you think of English class today?")
- Identify a common interest (e.g., "Do you watch baseball?")

As a group, are there other good questions or topics to talk about when starting a conversation?

3 Joining Group Conversations

Joining group conversations can be even more complicated as there are more people and topics to pay attention to.

As a group, consider the following questions:

1. When is a good time to join a conversation? Here are some examples:

- People are talking about something you know about.
- People say hi to you as you walk by.
- People open up the circle of conversation for you to join and someone asks you a question directly.

Are there other signs that it is a good time to join a group conversation?

2. What will you say?

- Say hi and ask how people are doing (“Hey! How are you guys doing?”).
- Comment on something they’re talking about and ask a follow up question (e.g. “I saw that movie too! What did you think of it?”).
- Simply enter the conversation and smile, show that you’re paying attention!

Are there other helpful things to say when joining a group conversation?

4 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.

Here are two questions to consider:

1. When is a good time to leave a conversation? Here are some ideas:

- When there is a natural break in conversation (e.g., people are having smaller side conversations, checking their phone, less talking).
- When someone else in a group setting is also leaving.
- When you feel ready or need to leave.

Any other ideas on when to leave the conversation?

2. How is the best way to leave a conversation? Here are some ideas:

- If in a group setting, say "I've gotta run" and step away.
- If in a group setting, smile and wave as you leave.
- If in a 1:1 conversation, say "It was great talking to you, and I have to head out."
- If in a 1:1 conversation, say "It was nice to meet you! Hopefully I'll see you again."
- If in a 1:1 conversation, say "I gotta go do _____, hope you have a great day."

Do you or any group members have other ideas about what to say to end a conversation?

5 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 sharing 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 always be self-disclosing 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. It's best to wait until several stressful situations have built up before you discuss them.

True or False

8. It can be a helpful strategy to listen carefully to how much the other person is sharing about themselves, and match your own self-disclosure to theirs.

True or False

As a group, discuss strategies to disclose the most helpful amount of information about yourself.

6 Group Activity

As a group, everyone stand up and move around the room for 5 to 10 minutes. Start conversations with others, join other groups and leave conversations. See what it is like to do this. Afterwards, discuss as a group what it was like to do this. What was helpful? Were there parts that were difficult? If so, what made it difficult?

7 Home Practice

This week, try:

- Starting a conversation with someone you don't know very well.
- Joining a group conversation.
- Leaving a conversation skillfully.

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

Multiplayer Communication and Relationships



Session 3 How to be Assertive

1 Review

Describe a time this past week where you started, joined, or left a conversation. What went well? Would you do anything differently? If you ran into difficulties, ask group members for suggestions on how to approach things differently next time.

2 Communication Styles

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.

Imagine that a friend asks if they can copy your schoolwork, but you don't want them to. The style in which you respond will affect whether your needs get met, and can also impact the relationship. Consider the table below.

Communication style	Example	Are your needs met?	Does your answer help keep your relationship?
Aggressive	"No way! That's your problem, not mine."	✓	✗
Passive	"Oh, sure."	✗	✓
Passive-aggressive	"I mean if you're too stupid to figure it out then I guess so."	✗	✗
Assertive	"I'm worried about getting caught, so I don't want you to copy my work. Thanks for understanding."	✓	✓

3 Ask for what you need and set limits: GOALS

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: Describe your **Own experience** of the situation using an “I” statement: either the emotion (“I feel...”) or the thought (“I think...”).

Step 3: Ask for what you want. Examples include:

- requesting more time from a romantic partner,
- asking a classmate to help you with a project,
- asking your boss for a day off.

...OR... say “no.” Examples include:

- telling your caregiver/parent that you can't help with the chores this evening,
- saying to your friend that you are not able to hang out with them this weekend,
- telling your co-worker you won't cover their shift next week.

Step 4: Loop back to the first three steps calmly and firmly if the other person does not follow through with your request (and it is within their ability to do so). Don't let yourself be distracted if they respond with their own judgments.

Step 5: Show gratitude once the other person follows through with your ask or respects your “no”. 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 practising with a friend) ahead of time — this may make it more effective.

4 Trying It Out

Either as a whole group, or splitting into 2-3 breakout groups, try using the steps in GOALS to be assertive in the following example situations. If you prefer, you can use a recent situation in your personal life instead.

Examples:

1. Your boss keeps scheduling you for late shifts, but working late makes you tired and is getting in the way of doing schoolwork.
2. You had planned an online gaming session with your best friend. They promised to go online at 7:00 p.m. but then didn't show up.
3. You are very overwhelmed with schoolwork and need to ask a teacher for an extension.
4. Your partner or friend is often on social media when you are hanging out and you don't like it.
5. Your parent comments on your appearance often, and you don't like it.

5 Home Practice

This week, try to practise using the GOALS skill to be assertive in an interaction this coming week with someone you trust. It can be something small (e.g., "pass the salt") or medium (e.g., asking for help with schoolwork). Consider holding off on more complex situations until you get more practice.

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

Multiplayer Communication and Relationships



Session 4

Deepen Your Connection in Relationships

1 Review

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," _____.

Were you able to practise the GOALS skill to help with being assertive this past week? As you are comfortable, share with the group how it went.

If not, was there a time you could have used it? As you are comfortable, describe how you could have used it.

2 Truly Engaging with Others

This session is about relationship-enhancing skills. When we do things to show other people we are interested, empathic, and non-judgmental, our relationships benefit. Good relationships support good mental health.

It's tempting to focus on ourselves in conversations, particularly when we're anxious or sad, because we want to make sure we're not doing anything wrong or embarrassing. But focusing on ourselves versus the other person makes it seem like we're not paying attention to them. It also makes us miss out on the connective experience of conversations.

Here are some ways to show that you are truly engaged in a conversation:

- Non-verbal cues (e.g., eye contact, smiling, nodding)
- Verbal cues (e.g., "Mmm-hmmm", "That's cool")
- Restate the person's message in your own words if you need to clarify what they are saying.

To help deepen the engagement further, use empathic statements if someone is upset, demonstrating that you understand why they would feel that way. Here are some examples:

- **"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."

Empathic responses are the things that require a lot of practice, particularly because most of us want to jump to problem solving. Consider the following when responding:

- Avoid jumping straight into problem solving — much of the time people just want to be heard.
- Avoid talking about your own ideas until the other person sees you have understood their message or there is a break in the conversation.
- Avoid showing approval or disapproval for what the other person is saying. If you think it is important to express your agreement or disagreement with what the other person is saying, wait until you get a sense that the other person feels understood.

3 Identifying and Practising Engagement

Review the example below, and after each message check the most empathic response that would demonstrate that you're engaged in the conversation.

You are listening to your friend discuss struggles she is experiencing with her music teacher. Her struggle includes three messages.

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 practise 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."

In breakout groups of 2-3 people, try this:

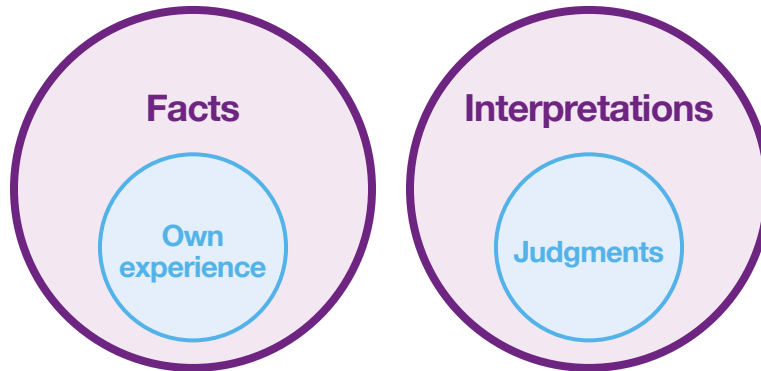
One group member talks about something stressful happening in their life right now. The other member(s) responds empathically. Then switch. Refer to the example responses above for help.

4 Responding without Judgment in Relationships

First let's understand the difference between a fact and a judgment. (This is also discussed in the other module on Cognitive Restructuring).

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 such as "I like Sara's coat", "I am angry" or "I am happy" are not typically up for debate.

Judgment is a type of belief where something is evaluated 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."). See the diagram below.



In the context of relationships, judgments can get in the way of connecting with others. Other people may feel threatened and get defensive if they hear judgments (even if the judgment is about a person not in the conversation). When communicating with others, it can be useful to reframe judgments in factual ways, often including your own emotional experience.

Example non-judging phrases include:

- "I don't like pasta",
- "I am worried that trying out this new skill will be dangerous", and
- "I hope that this strategy will be helpful."

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

Statement	Judging	Non-judging
That movie was the worst.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't like country music.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lisa is not acting the way I expected her to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think it will be helpful for me to attend group.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peter shouldn't be judging people so much.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5 Putting it Together: Engaging and Non-judging Communication

Look at the following examples. Circle the letter corresponding to the engaging and non-judging response in these conversations. Describe the reason for your selection.

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."

6 Home Practice

This week, try to practise engaging and non-judging communication with people you want to feel more connected to. Notice whether it changes or deepens your sense of connection to the other person.

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

7 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
Communication skills					
Using "balanced thoughts" about communication and relationships					
Starting, joining and ending conversations					
Helpful self-disclosure					
Assertive communication					
True engagement skills					
Letting go of judgments in relationships					

