**Mood Management**

**Student Workbook**



**Adapted from Drexel University Counseling Center**

**Kansas State Counseling and Psychological Services**

**785-532-6927**

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Welcome!

Welcome to Mood Management, a three-session workshop series intended to help increase your understanding of emotions and develop strategies to help you cope when your emotions become distressing and hard to tolerate. The goal is to provide you with skills to recognize and manage symptoms you may be experiencing. We hope you find it helpful.

Many people pursue therapy with the idea that the therapist will be able to “fix” them. While Mood Management is designed to provide specific tools to better manage overwhelming emotions, it is also designed to help *you* get a better idea of how to apply these strategies to *your own* situation. In order to get the most out of Mood Management, it is important to attend all 3 sessions since the material from each week builds on the previous week’s topic.

These skills are a form of “mental health hygiene.” At the outset, you may question why you need to practice these skills so often. Think of it like dental hygiene—you brush your teeth multiple times a day to prevent the buildup of plaque and ultimately to prevent cavities. Like brushing your teeth, daily skill practice can help you regulate your emotions both on a regular basis and when emotions become overwhelming. The more you practice and use these skills as part of your daily routine, the less tedious they will be.

Even if we brush our teeth meticulously, some of us still get cavities. There is a parallel to Mood Management skills here too, since change is not linear and you may encounter obstacles, setbacks, and/or difficulties while learning and integrating these skills into your life. Try your best not to get discouraged if this happens. You wouldn’t stop brushing your teeth if you found out you had a cavity!

Should you wish to focus more in depth on any of your mood-related concerns, you may debrief with a therapist following completion of the Mood Management workshop series to discuss options.

If at any time you notice active suicidal thoughts, please let your Mood Management leader know or contact the Counseling and Psychological Services at 785-532-6927.

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

**What is Mood Management?**

A three-session workshop series that focuses on mindfulness, emotion regulation and distress tolerance. It is designed to help people who want to gain a deeper understanding of their emotions and develop more tools to manage emotional distress.

**Why does the workshop use a three-session model?**

Three sessions allows you sufficient time to learn the concepts with time to practice between sessions. Keeping it to three 50-minute sessions allows you to find time in your busy schedule to learn these skills.

**What if I need more than 3 weeks to learn the model?**

You are not alone. The skills are difficult and take time to build. If you need more resources, we encourage you to follow-up with your referring clinician.

**What if I don’t feel comfortable in groups?**

Many people feel a little anxious about participating in a group. This workshop is structured and curriculum-driven, like a class. **You are not required to speak if you do not feel comfortable doing so.** The facilitators respect each participant’s right to share only what they are comfortable sharing and never require you to share sensitive or private information.

**What if I have an urgent need to see a counselor during the seminar?**

Simply let the workshop leader or Counseling and Psychological Services front desk staff know and they will facilitate you getting the help you need.

**Why do I have to do homework?**

The focus of this workshop is on building skills to use when you feel emotionally distressed; in order to achieve that goal, regular practice is essential. You will not be required to provide your responses out loud at any time. However, it’s important to bring your responses with you each week as you may be asked to look back or elaborate on a prior assignment during the workshop.

**What if I didn’t do my homework?**

We encourage you to come to group regardless. If you forget your workbook, we can provide you a new one. We can also assist you in working on examples when the homework is reviewed.

**IN SESSION WORKSHEETS**

**SESSION 1: Introduction & Mindfulness**

**Introduction: Workshop Series Goal Setting**

**General goal:**

To increase your understanding of your emotions and develop strategies to help you cope when they become overwhelming.

**Specific goals:**

Behaviors to Decrease:

* Emptiness; carelessness; being out of touch with yourself and with others
* Being judgmental of yourself or others
* Loneliness or conflicts in relationships
* Difficulty with change; difficulty accepting reality
* Mood swings; extreme emotions; acting based solely on your mood
* Impulsivity; risky behaviors; using drinking or drugs to cope; addiction
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Skills to Increase:

1. Mindfulness skills
2. Emotion regulation skills
3. Distress tolerance skills

**Introduction to Mindfulness**

**Goals of Mindfulness Practice**

* Reduce suffering, pain, tension and stress
* Increase happiness and contentment
* Increase control of your mind, memory, and focus
* Experience reality as it is
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**Mindfulness Definitions**

**What is mindfulness?**

Mindfulness is intentionally directing our awareness of thoughts, feelings and senses to the present moment. In mindfulness, this is done nonjudgmentally and without attachment to the present moment. In other words, we refrain from evaluating or judging the current moment (as good, bad, stupid, etc.) and accept our thoughts, feelings and senses just as they are. We also attend to the awareness of each new moment without clinging to the past or thinking into the future.

**How do I learn to practice mindfulness?**

Mindfulness skills can be practiced anytime, anywhere and while doing anything. Intentionally paying attention to the moment without judgment or attachment is all that is needed, but it can be harder than it sounds. We will learn the “what” and “how” of practicing mindfulness in more depth during today’s session.

Meditation is a form of practicing mindfulness for a set period of time. During mindfulness meditation, we find a comfortable position to stand, sit or lay in and focus the mind on our breath, sensations, thoughts and emotions. There are many ways to practice mindfulness meditation depending on what we focus on.

Contemplative prayer is a spiritual mindfulness practice.

Mindfulness movement includes yoga, martial arts, and dance. Other forms of movement, such as walking, can serve to practice mindfulness as well.

**The “What” and “How” of Mindfulness**

**What:**

* **Observe:** notice the sensations in your body, notice thoughts come into your mind and pass by like clouds in the sky, observe outside of yourself; when you notice your attention drifting, gently bring yourself back to the present moment
* **Describe:** focus on sensations to put words to your experience, label what you are observing, focus on stating facts as opposed to opinions or interpretations
* **Participate:** go with the flow, throw yourself completely into what you are doing or experiencing in the current moment, give your full attention

**How:**

* **Nonjudgmentally:** experience without evaluating as good or bad; acknowledge the difference between helpful and harmful or safe and dangerous, but don’t judge; if you find yourself judging, don’t judge your judging
* **One-mindfully:** pay attention to now, let go of distractions, concentrate and do one thing at a time
* **Effectively:** act skillfully, respectfully, with your goals in mind, and focus on what works (don’t let your emotions get in the way of being effective)

**Journal Exercise – Focus on a Single Object:**

Instructions: Use the “what” and “how” mindfulness skills to observe and describe an object.

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Write about any reactions you had to the “Focus on a Single Object” exercise:

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**Mindful Moments Exercise:**

Instructions: Take a look at some examples of ways you might try practicing the observe, describe and participate skills. Then, come up with 3 additional ways you might practice them yourself.

**Observe**

* Pay attention to your breathing, nothing else, just breathing in and out.
* Notice the sounds around you. What can you hear right now?
* Notice what you can feel (e.g. the feeling of your clothes, the air on your skin, your body’s contact with the floor or the chair you are sitting in).
* Fully immerse yourself when you take a bite while eating. What are the flavors, textures, temperature of what you are eating?
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**Describe**

* Practice describing one of your belongings or an object you found in nature.
* Describe as you observe yourself breathing by repeating “I am inhaling, I am exhaling” while you breathe.
* Describe what a person has done or is doing right now. Be very specific and try to avoid judging, making assumptions, or commenting on things that are not truly observable in that moment.
* Describe your feelings and associated thoughts: “I feel X, and my thoughts are Y.”
* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
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**Participate**

* Dance to music.
* Throw yourself into fully listening to what another person is saying.
* Sing along to music you are listening to.
* While walking, focus only on walking.
* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
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**Homework: Mindfulness Practice**

Write about one situation each day that prompted you to practice mindfulness.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Day:** | **Situation (who, what, where, when):** | **Check off skills used:** | **Describe your experience using the skills:** | **Check if your practice contributed to the following:** |
| Monday |  | * Observe * Describe * Participate * Nonjudgmentally * One-mindfully * Effectively |  | * Reduced suffering * Increased happiness * Increased focus * Increased living in the present * Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Tuesday |  | * Observe * Describe * Participate * Nonjudgmentally * One-mindfully * Effectively |  | * Reduced suffering * Increased happiness * Increased focus * Increased living in the present * Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Wednesday |  | * Observe * Describe * Participate * Nonjudgmentally * One-mindfully * Effectively |  | * Reduced suffering * Increased happiness * Increased focus * Increased living in the present * Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Thursday |  | * Observe * Describe * Participate * Nonjudgmentally * One-mindfully * Effectively |  | * Reduced suffering * Increased happiness * Increased focus * Increased living in the present * Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Friday |  | * Observe * Describe * Participate * Nonjudgmentally * One-mindfully * Effectively |  | * Reduced suffering * Increased happiness * Increased focus * Increased living in the present * Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Saturday |  | * Observe * Describe * Participate * Nonjudgmentally * One-mindfully * Effectively |  | * Reduced suffering * Increased happiness * Increased focus * Increased living in the present * Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Sunday |  | * Observe * Describe * Participate * Nonjudgmentally * One-mindfully * Effectively |  | * Reduced suffering * Increased happiness * Increased focus * Increased living in the present * Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

**SESSION 2:**

**Emotion Regulation**

**Homework Review**

If you practiced the homework, what strategies did you try? What did you observe? If you practiced these strategies more than once, what did you notice across practices?

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If you did not practice the homework, what got in the way? If something got in the way, what could you do over the upcoming week to try to reduce this barrier?

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**Goals of Emotion Regulation**

* Understand emotions and what they do for you
* Increase ability to identify (observe and describe) your emotions
* Stop unwanted emotions from starting in the first place
* Develop more understanding of unwanted emotions once they start
* Increase resilience and your ability to cope with strong emotions
* Increase positive emotions
* Reduce suffering when painful emotions overwhelm you
* Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**What Good Are Emotions?**

|  |
| --- |
| **EMOTIONS COMMUNICATE TO (AND INFLUENCE) OTHERS**     * Facial expressions are a hard-wired part of emotions. Facial expressions communicate faster than words and may replace words. * Our emotions are also communicated to others through language, voice tone, and body language. * When it is important to communicate to others, or send them a message, it can be very hard for us to change our emotions. * Whether we intend it or not, our communication of emotions influences others. |

|  |
| --- |
| **EMOTIONS ORGANIZE AND MOTIVATE ACTION**   * Emotions motivate our behavior and prepare us for action. The action urge connected to specific emotions is often hard-wired. * Emotions save time in getting us to act in important situations. This is especially useful when we don't have time to think everything through. * Strong emotions help us overcome obstacles in our mind and in the environment. |

|  |
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| **EMOTIONS CAN BE SELF-VALIDATING**   * Our emotional reactions to other people and to events can give us information about the situation. Emotions can be signals or alarms that something is happening. * When this is carried to an extreme, emotions are treated as facts: "If I feel incompetent, I am." "If I get depressed when left alone, I shouldn't be left alone." "If I feel right about something, it is right." "If I'm afraid, it is threatening." "I love him, so he must be OK." |

**Myths About Emotions**

1. There is a right way to feel in every situation.

CHALLENGE:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. Letting others know that I am feeling bad is admitting weakness.

CHALLENGE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. Negative feelings are bad and destructive.

CHALLENGE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. Being emotional means being out of control.

CHALLENGE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. Emotions can just happen for no reason.

CHALLENGE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6. Some emotions are stupid.

CHALLENGE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

7. Painful emotions are a result of a bad attitude.

CHALLENGE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

8. If others don't approve of my feelings, I shouldn't feel the way I do. CHALLENGE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

9. Other people are the best judges of how I am feeling.

CHALLENGE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

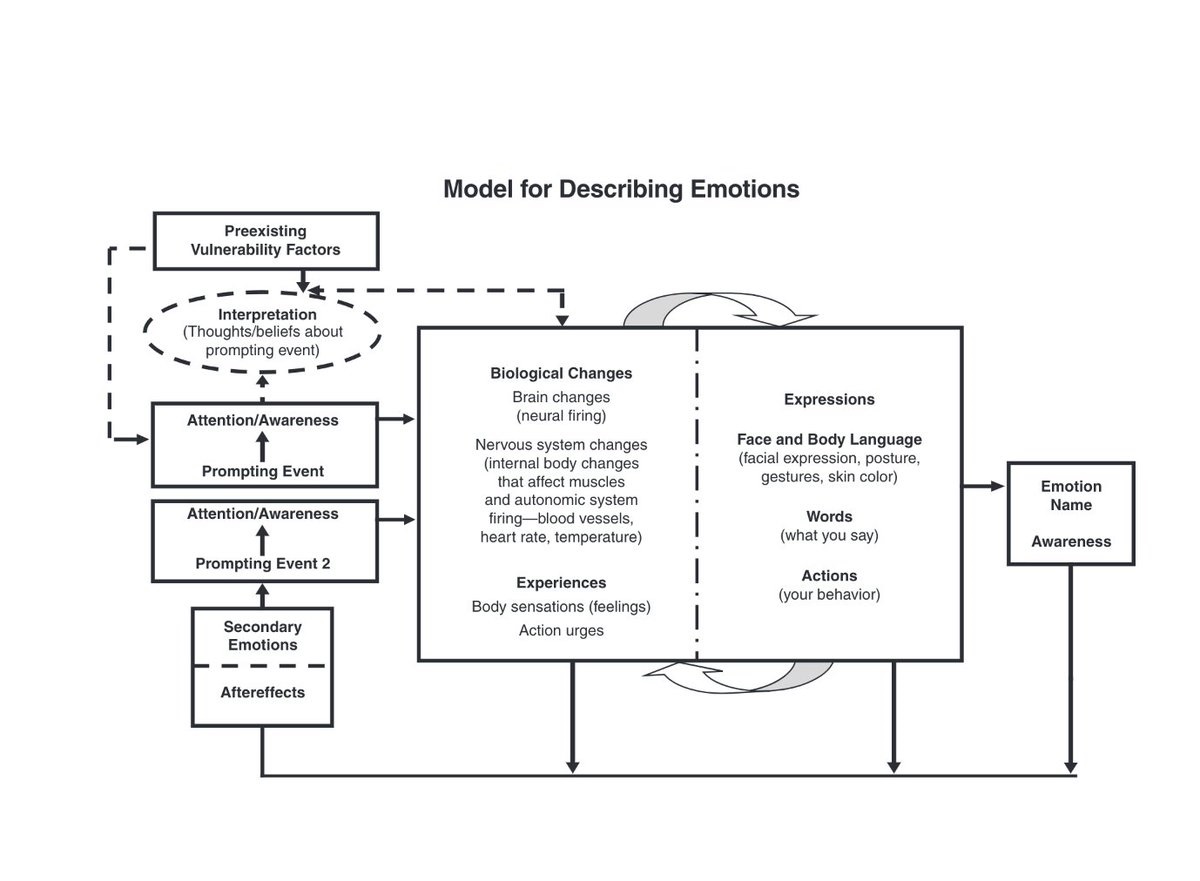
10. Emotions should always be trusted.

CHALLENGE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

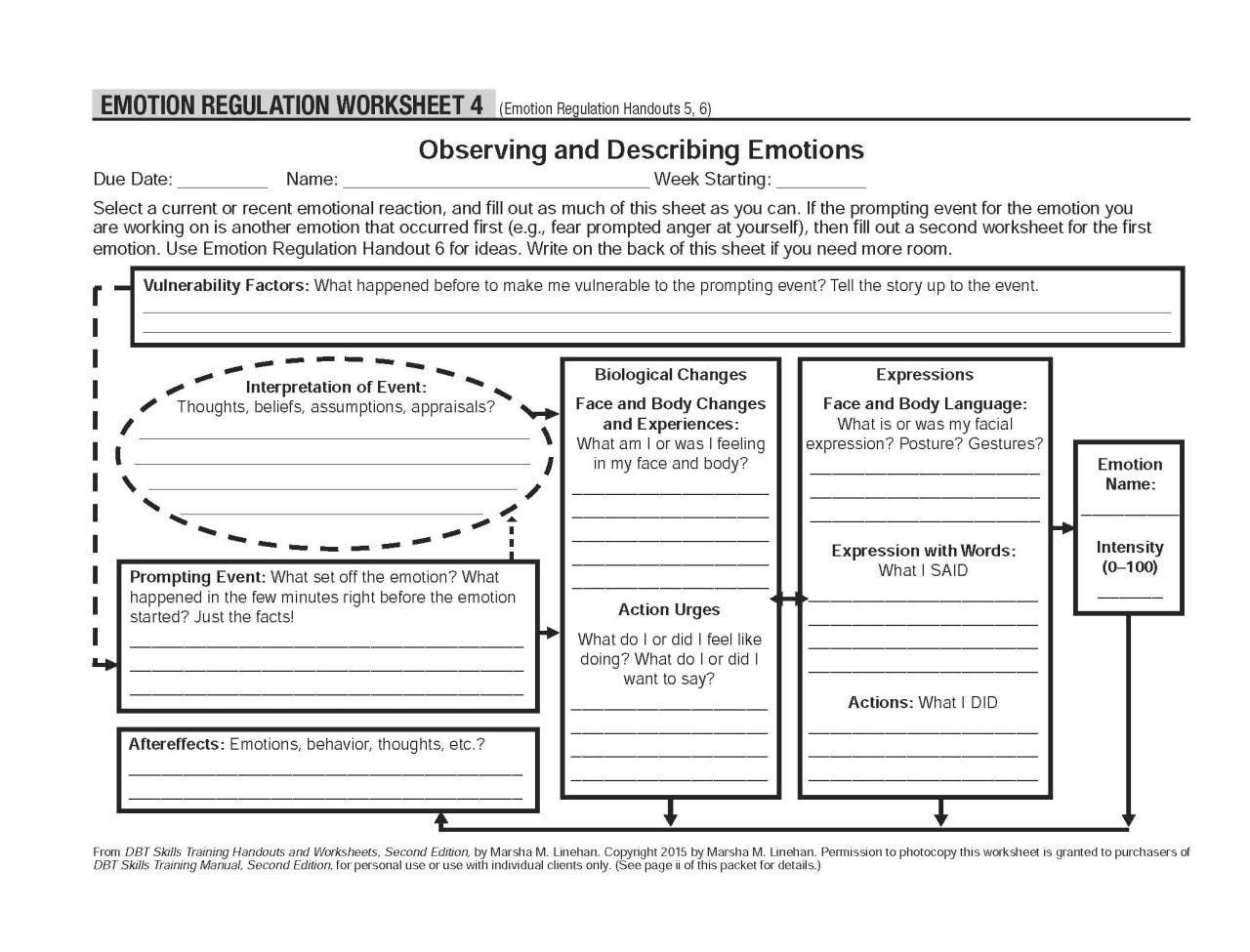
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CHALLENGE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

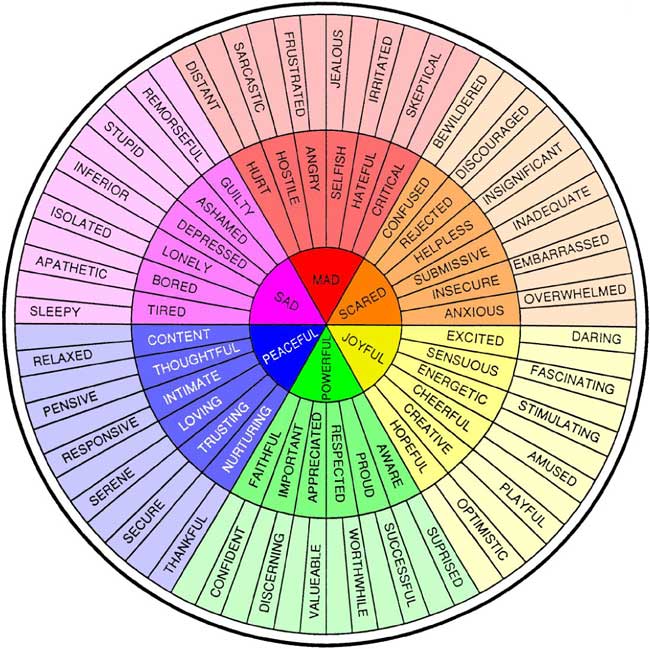
**Model for Describing Emotions**



**Instructions: Choose a current or recent situation and associated emotional reaction and fill out as much of this diagram as you can:**



**Feelings Wheel**



**Emotion Regulation Skills: Check the Facts**

**To check the facts, ask yourself:**

* What emotion do I want to change?
  + How intense is the emotion (1-10)?
* What was the prompting event?
  + How would I describe the prompting event using my senses?
  + Did I describe the prompting event without judgments or absolutes?
* Am I adding my own interpretations, beliefs, assumptions or thoughts to the facts?
  + What are other possible interpretations?
  + Am I looking at the event from all sides or points of view?
* Am I assuming a threat or catastrophe?
  + If so, what is the probability that it will occur?
  + If the threat/catastrophe did occur, how would I cope with it?
  + What other possible outcomes are there?
* Does my emotion and its intensity fit the facts?

**Examples of Emotions That Fit the Facts**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Fear |  |
| Anger |  |
| Disgust |  |
| Envy |  |
| Love |  |
| Sadness |  |
| Shame |  |
| Guilt |  |

**Emotion Regulation Skills: Opposite Action**

When your emotion does not fit the facts OR when acting on your emotions is not effective, consider using the skill **Opposite Action**. Each emotion has an “action urge.” For example, when we are angry at someone we might want to verbally attack them; when we are fearful we might want to avoid the thing we are scared of. Opposite Action means choosing an action that is opposite to the action urge. Instead of attacking the person we are angry at, we might gently avoid the person. Instead of avoiding what we are afraid of, we might approach it or take action doing it.

**Examples of Action Urges and Opposite Actions**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Emotion** | **Situation** | **Action Urge** | **Opposite Action** |
| Fear | Feeling nervous to participate in class discussion | Avoid; do not raise your hand | Take a chance! Raise your hand to participate. |
| Anger |  |  |  |
| Disgust |  |  |  |
| Envy |  |  |  |
| Sadness |  |  |  |
| Shame |  |  |  |
| Guilt |  |  |  |

**Emotion Regulation Skills: Problem Solving**

When your emotion fits the facts and the situation is the problem, consider using the skill **Problem Solving**. Use the following steps:

1. Identify your goal in solving the problem. What needs to happen or change? Is your goal realistic?
2. Brainstorm as many solutions as you can think of. Do not evaluate your ideas at this step. Instead try to think of solutions nonjudgmentally, even if they aren’t feasible. You can also ask people you trust to help generate ideas.
3. Choose a solution from your brainstorm that fits the goal and is likely to work. You may need to write out pros and cons if multiple solutions are viable.
4. Act: try your solution.
5. Evaluate the results. Did you achieve your goal? If not, you may choose to go back to step #3 to pick another solution to try.

**Reducing Vulnerability to Negative Emotions**

So far, the skills in Session 2 aim to help us regulate our emotions when we are already feeling/experiencing something that we wish to change. But what about preventative measures to help regulate our emotions?

Use the acronym **PLEASE** to reduce vulnerability to negative emotions:

take care of **PhysicaL health**

balance **Eating**

limit **mood-Altering substances**

balance **Sleep**

get **Exercise**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Take Care of PhysicaL Health** | * Seek appropriate medical care * Take medication as prescribed * Practice safe sex |
| **Balance Eating** | * Practice mindful eating * Pay attention to how different foods make you feel * Seek nutritional support from professionals |
| **Limit Mood-Altering Substances** | * Limit alcohol consumption * Limit marijuana use * Limit other recreational drugs |
| **Balance Sleep** | * Get 7-9 hours of sleep per night * Go to bed and wake up at the same time * Get extra sleep when sick * Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol 4-6 hours before bed |
| **Get Exercise** | * Set reasonable exercise goals * Schedule time to exercise throughout the week * Seek out enjoyable exercise |

**Homework: Plan to Reduce Vulnerability to Negative Emotions**

Instructions: List 3 strategies that you plan to engage in over the next week to help you reduce vulnerability to negative emotions. Be as specific as possible. For example, rather than writing, “Get adequate sleep,” write, “Go to sleep by 11:00 p.m. each night.” Your homework is both to create this list and to do your best to carry out your plan!

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**SESSION THREE:**

**Distress Tolerance**

**Homework Review**

If you practiced the homework, what strategies did you try? What did you observe? If you practiced these strategies more than once, what did you notice across practices?

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If you did not practice the homework, what got in the way? If something got in the way, what could you do over the upcoming week to try to reduce this barrier?

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**Goals of Distress Tolerance**

* Survive painful events and crisis situations without making them worse
* Learn to tolerate distressing emotions when you cannot make things better
* Reduce suffering when painful emotions overwhelm you
* Develop coping strategies that do not have unwanted side effects or consequences (e.g. instead of drinking alcohol or self-harming to cope)
* Increase resilience and your ability to cope with strong emotions
* Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**When to Use Distress Tolerance Skills:**

* You are in a crisis:
  + A stressful event occurs
  + You experience lots of strong emotions
  + You feel scatterbrained, have racing thoughts
  + You physically feel discomfort in your body
  + The crisis is short-term
  + You feel a sense of urgency (“I can’t stand it – it must be resolved now.”)
* When the crisis cannot be solved or cannot by solved *yet*

AND

* You are either not able to focus on changing how you feel or choosing not to change your emotions

AND

* The problems and the emotions are leading you to suffering/misery
* You want to act on your emotions but it will only make things worse

**Distress Tolerance skills may not be appropriate for:**

* Everyday problems
* Solving all your problems
* Making your life better in the long-term (since they are focused on helping you get some relief *now*)

**The Cost of Old Coping Strategies**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Coping Strategy** | **Possible Costs** |
| Spending a lot of time thinking about past pain, mistakes, and problems | Missing what is happening in the present; regret; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Worrying about potential future pain, mistakes and problems | Missing what is happening in the present; anxiety about the future; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Isolating yourself to avoid possible pain | Feeling lonely; missing out on support or experiences with friends/family; missing opportunities to make new connections; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Using substances (e.g. alcohol, drugs) to numb yourself | Addiction; spending money; academic/work problems; legal problems; relationship problems; health consequences; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Displacing painful feelings onto others | Damaging relationships; guilt; loneliness; legal consequences; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Engaging in self-harm behaviors (e.g. cutting, burning, hitting yourself) | Infection; scarring; shame; physical pain; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Engaging in unsafe sexual activity (e.g. unprotected sex, frequent sex with strangers, etc.) | STD risk; pregnancy risk; shame; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Remaining in destructive relationships | Potential physical/verbal/emotional abuse; not getting your needs met; getting burnt out doing things for other people; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Engaging in disordered eating behaviors (e.g. overeating, restricting food, throwing up, etc.) | Dangerous weight gain/loss; health consequences; isolation from others during meals; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Attempting suicide or engaging in other life-threatening behaviors | Possible death; hospitalization; medical consequences; disruption in academics/work; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

**Distress Tolerance Skills: STOP**

The first step in coping with a crisis, stressful event or difficult emotion is to develop the ability to STOP:

**S** – Stop! Do not react. Your emotions may give you the urge to act without thinking but the goal is to stay in control.  
**T** – Take a step back, take a break, breathe.  **O** – Observe what is going on inside and outside of you. What is the situation? What are your thoughts, sensations, and feelings? What is being said and done? **P** – Proceed mindfully. Do your best to act with awareness. Consider your thoughts, sensations, feelings, the situation and others involved when deciding what to do. Think about your goals.

**Distress Tolerance Skills: Distraction Strategies**

Instructions: Check off all the distraction strategies that you are willing to try.

\_\_\_ Engage in a hobby (specify:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_Clean/organize

\_\_\_Go to a coffee shop

\_\_\_Write in a journal

\_\_\_Surf the internet

\_\_\_Do a puzzle

\_\_\_Paint nails

\_\_\_Call/text/visit a friend

\_\_\_Go for a walk

\_\_\_Go out for a meal

\_\_\_Draw or paint

\_\_\_Watch TV

\_\_\_Wash dishes

\_\_\_Cook your favorite food

\_\_\_Make a collage

\_\_\_Do homework

\_\_\_Squeeze a stress ball

\_\_\_Lift weights

\_\_\_Go for a run

\_\_\_Nature-watch

\_\_\_Interact with animals

\_\_\_Look at funny memes

\_\_\_Write a poem, short story, or play

\_\_\_Make list of 10 places you want to go

\_\_\_Learn words from a new language

\_\_\_Send a thank you letter/card/email

\_\_\_Do a crossword or word search puzzle

\_\_\_Go to an event (specify:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_Play video games

\_\_\_Play a sport

\_\_\_Exercise

\_\_\_Watch a sporting event

\_\_\_Listen to music

\_\_\_Take a gym class

\_\_\_Go for a drive

\_\_\_Go window shopping

\_\_\_Do laundry

\_\_\_Make something for someone else

\_\_\_Do something for someone else

\_\_\_Do volunteer work

\_\_\_Read a book or magazine

\_\_\_Watch a movie

\_\_\_Make a video

\_\_\_Listen to or watch a comedy routine

\_\_\_Count/name the colors you see

\_\_\_Take photographs

\_\_\_Hold ice in your hand or to your face

\_\_\_Call/text a crisis line

\_\_\_Play a game on your phone

\_\_\_Name all the sounds you can hear

\_\_\_ Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Distress Tolerance Skills: Relaxation Strategies**

Instructions: Check off all the relaxation strategies that you are willing to try.

\_\_\_Light a scented candle

\_\_\_Burn incense

\_\_\_Observe nature

\_\_\_Look at an art/photography book

\_\_\_Fix hair/nails/makeup

\_\_\_Let ice melt in your mouth

\_\_\_Touch something soft

\_\_\_Take a bath

\_\_\_Pet your dog/cat

\_\_\_Soak your feet

\_\_\_Sit in a comfortable chair

\_\_\_Practice deep breathing

\_\_\_Hug/squeeze a pillow

\_\_\_Listen to upbeat music

\_\_\_Pray/meditate

\_\_\_Slowly suck on a hard candy

\_\_\_Buy/pick a single beautiful flower

\_\_\_Look up beautiful places online

\_\_\_Blow bubbles

\_\_\_Listen to a recording of nature sounds

\_\_\_Lie in/smell the grass

\_\_\_Make a collage of pleasing images

\_\_\_Listen to soothing music

\_\_\_Play an instrument

\_\_\_Listen to a white noise machine

\_\_\_Spray a pleasant fragrance

\_\_\_Focus on sounds around you

\_\_\_Slowly eat a popsicle

\_\_\_Bake

\_\_\_Treat yourself to a dessert

\_\_\_Work on an art project

\_\_\_Drink tea

\_\_\_Get a massage

\_\_\_Listen to a guided meditation

\_\_\_Take a shower

\_\_\_Put on a comfortable outfit

\_\_\_Hug someone you care about

\_\_\_Practice yoga or stretching

\_\_\_ Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Planning to Use Your Plan**

Instructions: Write down three situations over the upcoming week when you anticipate it could be helpful to use your distraction and relaxation strategies.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Distress Tolerance Practice Log**

Instructions: Rank your level of distress before and after using distraction and relaxation strategies (p. 30-31).

**Distress**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

None Mild Moderate Strong Extreme

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Skills Used** | **Distress Before Using Skill** | **Distress After Using Skill** |
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**Resources**

**Counseling and Psychological Services-785-532-6927**

**Hotlines**

National Suicide Prevention Hotline (24/7): 1-800-273-8255

Trans Lifeline (24/7): 1-877-565-8860

Trevor Project (24/7): 1-866-488-7386

Crisis Text Line (24/7): Text HOME to 741-741

Veterans Crisis Line (24/7): 1-800-273-8255 Press 1 or text 838-255