



START NOW is a manual-guided skills training program designed to target individuals who present with mood dysregulation, impulsivity (including self-injurious behavior), aggression, addictions, and/ or interpersonal discord

- Originally developed for correctional settings; now specifically adapted for forensic psychiatric units, and community settings
- All materials are freely available and in the public domain
- Already in use in multiple state correctional systems, forensic psychiatric hospitals, and community settings in the US and Canada

Structure & Design

- 32 sessions divided into 4 skill-based units
- Twice weekly for 16 weeks (recommended) or one time per week for 32 weeks
- 75 minutes in length (adaptable)
- Potential for rolling admissions at beginning of each new unit

START NOW designed specifically for psychiatric settings

- Concepts & language are simplified given potential cognitive or educational limitations
- Numerous images included in the participant workbook- especially useful with TBI or verbally limited participants
- Illustrative examples & coping behaviors are contextually relevant
- Detailed session-by-session facilitator manual includes numerous tips for engaging difficult-to-engage participants: e.g., shaping by reinforcing any movement toward the desired behavioral change.

Background

- An integrative skills training model informed by a number of theoretical approaches & models-
- Infused with elements of cognitive neurorehabilitation and motivational interviewing principles & practices
- Informed by trauma-sensitive care principles
- Specific workbooks allows for gender-specific or mixed-gender groups

Overall Principles

- Reinforce personal responsibility for behavior
- Identify strengths & build on them
- Appreciate & respect individual differences, capabilities & limitations
- Look for multiple opportunities to teach the connections between thoughts, feelings, & behavior

Two Primary Skills of START NOW

- Focusing Skills
 - Participants practice focusing skills using a variety of modalities including breathing, cognitive, visual, sound, and imagery.
- ABC System (Functional Analysis)
 - A way of looking at behavior, breaking down actions into 3 parts:
 - A = Activators; B = Behavior; C = Consequences
- Can be used for both problematic and constructive behaviors

- Goal of helping them to slow down, recognize high-risk situations, anticipate consequences, and use more constructive coping behaviors

START NOW Standardized Session Components

- Welcome any new members (if rolling admissions)
- Review of real life practice exercise from previous session (10 – 15 min.)
- Practice Focusing or ABC (functional analysis) Skills (10 – 15 min.)
- Introduction & rationale for new topic (10 min.)
- In-session practice exercise (15 min.)
- Assign new real life practice exercise (5 min.)



Materials Typically Needed

- Participant workbooks and Facilitator manuals
- Session-specific practice exercises
- Writing instruments; 2 white boards, one blank, one w/ ABC system
- Any materials needed for focusing practice
- An enclosed group room

START NOW Sessions

Unit 1- My Foundation: Starting with Me (10 sessions)

- Developing increased self-control & ability to cope with stressors
- Includes setting a treatment goal, increasing wellness skills, accepting yourself & your situation, enhancing your spirituality, values & personal boundaries

Unit 2- My Emotions: Dealing with Upset Feelings (8 sessions)

- Recognizing & understanding emotions.
- Coping with emotions through actions, or through thoughts & imagery
- Coping with depression, anger, anxiety & grief

Unit 3- My Relationships: Connecting with Others (8 sessions)

- Developing positive relationship skills
- Includes listening skills; assertiveness; setting boundaries; asking for support; avoiding destructive relationships; responding to feedback; coping with rejection

Unit 4- My Future: Setting & Meeting my Goals (6 sessions)

- Preparing for a positive future
- Includes topics of developing hope; setting realistic goals & breaking them down into steps; learning problem solving skills; learning to set and meet educational & vocational goals

Additional Implementation Procedures

- Certification of Facilitators
- Quality Assurance procedures including fidelity monitoring and attendance documentation
- Participant & facilitator satisfaction surveys

Selected References

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