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Introduction

This manual is for helping students with depressed mood. The activities provided are evidence-based interventions for adolescents. The CBT Mood intervention is to be provided by professionals with a graduate degree in mental health (counseling, social work, psychology) to students who have problems related to depression. A student need not meet criteria for a diagnosis of depression to benefit from this, but the interventions are designed to target the types of problems associated with adolescents with depressed mood.

This intervention is divided into three phases. The first phase involves students learning about moods and how they can be managed. The second phase involves teaching the students specific skills for improving their mood and the third phase involves helping the student apply these skills in their daily lives. The first two phases may be provided to students in group or individual meetings. The activities in the third phase should be provided in frequent (more than once per week) brief individual sessions (15 to 30 minutes).

Acknowledgements

The CARS Cognitive Behavioral Treatment Manual for Depressed Mood (CARS CBT Mood) includes ideas from CBT manuals developed by Craig Coleman, M.D., (Problem Solving and Cognitive Techniques Workbook; 1994), Peter Lewinsohn, Ph.D., Paul Rhode, Ph.D., Hyman Hops, Ph.D. & Gregory Clarke, Ph.D. (Adolescent Coping with Depression Course; 1991), and Kevin Stark, Ph.D. & Philip Kendall, Ph.D. (Taking Action; 1996). Specifically, the upward and downward spirals were based on similar material in the Adolescent Coping with Depression Course. Nicki's story is based on a very similar story in the Taking Action manual. Much of the bolded text explaining cognitive theory and instructing students how to complete 3 and 5 column sheets is directly out of the Problem Solving and Cognitive Techniques Workbook. Although much of it was revised, original text from that workbook appears in this manual. We appreciate Dr. Craig Coleman allowing us this liberty (personal communication, June 30, 2011). The majority of the manual was written, assembled and revised by Dr. Steven W. Evans as part of the CARS research project, but considerable feedback and activity ideas were provided by the CARS School Mental Health Team.

Homework

It is common for CBT groups to have homework following each group session. These homework assignments frequently include asking students to complete 3 and 5 column sheets in between sessions when confronted with emotionally charged situations. We recommend that you do not give these assignments. The information on these sheets can be very confidential and quite embarrassing for a student if discovered by a peer. In addition,



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many students are fairly careless with their belongings and this increases the risk of a breach of confidentiality. Although we realize that homework completion can increase the effectiveness of this intervention, we believe that in a school setting the risks outweigh the benefits. Nevertheless, if the SMH professional believes that the homework could be particularly beneficial, the student is agreeable to completing the sheets outside of sessions, and the risk of a breach in confidentiality is uniquely minimal; then we respect the clinician's judgment about the use of these types of assignments.



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SESSION 1: Orientation

The purpose of the first session is to introduce the students to the format of the group and each other.

Session One Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain group rules
- Students will be able to explain the meaning and importance of confidentiality in the group
- Students will be able to state the time and location of group meetings and how changes to these will be communicated.
- The students will be able to describe a situation during which a person's mood either helped them behave in a desirable or undesirable way.

Time estimation: 45 - 60 min

- I. Overview of group
 - a. Group rules
 - b. Confidentiality
 - c. Logistics of group sessions
- II. Introductions
 - a. Ice breaker (length varies as function of activity)
- III. Introduction to CBT Mood
 - a. Types of emotions
 - b. Actions from emotions

I. OVERVIEW OF GROUP

Welcome to the first day of group! This group is about learning how our emotions, thoughts and behaviors work together. We are going to talk about these things in a couple of minutes. Before we do I want to go over a few things.

Review:

- *Group Rules* – Group rules should be set either before or during the first session. The group leader may allow the students to have input into the rules and consequences or may establish these alone ahead of the group meeting. Rules and related consequences should be explained and may be role-played. A sign listing the rules may be posted in the room to serve as a reminder.
- *Confidentiality* – Confidentiality should be defined and its importance discussed with members of the group. The basic expectation is that students do not discuss or mention anything that is shared in group outside of the group sessions. Students who break this trust may be asked to leave the group.



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- *Logistics of group sessions* – Review the standing time and location for the group meetings, how the leader will communicate changes to students, expectations for attendance and informing the group leader of conflicts.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Let's take the next couple minutes to introduce ourselves to each other. Please just state your first name and anything else you wish to say about yourself. I will begin.

My name is _____ and _____ . Continue with introductions.

At this point you may wish to do an ice breaker activity. There are some examples of these activities in the appendix (see appendix Session One), but you may use one of your own if you wish. The activity should be designed simply to get the students talking, enjoying their interactions and feeling comfortable.

III. INTRODUCTION TO CBT MOOD

As you know, there are many types of emotions. Sometimes we feel these emotions very intensely and other times we do not feel them at all. Brainstorm types of emotions. Sometimes these emotions help us do wonderful things. For example, if you can care about another person and feel happy or sad about their happiness or sadness, you are likely to treat them well and do nice things for them. On the other hand, sometimes people lose control of some of their emotions and do things that they regret or get them into trouble. For example, if someone gets very angry about something a teacher says, that person may say things or do things in class that get them into serious trouble. Brainstorm stories about people whose moods helped them do nice and helpful things and other times that moods led to inappropriate behavior. The goals for this group involve helping us manage our emotions so we behave in a way that is consistent with our Ideal Self Goals (review these goals from ISG if helpful). Give any instructions for attending the next meeting or proceed to Phase 1 activities.



PHASE 1: Knowledge Acquisition

There are three activities in this section (Introduction to Cognitive Theory, Mood Spirals and Nicki's Story). They do not have to be completed in one session, but they should be completed in the sequence listed. If they are completed in separate sessions, the content from the previous session should be reviewed at the beginning of the subsequent session. The Introduction to Cognitive Theory is likely to take 30 to 40 minutes and the other two may only take 15 to 20 minutes each.

Phase One Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain cognitive theory in their own words.
- Students will be able to describe a mood spiral and give examples of both a positive and negative spiral.

Introduction to Cognitive Theory

Time Estimation: 30- 40 min

- I. Introduction to Cognitive Theory
 - a. **The emotions we are feeling are caused by the thoughts we are thinking**
 - b. Situation → Feeling
 - c. Situation → Thoughts → Feelings
 - d. Examples: Happy Hannah and Sad Sam
- II. Automatic Thoughts
 - a. Not always accurate
 - b. "Distortions"
 - c. Coping thoughts
- III. Cognitive Theory Examples

The main thing we will learn about today is about how our mind works according to "cognitive theory." Cognitive Theory can be defined as follows (*write the sentence on the board and encourage thought and discussion about what it means*):

The emotions we are feeling are caused by the thoughts we are thinking.

Listen to the sentence again and really study it. You will need to really know this sentence and understand what it means if you are to truly master the next techniques that we are going to learn.

Here is an explanation to help you understand what the theory means. Think about a time when you were really angry. If someone asked you why you were so angry, you would probably tell him or her about something that happened to you



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that got you so angry. That thing that happened to get you so angry would be called the situation. You might say that because of a certain situation, you ended up with a strong feeling (anger). For instance, you might say that you got so angry because a teacher gave you a detention. In this case, we would have the following:

Write on the board:

SITUATION: Teacher gave me a detention.

FEELING: Angry

And your explanation that the teacher giving you the detention is what made you angry could be put in a diagram like this:

Write on the board:

SITUATION -----> FEELING

But remember, the cognitive theory says:

The emotions we are feeling are caused by the thoughts we are thinking.

What this means it that the anger isn't really *caused* by the situation, but instead the anger is caused by what you are thinking about the situation. So in this example, what might happen is this: the teacher gives you a detention, and you think "that teacher is always picking on me," and this thought makes you feel angry. So instead of the situation causing the feeling, it's the situation that leads to a thought and then the thought causes a feeling. That means the diagram for this would be as follows:

Write on board and/or share Cognitive Theory Diagram in appendix:

SITUATION -----> THOUGHTS -----> FEELINGS

This concept is *really* important, so it's worth repeating. When you have a strong feeling, it's not really what's going on (the situation) that makes you have the feeling; instead, it's the thoughts that you have about what's going on that make you have the feeling. Let's discuss some examples.

Example 1

One way to really see how this works is to look at situations where two different people might have two different thoughts and feelings in the exact same situation. Let's start by learning a little about the two people in the example, Happy Hannah and Sad Sam. *The group leader should acknowledge that Happy Hannah and Sad Sam are silly names. Tell the students that unusual names were selected to help them remember them.* Happy Hannah is a girl with a really positive attitude who always looks on the bright side of things. Sad Sam is a guy who always thinks about the



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worst thing that could happen and is always miserable. Let's put each of them into a situation and see what happens.

SITUATION: You are walking down the street, and there are two people walking towards you about 100 feet away. One of them begins to laugh.

Now, let's imagine that we are Happy Hannah in that situation. Remember our diagram:

Refer to diagram already on the board:

SITUATION -----> THOUGHTS -----> FEELINGS

Happy Hannah

So we need to imagine what thoughts Happy Hannah might have because of this situation. Happy Hannah might have the following thought: "I'll bet they are just talking about something funny that happened this weekend." Now, according to the diagram, this thought would cause Happy Hannah to have a feeling. That feeling would probably be "happy." So our diagram for Happy Hannah would look like this:

Write on board:

Two people laughing -----> Must have been a funny joke -----> Happy

Sad Sam

Now let's imagine that Sad Sam is in the exact same situation. What we know about Sad Sam is that he always looks at the bad side of things. So, if we once again refer to the diagram above, we need to guess what thoughts Sad Sam will have because of this situation. Sad Sam would probably think, "They're laughing at me. Everyone always laughs at me." This thought would lead Sad Sam to have a feeling of "sadness." So our diagram for Sad Sam would look like this:

Write on board:

Two people laughing -----> Must be laughing at me -----> Sad

The important thing to notice about this is that even though Happy Hannah and Sad Sam were in the *exact same situation*, they ended up with two *very different feelings*. And how did they end up with such different feelings? (Solicit answers and help students understand the example in relation to the model).

It was because they had two *very different thoughts*. If situations caused feelings, then Happy Hannah and Sad Sam should have had the exact same feelings since they were in the exact same situation. But, because they had two different thoughts, they ended up with two different feelings. Let's consider another example.

Example 2

SITUATION: You get your report card, and you see that you got 4 A's and 1 C.



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Remember our diagram:

Point to diagram already on the board:

SITUATION -----> THOUGHTS -----> FEELINGS

Let’s imagine that Happy Hannah and Sad Sam are in this situation. We need to know what they are thinking in order to predict how they will feel. See if you can guess what each is feeling once you know what they’re thinking.

Happy Hannah

THOUGHT: “That’s a pretty good report card. I’ll try to bring the C to a better grade next time to make it even better.”

FEELING: _____

What are some feelings Happy Hannah might experience? Discuss answers.

Sad Sam

THOUGHT: “I can’t believe I got a C on my report card. I’ll never be able to graduate.”

FEELING: _____

What are some feelings Sad Sam might experience? Discuss answers. Make sure that students are connecting thoughts and feelings in a causal relationship.

Once again you see that even though Happy Hannah and Sad Sam were in the exact same situation, because they had different thoughts they ended up with different feelings. This once again demonstrates the cognitive theory, which says that situations lead us to have thoughts, and the thoughts we have cause us to have feelings. Many situations could cause different thoughts in different people, and the feelings you have depend on the thoughts you have.

We don’t usually decide what thoughts we will think; instead, our thoughts come into our head automatically. For this reason we sometimes call these thoughts “automatic thoughts.” Each of us may have different automatic thoughts even in the exact same situation, just like Happy Hannah and Sad Sam did.

At this point you may be wondering, “Why are we learning all this cognitive theory stuff anyway?” Well that’s a good question. Many students have a really hard time controlling their feelings and the behaviors that they show when those feelings are especially strong. For instance, some students may be experiencing depression with strong sad feelings. This sometimes makes them stay away from their friends or family, or neglect their schoolwork. Other students may be experiencing strong angry feelings, which can make them argue with people a lot or even try to hurt people. Yet others are experiencing extremely nervous or anxious feelings, which could make them afraid to do or say certain things.



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All of these students are having their strong feelings because of the automatic thoughts they are having in certain situations. We also know that *in many cases the automatic thoughts that people have are not really completely accurate thoughts about that situation, but instead are what we call “distortions.”* A distortion is like what you see when you look at a funhouse mirror or look through someone else’s glasses. What you see is kind of like how things really look, but the image is changed and doesn’t look quite right. So, a distortion is a thought that may be a little true, but not really true.

Sad Sam had a couple of distortions in our previous examples. When the two people were walking on the street and laughed, Sad Sam had the automatic thought that they were laughing at him. This was a distortion because there were other possible explanations for why they were laughing, and he just assumed he knew the reason. Also, when Sad Sam got a D on his report card he had the automatic thought that he would never graduate. This was a distortion because people can still graduate with a D on their report card.

So we learn the cognitive theory so that we can manage our strong emotions. When you have a strong feeling, a lot of times that will happen because the thought that caused your feeling was a *distortion*. Our goal in using these cognitive techniques is to help you figure out the times that you are having distortions in your automatic thoughts, and to help you “fix” that distortion so that your strong feelings can be under better control.

A second purpose of learning cognitive theory is to help us manage our emotions even when thoughts are not based on a distortion. We can learn to adjust our thoughts to help us cope with intense emotions that are not related to distortions. So by correcting distortions and using coping thoughts we can improve our mood and manage our behavior.

Review the examples below and practice having the students think of the thoughts and feelings.

Cognitive Theory Examples

For the situations described below, predict the thoughts and feelings that Happy Hannah and Sad Sam will have. Keep in mind that cognitive theory, as described by the diagram:

SITUATION -----> THOUGHTS -----> FEELINGS

SITUATION: You ask someone in your class to go to a movie with you, and they say “not today, but maybe sometime next week would be okay.”

Happy Hannah



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THOUGHT: _____

FEELING: _____

Sad Sam

THOUGHT: _____

FEELING: _____

SITUATION: Another student tells you that he/she will call you this evening and does not call.

Happy Hannah

THOUGHT: _____

FEELING: _____

Sad Sam

THOUGHT: _____

FEELING: _____



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Mood Spirals

This activity should occur after the Introduction to Cognitive Theory.

Time Estimation: 20 min

- I. Negative Downward Spiral
 - a. Feeling down, less likely to do enjoyable things, always gets worse
 - b. Examples
 - c. NEGATIVE DOWNWARD SPIRAL HANDOUT
 - d. Story of downward spiral
- II. Positive Upward Spiral
 - a. Feel good, do positive things, keeps getting better
 - b. Examples
 - c. POSITIVE UPWARD SPIRAL HANDOUT
 - d. Story of upward spiral

Reminder: Review material from previous session if phase 1 material spread across multiple sessions

As we talked about in other sessions, situations cause us to have thoughts, and the thoughts we have cause us to have feelings. Our feelings can affect our behaviors or the things we do every day. For example, when we feel down, we're less likely to do the things we enjoy and we begin to have doubts about our ability to be successful doing those things. This leads to a NEGATIVE DOWNWARD SPIRAL (write on board). Provide students with the NEGATIVE DOWNWARD SPIRAL handout (see Appendix Phase 1). Talk to students about the example provided on the handout.

Thoughts, feelings or situations can start a spiral DOWNWARD into depression. Can anyone think of an example that could start this spiral? Solicit some examples from the group. Below are several examples.

1. **Breaking up with a girlfriend or boyfriend.**
2. **Feeling sad.**
3. **Doing less.**
4. **Thinking that no one likes you.**
5. **Feeling even worse, then doing less, and so on.**

Downward Spiral story:

Tyler was a high school student who often felt worthless. He was part of the track team and found confidence in his running abilities. But on a daily basis, he felt sad and angry. He used his girlfriend (who was also on the track team) as a main support system. But one day, his girlfriend said that he wasn't "fun enough" for her and dumped him. This triggered Tyler into a downward spiral. He stopped wanting to leave the house and even quit running. He said that it was too painful and



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embarrassing to be around the track team without her there. He began spending all of his time alone and would not talk to his friends or parents about what was happening.

Tyler quickly found that he had less and less energy to do anything. He never felt happy and stopped caring about doing well in school. His grades got worse and this discouraged him and his parents even more. His parents attempted to help, but he did not like to talk to them about his problems. They attempted to encourage him to rejoin the track team, but he was not interested in giving any effort.

On the other hand, when we are successful at something we feel good and we gain self-confidence. When we think that we can do something well, we feel good and we are more likely to do more things in the future. This is called a **POSITIVE UPWARD SPIRAL** (write on board). Provide students with the POSITIVE UPWARD SPIRAL handout (see Appendix Phase 1). Talk to students about the example provided on the handout.

There are some things that can start a spiral UPWARD or get you on a roll. Can anyone think of an example that would start this spiral? Solicit some examples from the group. Below are several examples.

1. Receiving a good grade.
2. Being invited to a party.
3. Thinking that you worked hard to earn an 'A'.
4. Doing something fun.
5. Having a good conversation with friends.

The best approach is to try to PREVENT OR INTERRUPT NEGATIVE SPIRALS before they become serious. The purpose of this group is to teach you skills that will help you change a downward spiral into a positive one. Most of the skills we will learn will focus on changing thoughts and actions which will bring about changes in your feelings as well.

Positive Spiral Story:

Susan always had trouble fitting in at high school. She was often feeling sad and never had any self confidence. She usually kept to herself and did not reach out to meet people. Every time she met someone new, she believed that they judged her immediately by her bad hair, or clothes or lack of friends. After feeling like this for awhile, Susan was invited to join a group like this one. After learning about cognitive theory, she wondered if her ideas about what others' thought about her weren't always accurate. She started noticing that the way she thinks about things could have a lot to do with how she feels.

She asked herself, is there another possible explanation for why people might not be friends with her? After talking to her counselor and thinking about it, she



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realized that she wasn't always friendly to others because she was never confident that people would like her. After realizing that everyone was not judging her quite like she thought, Susan decided to take a chance and she joined the yearbook. She had always been good at writing and wanted to see if she could fit in with that group. She found out very quickly that she was very skilled at writing stories and editing others' stories. She began to gain confidence as her classmates and her teacher praised her for her work on the yearbook. With her new confidence, Susan began to talk to her classmates in yearbook and made some new friends. She asked a few friends to hang out on the weekend and discovered a whole new group of people who treated her like a friend. When she was faced with difficult situations, Susan was able to think through her thoughts and identify when she was making small things into big deals. She continued to use the skills that she learned in her group to help her maintain her confidence and new friendships.

Nicki's Story (10-15 min.)

This story is designed to instill hope in students and let them know that the activities of this group have been useful for students. By describing a student with similar difficulties and the benefits they received from the group, students may become more invested and engaged in the activities that will improve the likelihood for positive outcomes. Below is an example story which you may use or change to your liking and/or personal experiences. If there are things that you can include in the story so your students identify with Nicki, please make these revisions to the story before sharing it with the group.

Nicki's Story

There was a girl a few years ago who was in a group like this one and she worked really hard. I'll call her Nicki since it would not be confidential to use her real name. She was in a group of high school students that was similar to this one. When she came to the first meeting she looked real down. She never smiled and wore her hair over her eyes so that no one could see her. She didn't feel good about herself because she thought she wasn't pretty, or smart, and couldn't make friends. She would look at the other kids and think, "I'm not as good as them."

During our first few meetings she hardly said a word. She didn't believe that anything could help her. So the first time I asked her to complete some practice exercises, she did not want to do them, but she did. She complained that the practice exercises were too much work, and she would rather not do them. During our group meetings she always listened to what everyone said, but did not contribute. Gradually she became more comfortable. Nicki told me that she realized that it was okay to have these feelings and she began to trust the people in the group. She started to talk more and told the group about her feelings, thoughts, and things that were bothering her. It seemed like she was feeling better each time we met.



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Nicki told us that she was living with her mom because her mom and dad had just gotten a divorce. She thought that she had caused it, even though she really hadn't. Her mom always told her to do things around the house. When she did these things, it was never good enough for her mom, so her mom would complain and punish Nicki. Nicki was always getting grounded which made her feel very down and worthless.

When we first started meeting, Nicki felt tired so she just sat around. When other kids asked her to do things with them, she would tell them she couldn't – even when she could. We spent a good deal of time talking about friendships, which seemed to help Nicki feel more confident. She made friends with the other kids in the group. She talked more and more and eventually started hanging out with some of the other kids in the group, and hanging out with other kids her age. She got her hair cut so that you could see that she was actually quite nice looking. She started to feel better about herself, and she learned how to talk to her mother so that they wouldn't fight all the time. *(ask students about whether either of the mood spirals were apparent in this story)*

We can't guarantee that everyone will feel that same way or benefit the same way as Nicki. But she is just one of many teenagers who found the group meetings to be useful. At first, she did not want to be part of the group, but eventually she started to participate, enjoyed it and began feeling better.

Students may progress to Phase 2 when they can demonstrate that they have accomplished both Phase 1 objectives.

- Students will be able to explain cognitive theory in their own words.
- Students will be able to describe a mood spiral and give examples of both a positive and negative spiral.



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PHASE 2: Skills Acquisition

After completing Phase 1, the students should understand the general idea of cognitive theory and how it may apply to their specific strengths and weaknesses. Specifically, they should understand the relationship between situations, thoughts and feelings and how these can work together to improve mood or make someone feel worse.

During the second phase, the students will learn skills related to rating their emotions, identifying and changing their thoughts, and choosing pleasant activities. The goal of Phase 2 is to learn the skills. The majority of the practice of the skills will occur in Phase 3.

Phase Two Objectives:

- Students will be able to rate their own emotions using the 0 to 100 scale on the Rating Feelings form
- Students will be able to correctly complete an activities goal sheet
- Students will be able to independently and accurately complete a 5-Column sheet

PHASE 2 - STEP 1: Pleasant Activities

Materials needed for these sessions (see appendix):

1. *Rating Feelings*
2. *What Kinds of Activities Make You Feel?*
3. *Activities Goal Sheet*

Time Estimation: 60 – 70 min (total time; can be done in parts)

- I. Introduction of Emotions and Activities (20 - 30 min)
 - a. Rating Feelings Form
- II. Linking Moods and Activities (25 min)
 - a. Identifying activities
 - b. What Kinds of Activities Make You Feel? form
- III. Planning Activities for the week (15 min)
 - a. Complete Activities Goal Sheet
 - b. Next week- check in with students about each activity

I. INTRODUCTION EMOTIONS AND ACTIVITIES (20 - 30 min.)

To begin we are going to look at a form called the Rating Feelings form (*distribute copies of form*). These pictures will help us learn how to rate our moods. Look at the scale at the top for happy. According to the scale, the face showing “not at all” happy would be rated as a zero and the face showing “very much” happy would be a 100. What score (number) would you rate the “just a little” face on the happy



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scale? Spend some time discussing the ratings and pictures for each scale and then ask the student(s) to rate their mood on each of the individual scales. The answers should be a mood followed by a number (e.g., Angry – 63). **We are going to keep this rating scale so when we meet you can use it to help me understand your feelings as we work on other parts of this program.** Ask the students to complete a Mood Rating Form and put each student's completed form in their CBT Mood Folder. They should complete this form at the beginning of every meeting from this point forward. Leave the Rating Feelings form with the student(s) until the end of the session. Store the forms with materials for later meetings.

II. LINKING MOODS AND ACTIVITIES (25 - 35 min.)

Some of the things we do help us feel happy, sad, anxious or worried. For example, some people feel very relaxed and happy when they are exercising. Others feel worried when they are with certain people. **I want you to think of some of the things you do and how they make you feel. Can you think of an activity or situation that helps make you feel (happy, sad, angry, anxious)?** Give common examples if examples are not forthcoming. Hold a brief discussion and brainstorm examples. Prompt for examples that may be relevant to the student (e.g., arguing with parents, doing well on a test, fighting with sibling, sitting next to certain students in the cafeteria, having Mrs. Smith get mad at student). **Now I am going to give you a form called What Kinds of Activities Make You Feel?** (give form to student(s)). **First, list activities that help you feel each of the moods listed on the sheet. You should only complete the first column on the sheet.** Give time to complete and assist and discuss as needed. **Now rate how much you felt each emotion the last time you did that activity.** Give time to complete and assist and discuss as needed. **Finally, write the number of times that you did each of these activities during the last week, last month and last year.** After completing the form, discuss the proportion of time spent in activities that make the student feel each emotion. Ask about the choices of activities and the emotional consequences of those choices. This discussion should lead to conversation about prioritizing activities that make us feel desirable emotions instead of undesirable emotions.

III. PLANNING ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK (15 min.)

The next thing we need to do related to activities and moods involves completing the **Activities Goals Sheet.** Distribute copies of this sheet. **Look at the information you wrote on the What Kinds of Activities Make You Feel? form.** If you want to feel happier this week than you did last week, what choices about activities could you make? Write down activities that you want to do more often this week than you have done in the past and other activities that you want to do less often this week than you have in the past. Give time to complete and then discuss activity goals for the week. **Now write the approximate number of times you did each activity in the past week and how many times you want to do it during the next week.** Give time to



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*complete and then discuss activity goals for the week. **Next week when we meet I am going to ask you how well you did achieving your goals. Are there reasons that you can think of that would make it hard for you to achieve your goals? Use WILBUR to try to resolve obstacles.***

Sometime students are unsure about what activities “count” or should be considered when doing this. Students should be encouraged to include any formal or informal situations. Chatting with parents after dinner, walking to class with a particular friend, and even spending time daydreaming while lying in bed are activities that can be included in this activity. Encourage them to think broadly and prompt them with ideas.

PHASE 2 - STEP 2: Cognitive Therapy

Step two contains two parts. After completing the instructional activities outlined in this section, group leaders should do the practice activities at group meetings until the students have mastered the Phase 2 objectives listed at the beginning and end of the information about Phase 2 in this manual.

Materials needed for these sessions:

1. *Match the Thoughts and Feelings*
2. *What Kinds of Thoughts Make People Feel?*
3. *Three-column Recording Form*
4. *Five-column Recording Form*
5. *Checking for Distortions Guide*



Time Estimation: 40 - 50 min. (may be provided in small sections)

- I. Thought Recording
 - a. Review Cognitive Theory
 - b. Discuss Thought Recording
 - c. Introduce the 3 Column Sheet
 - i. Go through every column with the student
 - ii. Examples
 - d. Discuss 3 areas that people normally have distortions
 - i. Thoughts about you as a person
 - ii. Thoughts about how others in the world treat you
 - iii. Thoughts about your future
 - e. Practice Activities (multiple sessions)



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THERE WILL BE A SERIES OF SESSIONS THAT ONLY INCLUDE PRACTICE ACTIVITIES BEFORE BEGINNING THE “EVALUATING AND FIXING THOUGHTS”. STUDENTS MUST MASTER THE 3-COLUMN SHEETS BEFORE PROCEEDING.

Time Estimation: 90-120 min. (may be provided in small sections)

- II. Evaluating and Fix Thoughts
 - a. Fixing Distortions
 - b. Evaluating your thoughts
 - i. Asking questions about your thoughts
 - c. Introduce the 5 Column Sheet
 - i. 3 Column Sheet plus new steps
 - ii. Examples
 - d. Do at least one example with the student
 - e. Coping with Difficult Situations
 - i. Coping Cognition Guide
 - f. Practice activities

I. THOUGHT RECORDING (40 - 50 min.)

By now, the student should have a good understanding of the cognitive theory and understand the difference between thoughts and feelings. *Prior to beginning the skills related to 3-column sheets, review the cognitive theory and discuss a few examples and remind them how this will be useful in learning how to manage moods.*



People have really strong feelings because of the thoughts they are having in the situations. And many times, those thoughts are not really true or accurate; those untrue thoughts are called distortions.

Our goal in using cognitive techniques is to be able to notice when we are having a thought distortion that’s causing us to have strong feelings. Then, once we notice the distortion, we can try to “fix it” so that the thought is accurate. This will help us get our feelings under better control. In addition, we will learn to notice when thoughts are leading us to an emotion that could cause us problems. We can use our own thoughts to manage moods even when they are not based on distortions.

In this section, we are going to learn the first cognitive technique, called Thought Recording. The purpose of Thought Recording is to achieve the first part of the goal stated above; that is, we want to be able to notice what we are thinking at the time we are having strong emotions.

Hand the student the “3 Column Sheet” and explain: Do you recognize the headings? The headings represent the cognitive theory that we talked about before. The columns on



the paper are in the same order as they happen in your head: you're in the situation, and this causes you to have thoughts about the situation, and the thoughts cause you to have feelings.

Here is how we use this sheet:

Step 1: Think of a situation that led to strong feelings.

For thought recording, we need to use situations in your life that ended with you having strong feelings. Write a brief description of the situation in the first column (*point to the first column*). You should describe the situation, including who was there, where it was and what exactly happened. If someone else read it, they should be able to know what took place.

Step 2: List the feelings that you had and rate them from 0 to 100.

For this, you're going to skip to the third column of the sheet and write down the feeling or feelings that you had at the end of the situation. Feelings are typically just one word (e.g., angry, sad, happy). Sometimes you'll only think of one feeling, and other times you may have had two or three feelings at the same time. List all of them if you had more than one. We record feelings before thoughts because it is usually easier to identify the feelings than the thoughts. It can take some "detective work" to correctly identify the thoughts.

Then, rate the strength of the feelings, from 0 to 100 using the same scales we discussed when we developed our scales on the Rating Feelings Form (show a copy of this form). Rate the strength of each feeling separately. *Like before, these ratings should be the feeling followed by a number (e.g., happy – 72).*

Step 3: Record the thought that you had in the situation that led to your feelings.

This can be really hard to do sometimes, because remembering exactly what you were thinking can be difficult. Although feelings are typically just one word, thoughts are phrases or sentences. They are usually "in the moment" and in first person and present tense (*see table below for examples to explain*). *If the student is having trouble, you can ask him/her to role play the situation with you to recreate the thoughts that occurred. You can also ask him/her to close his/her eyes and imagine the situation all over again to recreate the thoughts.*

Many people who learn to record automatic thoughts have trouble identifying the actual thoughts and frequently report descriptions instead of thoughts. Thoughts occur in the first person and in present tense and the table below can be used as a reference to help teach the students how to generate automatic thoughts.

Examples for Automatic Thoughts	Examples of Phrases that are not Automatic Thoughts	Why these examples are not automatic thoughts
"You can't get away with that!"	"I was thinking that he shouldn't be allowed to do	Not "in the moment". This is a description of a



	that.”	thought, but not the thought.
“You always pick on me!”	“She is an unfair teacher”	Not first person.
“I crushed this test!”	“I got a good grade and that felt good.”	This is a description of a situation and not the words that were thought at the time.

Once you figure out your thoughts, put them in the second column on your sheet. You should try to find thoughts that you were having that were about one of these three general areas:

- thoughts about you as a person
- thoughts about how others in the world treat you
- thoughts about your future

These three areas are often the places that people have thoughts that are distortions.

If the student is having problems coming up with situations and ideas, give them the example page of the completed 3 column sheet and discuss the examples. Practice completing these sheets for various situations during the remainder of this session.

Becoming good at completing these sheets can take some practice. We are going to do some fun activities to practice completing these forms during the next couple sessions. Until we meet again, please try to notice what you are thinking when you feel happy, sad, angry or anxious at a level higher than 70. These will serve as situations that you can use when we practice this activity in our next session.

Being able to accurately complete these sheets takes practice. Many individuals (including adults) need practice before they can do these well. It is important for students to record their automatic thoughts reliably before moving to the next step of evaluating and fixing the thoughts. Below is a set of activities to use to practice completing the 3-column sheets. Continue to use these activities in group until the students can accurately and reliably record their automatic thoughts.

Practice Activities for recording automatic thoughts

- Before the session, write many situations on pieces of paper and place them in a hat or box. Then, have the students randomly pick a situation out of the hat and act it out with another student. The situations should just describe the setting and behaviors of the participants (no thoughts or feelings). Example: Bob is walking down the hall and trips Sally. While the students act it out, have them add their own emotions into the scene. After the acting, ask the students to brainstorm the situation, thoughts and feelings and the write these on the board or chart paper. Discuss the wording of the thoughts and relationship between thoughts and feelings.




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- Use movie clips from YouTube (or another source) that depict two or more people in an emotional situation. Complete a Three Column Sheet as a group for each clip.
- Read aloud a section of a fiction or non-fiction book that describes an individual in an emotionally charged situation and complete a Three Column Sheet for that character. Sections from stories or books used in English classes or History classes may be particularly relevant for this activity. (other relevant stories may be gathered from magazines or newspapers)

II. EVALUATING AND FIXING THOUGHTS (90-120min.)

Now that you have mastered the three-column sheets we can move onto the last new skill. Now we're going to move onto two other cognitive techniques. The first one involves evaluating your thoughts and "fixing" the ones that are distortions. The second involves coping with those that are difficult, but not distortions.



Don't forget to complete a Mood Rating Form and

those

***Fixing Distortions:* Evaluating your thoughts is just a fancy way of saying that you are trying to decide if a thought from your Thought Recording is a distortion or not. Together, we will choose one of your thoughts from your Thought Recording sheet to evaluate. To evaluate it, you will ask these questions:**

- What is the evidence that my thought is true?
- Is there another possible explanation for what happened?
- Is this thought an exaggeration of the truth?
- Am I making a big deal out of something small?

I will help guide you through the process of evaluating your thoughts. This might mean I ask you if you think it is a distortion or not. It might also mean that I help you set up experiments to test if your thoughts are true. I might also ask you to define some of the abstract words that you have used, including "ugly", "stupid", "love", "hate" and others.

Once we have chosen a thought that we believe is distorted, we will "fix" the distortion. This means that we will change the thought to one that is more like the truth and less like a distortion. So, for example, you might change a thought distortion like "nobody in my neighborhood likes me" to one that is less exaggerated like "some people in my neighborhood like me but not everyone does." *The group leader can guide the group to work together on personal situations that students share in these activities. It is important to remind students to be respectful and not everyone has to share.*

***Hand the student the 5 Column Sheet.* We have a new form that combines the Thought Recording you have already done with the methods for evaluating and "fixing" thoughts you are learning in this section. The new form is called a 5-Column Sheet, because it is divided into five columns. The first three columns are the same as on the 3-Column Sheet, and you complete those exactly like you did for the 3-Column Sheet. Then you stop and evaluate whether the thought you had is accurate or a distortion. If you discover that it is a distortion, you "fix" the thought by changing it to a new thought that is more accurate. Then you write the new thought in the fourth column labeled "New Thought."**



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The final step to complete the 5-Column Sheet is to give the situation a new set of feelings in “New Feelings” column. When the thoughts change, our feelings may also change. Now you can use the same rating scale of feelings (0 to 100) (*show them the Rating Feelings form*) to show how strong the feelings are now that you have “fixed” the thought. These new ratings of the feelings will usually be lower than the first ratings.

Hand the student the completed example of the 5 Column Sheet from the appendix. You can see that this is just a continuation of the Thought Recording example I showed you before. Notice that the automatic thought (“My favorite teacher hates me”) was found to be a distortion. To change the thoughts in this example, the student asked the question “is there another possible explanation for what happened in this situation?” The student found that there were several possible explanations. Then the student was asked to make a list of things that people do to you when they hate you. After the student came up with five or six items (like “call you nasty names” and “refuse to speak to you”), this student realized that her teacher hadn’t done anything like that. She therefore recognized the automatic thought as a distortion, and “fixed it” by changing it to the new thought she recorded in the fourth column. Then, as you can see, the new thought resulted in a big drop in the student’s feelings of sadness.

Have the student(s) record at least one situation, thought and feeling on the new 5-column sheet. Before considering the situation, thought and feeling on your form, let’s review those four questions that we use to check our thoughts for distortions (*Give students a copy of the Checking Thoughts for Distortions Guide and review and discuss each of the four questions used to test for a distortion. Generate examples of thoughts related to each of the four questions.*)

Coping with Difficult Situation: Sometimes thoughts are not distortions and can lead us to feel intense emotions. For example, it is possible that students you observe laughing are laughing at you. This could lead to feeling very sad or angry. Pets, friends and grandparents may die and these events are truly sad. Sometimes we need to use cognitive theory to help us cope with difficult situations. This can be more difficult than fixing a distortion and sometimes it does not make the sadness or anger go away, but it can help us effectively deal with the emotions.

Let’s think of a situation and thought that is likely to make someone feel very angry, anxious or sad, but the thought is not a distortion. Use the following example from the *Coping Cognitions Guide*. Mike is 17 years old and he just discovered that his girlfriend had been cheating on him with a guy that Mike hates. She told him today that she is dumping him to go with the other guy. Mike’s thoughts include, “You’re leaving me for him. He is an idiot.”; “I thought we were in love. How can you do that to me?”; “You were lying to me all that time! You never cared for me.”; and “This can’t be happening.” *Discuss how these thoughts might make Mike feel.*

Review the *Coping Cognitions Guide* (in the appendix – phase 2) and discuss each statement in relation to the problem, strategy and “fix”. Now let’s complete a 5 column sheet with an example of a sad event. Write on the board that Mark’s aunt died and he was very close to her. His automatic thoughts were, “I can’t believe that I will never see her again.”; “Who will I talk to about my life?”; “She wanted to visit me this summer.”; and “I always felt so happy



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when I was with her.” None of these thoughts are distortions or incorrect, but there are ways to think about the situation in a way that can help us cope with the loss. The last thought may be a little tricky to “fix”. The implication from the thought is that he has lost a major source of happiness in his life and therefore, he may not be as happy. Thoughts to help cope with this may involve keeping “her” or “her memory” with you all of the time and using this to keep you happy, thinking about how she wanted you to be happy and successful and believed in you, and thinking about other friends and family who also make you happy and how valuable they are to you.

This discussion can make the students feel sad. It is important to remain upbeat and positive during the discussion. Some students may share their situations that involve losses of loved ones. After completing this example, it may be appropriate to ask them to complete a sheet related to a situation involving the death of a friend or family member. If you do this, then make sure you have enough time to complete it. Ending the session by recording the thoughts and feelings without fixing the distortions or adding the coping thoughts will likely lead the group session to end on a very negative note.

*After practicing with the coping example, provide another example that may include thoughts that are distortions and others that are not. Review the fixing process for automatic thoughts. So after we record our automatic thoughts on a 5-Column sheet in the second column and associated feelings in the third, then we review the thought to see whether it is a distortion or not (see *Checking for Distortions Guide*) and fix the distortions if they exist. Then we review the remaining thoughts and consider ways to change them that will help us cope.*

Being able to accurately complete these sheets takes practice. Many individuals (including adults) need practice before they can do these well. Correcting automatic thoughts is a critically important step in this intervention. It is expected that it may take three or more sessions before students are competent at this. Below are some activities that can be used to help students practice and learn how to do this. Continue to use these activities in group until the students can accurately and reliably record and correct their automatic thoughts.

Practice Activities for recording and correcting automatic thoughts

- Encourage a member to identify a negative thought or issue and have other members use the Cognitive Distortions Guide and Coping Cognition strategies to help the member see the thought from different perspectives. If members of the group are not contributing, or do not wish to engage in discussion, perhaps create a scenario and discuss the character’s thoughts and how they might make the person feel. Then brainstorm ways to fix those thoughts.
- Use practice activities in the previous section that focused on learning to complete the 3-column sheets, but add the fixing steps and revised mood ratings.



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Students may progress to Phase 3 when they can demonstrate that they have accomplished all three Phase 2 objectives.

- Students will be able to rate their own emotions using the 0 to 100 scale on the Rating Feelings form
- Students will be able to correctly complete an activities goal sheet
- Students will be able to independently and accurately complete a 5-Column sheet



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PHASE 3: Practice & Application

The knowledge and skills learned in Phases 1 and 2 provide the foundation, but the benefit of this intervention relies on successful implementation of Phase 3. During Phase 3 students will learn to apply these skills to their daily lives. Sessions in Phase 3 may be short and should be individual meetings with a student. Although the sessions may sometimes be as short as ten minutes, they are most likely to be effective if they are frequent (no less than once per week and preferably more than that). This is similar to optimal methods for learning in a high school class. The teacher instructs the students on the knowledge and skills and students will maximize their learning if they study for short intervals frequently.

Time Estimation: varies with every student (20 minutes-1 hour sessions)

- I. Phase Three Check In Sheet
- II. Check how the student is doing
- III. Highest/lowest rating for emotions since last session
- IV. Fill out 5 Column Sheet
- V. Activities Goal sheets from previous session

Clinician should bring the following to these sessions

Student's CBT Emotions folder (with all sheets from previous sessions)

Blank Phase 3 Check-In sheet

Blank 5-Column sheet

Blank Activity Goals sheet

1. Meet with a student in a confidential setting and bring the student's CBT Emotions folder with stapled sheets (Phase Three Check-In sheets, 5-Column sheets, and Activities Goals sheets) from previous meetings and a blank 5-Column sheet, Activity Goals sheet, and Phase Three Check-In sheet.
2. Enter the information on the two lines at the top of the Phase Three Check-In sheet (name and date).
3. Ask the student how things have been going with classes/friends/family/job (or whatever is relevant for this student) and record the answer in the space after this question on the Phase Three Check-In sheet.
4. Ask the student to tell you his/her typical, highest and lowest rating for happy, sad, angry and anxious since your last meeting and record these in the table in the middle of the Phase Three Check-In sheet.
5. Select a situation for a 5-Column sheet that occurred since your last meeting that involves interactions with others and led to feelings of happiness, sadness, anger or anxiety. If the student cannot think of one, then extend the timeline back before the



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time you last met. Do not use a situation that you already reviewed. Complete a 5-Column sheet for that situation.

6. Look at the Activity Goals sheet from the previous session and discuss the student's choices since you last met related to the activity goals. Use WILBUR to address obstacles to achieving the goals and complete a new sheet with goals for activities.
7. Enter the length of the meeting on the line near the top of the Phase Three Check-In sheet.
8. Staple the Phase Three Check-In, 5-Column and Activities Goals sheets together and put them in the student's CBT Emotions folder.



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APPENDIX

1. *Session 1*
2. *Phase 1*
3. *Phase 2*
4. *Phase 3*



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APPENDIX Session 1

Ice Breaker Activities



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Ice Breaker Activities

1. Have a ball with written questions and toss it to each other and wherever their right index finger catches the ball, they will answer the question. (Question examples: Whom do you look up to most in your family? If you were to go anywhere in the world where would you go? What's important to you about your culture?)
2. Two truths and a lie activity. Everyone shares two truths and one lie and the rest of the group tries to figure out which statement was a lie.
3. Have group members write down a certain type of person (e.g., firefighter, etc.) in private and then have the facilitator stick the Post-it on the group members' foreheads. The group then agrees to interact with the person with the Post-it in a way that addresses them like the person written on their forehead. The Post-it member can also ask yes/no questions of other members to try to determine who they are on the Post-it. The objective is for the member with the Post-it to try to figure out what is written on the Post-it.
4. Have a list of things/facts about people (Ex: having more than 3 siblings). Read out the list and have the students who have this trait to stand up. This game often helps the students realize they have a lot in common with others.
5. Every student writes a fun fact about himself/herself and puts it into a hat. The facilitator reads them aloud while everyone guesses whose they are.
6. Depending on the size of the group do a Venn diagram together or split group into 2-3 students and do a Venn diagram. Find things the students have in common and write these in the intersecting areas of the diagram and unique things about the students in the outer areas.
7. Pass around a roll of toilet paper and instruct students to take as many squares as they want without any further instructions. When everyone has done this, they have to tell the group something different about themselves for each square they took.



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APPENDIX Phase 1

1. *Cognitive Theory Diagram*
2. *Downward and Upward Spiral*



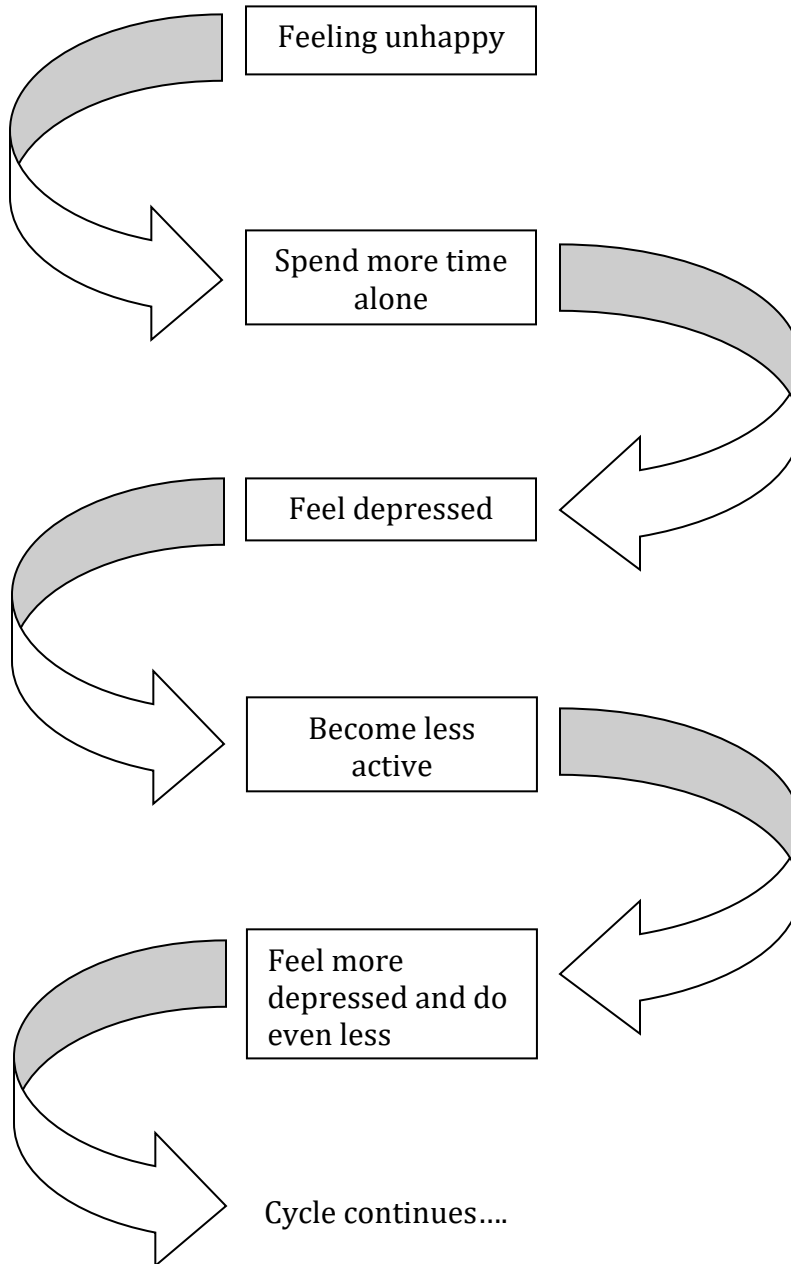
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Cognitive Theory Diagram

SITUATION -----> THOUGHTS -----> FEELINGS



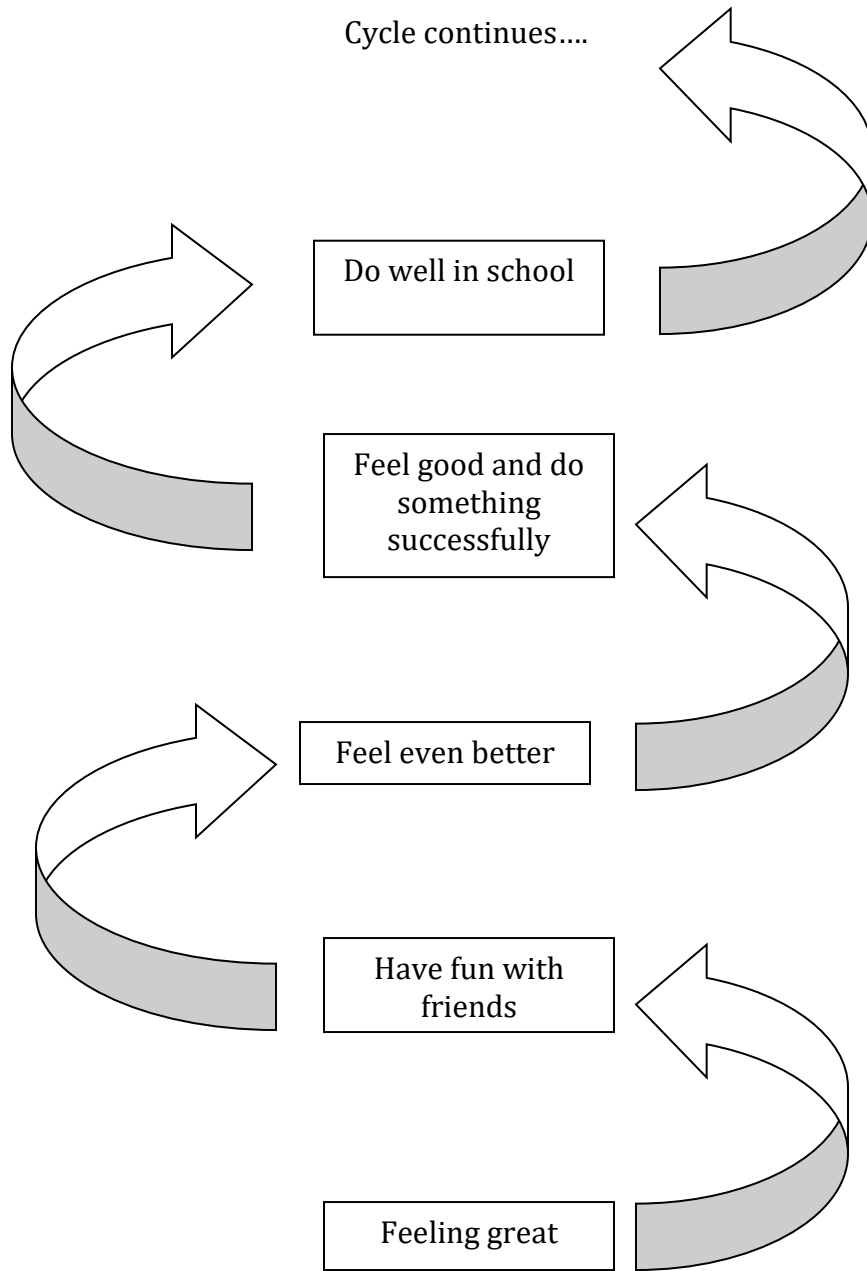
Downward Spiral Handout





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Upward Spiral Handout



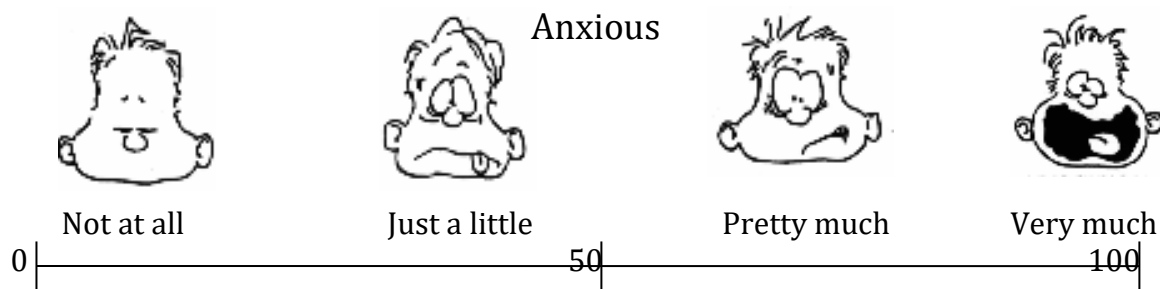
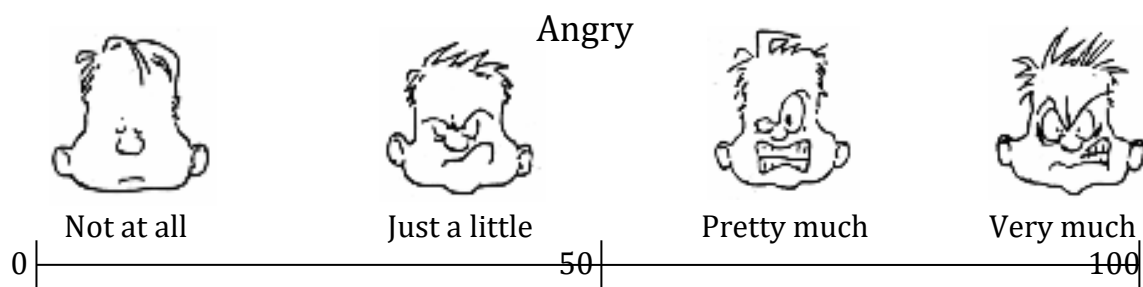
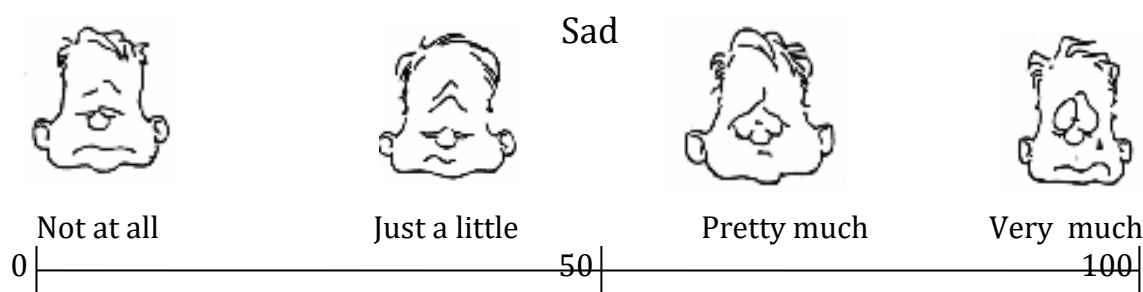
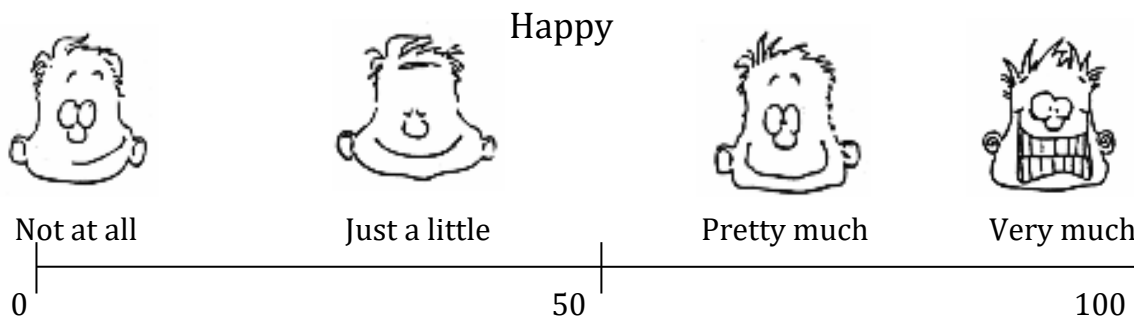


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APPENDIX Phase 2

1. *Rating Feelings*
2. *Mood Ratings Form*
3. *What Kinds of Activities Make You Feel?*
4. *Activity Goal Sheet*
5. *Match The Thoughts and Feelings*
6. *What Kinds of Thoughts Make People Feel?*
7. *Three-column Recording Form*
8. *Five-column Recording Form*
9. *Checking for Distortions Guide*
10. *Common Examples of Errors in Thinking*
11. *Coping Cognitions Guide*

Rating feelings





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Mood Rating Form

Student Name _____ Date _____

Please write the ratings for each mood in the table below. Use the ratings from the Rating Feelings form. Remember that 100 means that you felt that mood “very much” and 0 means that you felt it “not at all”. See the descriptions below to understand the column headings.

TYPICAL – This rating should be the one that was most common for you since your last group meeting. You may have had some high and low scores during that time, but the score you write in the TYPICAL column is the score that represents your mood most of the time.

HIGHEST – This rating should show the time that you felt the mood the strongest since the last meeting. Even if you felt the mood very strongly for only a few minutes, that is the score that should go in this column. For example, Mark felt pretty happy most of the week (TYPICAL = 77), but when he learned that he got the summer job that he wanted he felt extremely happy (98) so he recorded a 98 in the HIGHEST column in the happy row.

LOWEST - This rating should show the time that you felt the mood the lowest since the last meeting. Even if you felt the mood very little for only a few minutes, that is the score that should go in this column. For example, Jessica felt kind of down most of the week (TYPICAL=68), but when she was relaxed and playing with her dog one evening she did not feel sad at all (8) so she recorded an 8 in her LOWEST column for sad.

Mood Ratings	Typical	Highest	Lowest
Happy			
Sad			
Angry			
Anxious			

What kinds of activities make you feel...

Happy



Activities	Rating from Last Time	Times This Week	Times This Month	Times This Year

Sad



Activities	Rating from Last Time	Times This Week	Times This Month	Times This Year

Anxious



Activities	Rating from Last Time	Times This Week	Times This Month	Times This Year



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What kinds of activities make you feel...

Angry



Activities	Rating			
	from Last Time	Times This Week	Times This Month	Times This Year

Proud



Activities	Rating			
	from Last Time	Times This Week	Times This Month	Times This Year

Guilty



Activities	Rating			
	from Last Time	Times This Week	Times This Month	Times This Year



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Activity Goals

Name _____ Today's Date _____

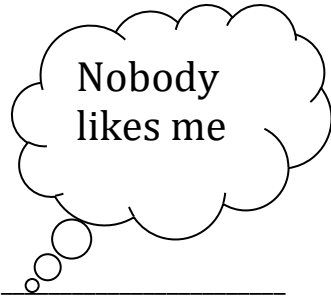
I Want to do These Activities More Often This Week Than I Did Last Week	Number of Times Did This Last Week	Goal for Number of Times This Coming Week
--	------------------------------------	---

I Want to do These Activities Less Often This Week Than I Did Last Week	Number of Times Did This Last Week	Goal for Number of Times This Coming Week
--	------------------------------------	---



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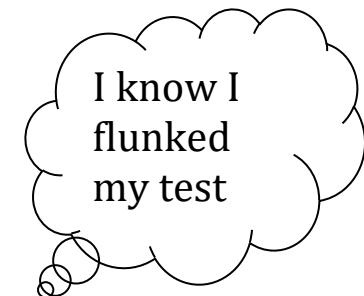
Match the thoughts and feelings



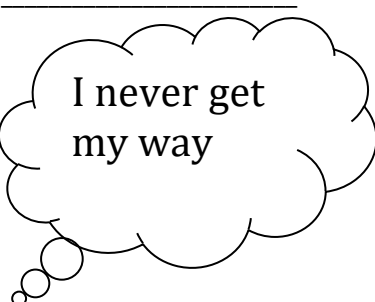
Anxious



Angry



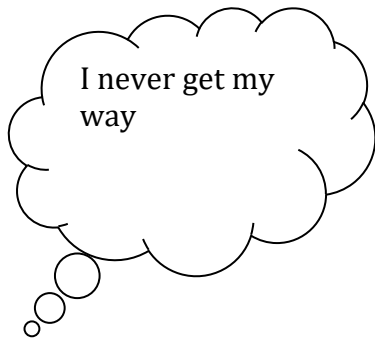
Happy





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Sad





CARS

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What kinds of thoughts make people feel...



Happy



Sad



Anxious





Scared



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CARS

What kinds of thoughts make people feel...



Embarrassed



Guilty



Hopeful



Angry



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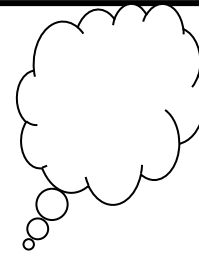


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Student Name _____

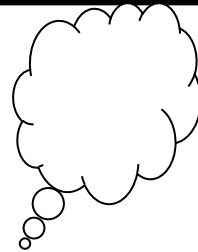
Date _____

Situation → Thoughts → Feelings



Situation → Thoughts → Feelings

I was walking down the hall alone yesterday on my way to the cafeteria at lunch. I said hello to my favorite teacher and she didn't answer back.



She doesn't even know I am here. Nobody does.



Sad- 90

My mother does not like my boyfriend and she told me I cannot talk to him while I am in the house.

She treats me worse than she treats my little sister. I can't even have a boyfriend!

Angry- 95
Sad- 80
Frustrated- 100



I was walking through the hall today before third period. Carl hit me in the back of the head with a spitball.



He is always picking on me. What an idiot! Why does he have friends and I don't?

Angry- 80
Sad - 65





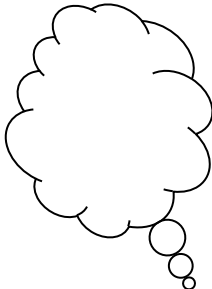




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Student Name _____

Date _____

Situation →	Thoughts →	Feelings	New thoughts →	New feelings
				

Situation → Thoughts → Feelings → New thoughts → New feelings

I was walking down the hall alone yesterday on my way to the cafeteria at lunch. I said hello to my favorite teacher and she didn't answer back.



She doesn't even know I am here. Nobody does.

Sad- 90

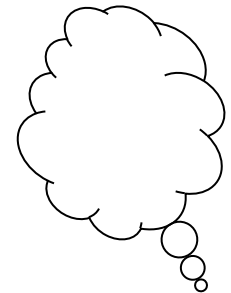


53



Man, she can be spacey sometimes. She must have been thinking about something.

Sad- 30





Checking for Distortions Guide

What is the evidence that my thought is true?

Answering this question involves identifying facts (not opinions) that support and contradict the thought. Make a list of all of the facts that support the thought and the evidence that does not support the thought. These lists should only include facts.

Look for patterns and contradictory information: Does the person always act that way? For example, if the thought is, “she hates me”; then does that person always act as if she hates you? Are there times she acts in a way that suggests that she likes you?

Does the fact warrant the conclusion: Is the conclusion being drawn about the situation true? For example, does one failing grade make someone an idiot? Are there things that led to the failing grade other than being smart or not (e.g., did not study)?

Are you mind reading? Sometimes people think they know what others are thinking. It is usually better to find out for sure as mind reading is often wrong!

Is there another possible explanation for what happened?

This question requires brainstorming possibilities (like generating ideas in WILBUR). Make a list of other possible explanations for what happened than the one included in the thought.

Other behaviors that I could have done: Consider if there are things that you could have done to cause the problem besides the thought. For example, your mother yelling at you for coming home late may not mean that she treats you like a little kid. It may mean that you simply forgot to call her to tell her that you were running late and she was worried.

Behaviors that others could have done: Are there things that others may have done to cause the situation. For example, your friend may have had a lousy day and been in an irritable mood when she was mean to you. The bad situation may have had nothing to do with you.

Is this thought an exaggeration of the truth?

Sometimes our thoughts are exaggerations of the truth. So our thought may be partially true, but the way we say it to ourselves makes it seem much worse than it really is. Below is a clue to keep in mind when considering exaggerations.

All or Nothing Thinking: All or nothing thinking is usually an exaggeration. If your automatic thought has any of the following words in it, then it probably includes an exaggeration: *everyone, nobody, always, never, must, and should*. These words usually make a sentence an exaggeration because things are rarely true to such an extreme degree.

Imaginary Rules: People do not always do what they “must” or “should” and it is not your job to make them. Others sometimes reject things that we believe to be important and true. If the thought has the words “should” or “must” in it, then it is likely to be a distortion.

Am I making a big deal out of something small?

This question is the “is it worth it” question. Sometimes our thoughts are rigid and catastrophic and this question encourages you to consider “letting it go”.



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What would happen if you did nothing: If you ignored the situation, what would happen (today, tomorrow, next week, next month)? If the answer is nothing or almost nothing, then you may be making a big deal out of something small.

What is the benefit of acting on this: If you did something about this situation because of how you feel, are there consequences? Are the consequences worth the benefit of acting on your emotion? Use your WILBUR problem-solving skills to help with this one.

Common Examples of Errors in Thinking

- **Blaming:** You focus on the other person as the source of your negative feelings and you refuse to take responsibility for changing yourself. For example: "She's to blame for the way I feel now" or "My parents caused all my problems."
- **Catastrophizing:** You believe that what has happened or will happen will be so awful and unbearable that you won't be able to stand it. For example: "It would be terrible if I failed."
- **Dichotomous thinking:** You view events, or people, in all-or-nothing terms. For example: "I get rejected by everyone" or "It was a waste of time."
- **Discounting positives:** You claim that the positive accomplishments you or others attain are trivial. For example: "That's what girlfriends are supposed to do—so it doesn't count when she's nice to me" or "Those successes were easy, so they don't matter."
- **Emotional reasoning:** You let your feelings guide your interpretation of reality. For example, "I feel depressed; therefore, my relationship is not working out."
- **Fortune telling:** You predict the future—that things will get worse or that there is danger ahead. For example: "I'll fail that exam" or "I won't get the job."
- **Inability to disconfirm:** You reject any evidence or arguments that might contradict your negative thoughts. For example, when you have the thought "I'm unlovable," you reject as irrelevant any evidence that people like you. Consequently, your thought cannot be refuted. Another example: "That's not the real issue. There are deeper problems. There are other factors."
- **Judgment focus:** You view yourself, others, and events in terms of black/white evaluations (good-bad or superior-inferior) rather than simply describing, accepting, or understanding. You are continually measuring yourself and others according to arbitrary standards and finding that you and others fall short. You are focused on the judgments of others as well as your own judgments of yourself. For example: "I didn't perform well in college" or "If I take up tennis, I won't do well" or "Look how successful she is. I'm not successful."
- **Labeling:** You assign global negative traits to yourself and others. For example: "I'm undesirable" or "He's a rotten person."
- **Mind reading:** You assume that you know what people think without having sufficient evidence of their thoughts. For example: "He thinks I'm a loser."
- **Negative filter:** You focus almost exclusively on the negatives and seldom notice the positives. For example: "Look at all of the people who don't like me."



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- **Overgeneralizing:** You perceive a global pattern of negatives on the basis of a single incident. For example: "This generally happens to me. I seem to fail at a lot of things."
- **Personalizing:** You attribute a disproportionate amount of the blame for negative events to yourself and fail to see that certain events are also caused by others. For example: "My relationship ended because I failed."
- **Regret orientation:** You focus on the idea that you could have done better in the past, rather than on what you could do better now. For example: "I could have had a better job if I had tried" or "I shouldn't have said that."
- **"Shoulds":** You interpret events in terms of how things should be rather than simply focusing on what is. For example: "I should do well. If I don't, then I'm a failure."
- **Unfair comparisons:** You interpret events in terms of standards that are unrealistic by focusing primarily on others who do better than you and then judging yourself inferior in the comparison. For example: "She's more successful than I am" or "Others did better than I did on the test."
- **What if?:** You ask a series of questions about "what if" something happens, and you are never satisfied with any of the answers. For example: "Yeah, but what if I get anxious?" Or "What if I can't catch my breath?"

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Coping Cognitions Guide

Below is an example of a situation that is likely to lead someone to be quite upset. Some of Mike’s thoughts in the example are not distortions. The table below the example lists some “fixes” for a 5-Column sheet for some of Mike’s thoughts.

Mike is 17 years old and he just discovered that his girlfriend had been cheating on him with a guy that Mike hates. She told him today that she is dumping him to go with the other guy. Mike’s thoughts include, “You’re leaving me for him! He is an idiot.”; “I thought we were in love. How can you do that to me?”; “You were lying to me all that time! You never cared for me.”; and “This can’t be happening.”.

Thought	Problem	Coping Strategy	Fix
<i>You are leaving me for him! He is an idiot!</i>	This thought implies that his girlfriend thinks that he is worse than an “idiot”.	Self- preservation: Other people do not determine your worth. You do!	I didn’t know her as well as I thought I did. I never would have thought that she would have lied to me to be with someone else.
<i>I thought we were in love. How can you do that to me?</i>	This thought makes it sound like his girlfriend’s choices are all about being mean to him. Although it is possible that she was at least partially motivated by anger at him, there are probably many other reasons that went into her decisions besides attacking Mike. If this type of thought is not corrected, then anger and retaliation may become Mike’s focus.	Accept That it Hurts: Sometimes we feel extremely sad without anyone having been mean to us. Accept that it is sad, but her intent (being mean or not) doesn’t really matter.	This really hurts because I really loved what I thought we had together.
<i>You were lying to me all that time! You never cared for me.</i>	This thought can lead Mike to not trust or care for another person again. If he decides that the whole relationship was bad because of how it ended, he may not trust to get that close to someone again. Even in bad	Don’t lose the silver linings: It is very easy to spoil many good things when they are associated with a bad experience. Mike needs to remember the good times and good feelings are important so	I can’t believe it ended this way. We had a great thing going and it is sad to have it end this way.



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	relationships, there are good times of closeness and discounting these gives a distorted view of the relationship.	that he continues to enter into relationships and feel good about them.	
<i>This can't be happening.</i>	Thoughts like this can keep a person from moving on from a bad situation. It can keep Mike thinking about how awful it is indefinitely as if he is waiting for reality to save him (because of course, this can't be really happening). Unfortunately, bad things happen and thoughts like this are fine for a little while after the bad situation, if they persist, they will not allow Mike to recover.	Plan Ahead: Mike needs to focus on making adjustments to his routine based on the fact that he will not be spending time with his girlfriend. He needs to think of things that he enjoys and plan to do them. He may find that he can reconnect with family and friends that he was spending less time with since having a girlfriend. Clubs, hobbies and activities that he may have done less since having a girlfriend may be pursued.	This really shocked me. I have to find some friends/activities to focus my time and attention.



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APPENDIX Phase 3

Phase 3 Check-In Sheet



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Phase Three Check-In Sheets

Student's Name _____

Date _____

Approximate Length of Meeting _____

How have things been going since the last time we spoke?

Please tell me your typical, highest and lowest mood ratings (0 – 100) that you have experienced since we met last. Typical should be rating that would be most common for the student during the time interval. Highest and lowest should represent the moments with the most extreme emotions during the time since the last meeting.

Mood Ratings	Typical	Highest	Lowest
Happy			
Sad			
Angry			
Anxious			

Select a difficult or emotionally charged situation from the time between the last meeting and this one and complete a 5-column sheet. **STAPLE THE COMPLETED 5-COLUMN SHEET TO THIS FORM**

Review Activity Goals sheet from last session and complete a new one. **STAPLE THE COMPLETED ACTIVITY GOALS SHEET TO THIS FORM.**