

# START NOW

## *Female Participant Workbook*

### Unit 2

### My Emotions: Dealing with Upset Feelings



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# My Emotions: General Skills for Understanding & Coping with Feelings

Session 11

## My Emotions & Feelings, part 1



*Review Content and the Practice Exercise from Session 10*



*Focusing In-Session Practice Exercise*

**Some people see their emotions as an invading force. They try to get away from their emotions or just put up with them.**



### **Here are some possible reasons:**

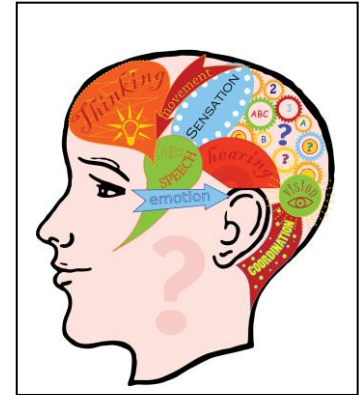
- Sometimes people don't have words to describe what they're feeling. This can make their feelings seem strange.
- Some people were told as children that their feelings were not ok. They may have been taught to pretend they weren't feeling what they really were.
- They may have seen the adults around them behaving very badly and blaming their emotions for their behavior.
- Strong feelings may seem to come out of the blue and surprise or frighten them.

In this unit, we focus on taking some of the mystery out of emotions and feelings. You may end up feeling less pushed around by your emotions. Today we look at how emotions can be helpful to us. We also learn some ways to recognize and talk about them.

## How Emotions are Helpful

### Emotions give you helpful information.

Noticing your feelings can give you clues to cope better. Here are some examples:



- Feeling nervous or fearful can be an excellent clue to an unsafe situation.
- Anger may be a sign that your personal boundaries have been crossed.
- Feeling hopeful can be a sign that you are on the right track.
- Feeling anxious may be a sign that something is important to you.

### Emotions help you have a fuller life. How?

- Even though most of us don't like to experience painful emotions, like sadness or loneliness, they are a part of life.
- Some people believe that we have to experience cloudy days to appreciate the sunny ones. By having this outlook, we not only tune into negative feelings, but also the positive ones, too.
- Emotions can connect you to other people. Here are some ways your feelings can connect you to others:
  - loving someone
  - worrying about someone, or having them worry about you
  - feeling sad to be apart from someone
  - feeling cared about



## How to Recognize & Talk about Feelings

Emotion	Clues	Feeling Words
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Happiness</b></p> 	<p>smiling, a feeling of warmth, talking in a way that sounds excited, laughing, singing, dancing, thinking that a lot of good things are possible</p>	<p>happy, glad, hopeful, excited, enthusiastic, joyful, content, satisfied, thrilled, pleased, cheerful</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sadness</b></p> 	<p>mouth &amp; eyes turn down, crying, thinking that everything is bad &amp; not going to get better, low energy, tired, avoiding others</p>	<p>sad, down, depressed, glum, morose, lonely, “blah,” “bummed out,” low, gloomy</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Anger</b></p> 	<p>clenching teeth, pupils (the black inner part) of eyes look smaller, making hands into fists, thinking over &amp; over of how you were harmed, thinking of revenge, increased swearing</p>	<p>angry, annoyed, irritated, enraged, aggravated, crabby, furious, frustrated, fuming, resentful</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fear &amp; Anxiety</b></p> 	<p>stomach upset, eyes widen, hands trembling, looking around quickly, keyed up, body feels tense, thinking you or someone you care about is going to be harmed</p>	<p>afraid, nervous, anxious, worried, “freaking out,” “nerved up,” frightened, terrified</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Guilt &amp; Shame</b></p> 	<p>not looking people in the eye, face gets red, thinking everyone is looking at you or judging you, feeling badly about a mistake you made (guilt) or something you think is wrong with you (shame)</p>	<p>ashamed, guilty, embarrassed, humiliated, self-conscious, mortified</p>



*Review and Discuss the Real-Life Practice Exercise*

# My Emotions: General Skills for Understanding & Coping with Feelings

## Session 12 My Emotions & Feelings, part 2



*Review Content and the Practice Exercise from Session 11*



*ABC In-Session Practice Exercise*

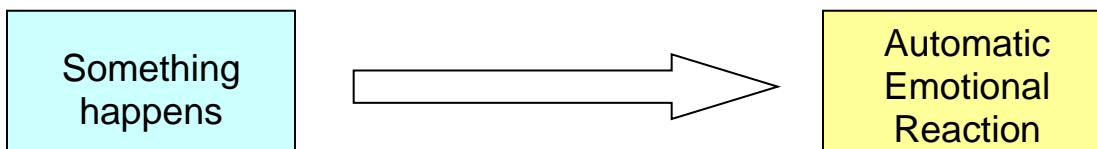
Sometimes people believe that their emotions just happen to them, or are directly caused by other people's actions.

This can be seen when people say things like:

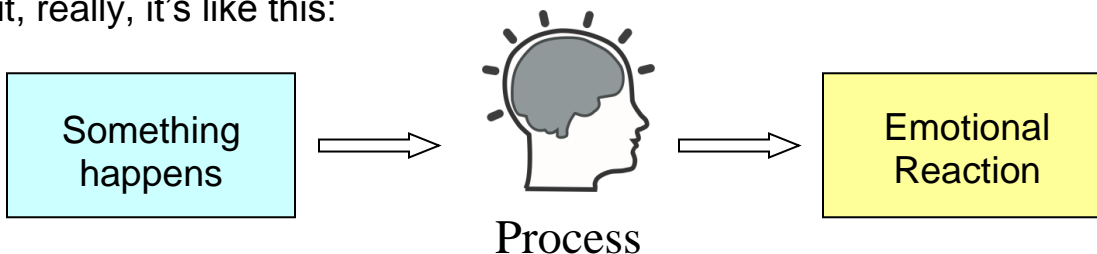
- "You made me so mad!"
- "I just freaked out."
- "Don't make me lose my temper."

### What Causes Emotional Reactions?

A lot of people think emotions happen like this:



But, really, it's like this:

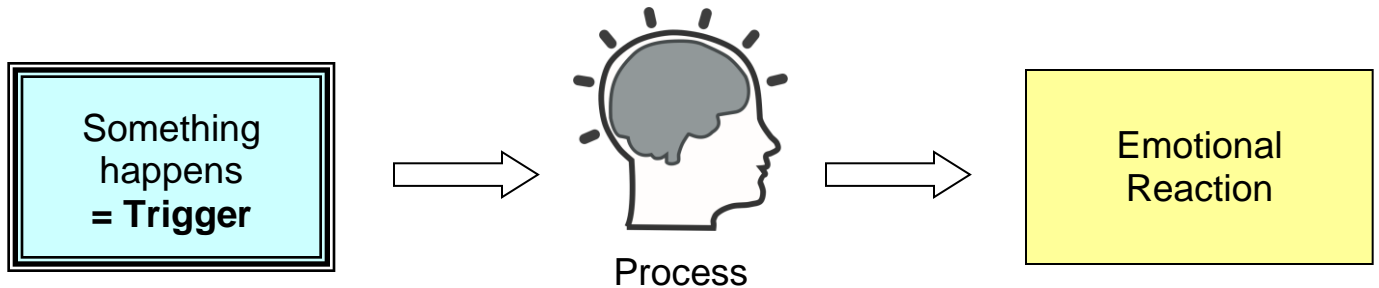


**What does it mean to *process*?** *Process* is how we think about and make sense of what happened.

Before we focus on process, let's look some more at the first box in the diagram above.

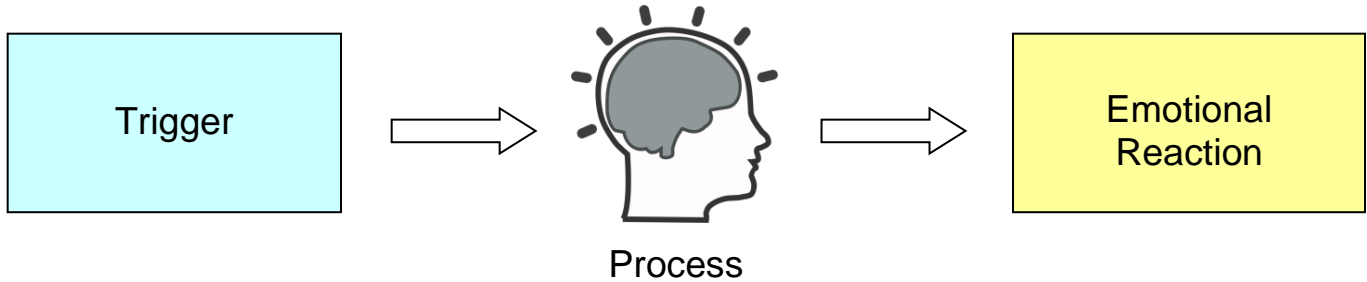
## Understanding Emotional Reactions: Triggers

*Trigger* is another word for what sparked an emotional reaction.

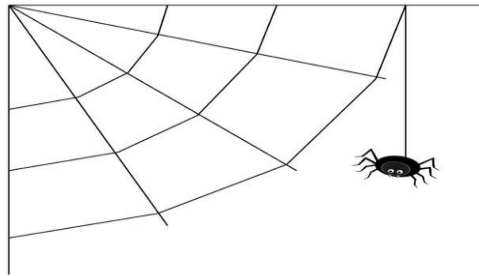


- Sometimes we are *triggered* when something happens around us. A trigger is some kind of action. Here are some examples:
  - someone says something disrespectful to us
  - we observe an argument
  - someone does something mean
- Triggers can also be something we observe using any of our senses:
  - sight
  - hearing
  - smell
  - taste
  - touch
- Triggers can also be thoughts. Here are some examples:
  - “I have been in this place for 2 months already.”
  - “Another inmate talks a lot.”
  - “Reading is difficult for me.”

## Understanding Emotional Reactions: Process



Now let's look at how process affects our emotional reactions. Process is different for each individual. We may all see the same thing and each have a different reaction.



For example, you might notice a spider making a web in the corner. Your reaction depends on how you process it.

- What does it mean to you?
- What are some thoughts people may have about that spider making a web?

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*Process* is how we think about and make sense of what happened. How you process a trigger is affected by your stress level and mood. You may process the same trigger differently depending on your mood and your stress level.

How could this apply to the spider example?

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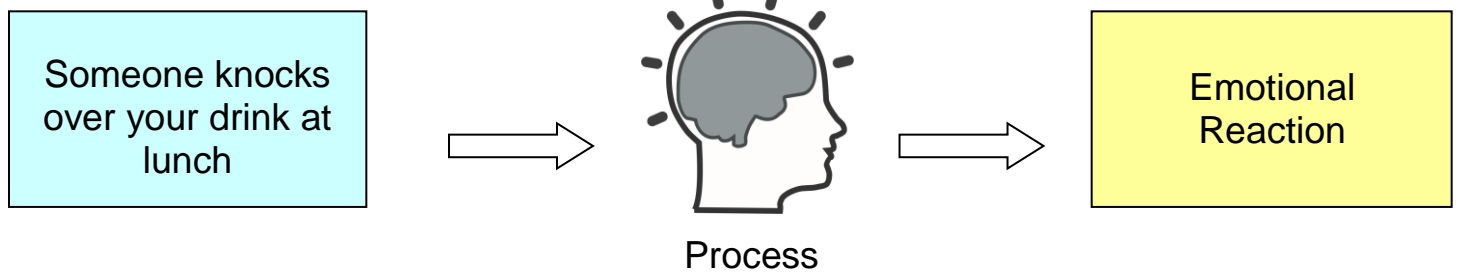
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In-Session Exercise

**Imagine you're at lunch and someone knocks over your drink.**



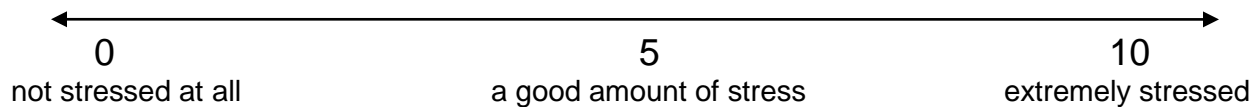
How would the process affect your emotional reaction to the spill?  
(Remember, how you process what happened is affected by mood & stress level):



How are you feeling? What is your mood?

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What does your stress level look like right now?



How do you think about what happened? What does it mean to you?  
What do you say to yourself about it?

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*Review and Discuss the Real-Life Practice Exercise*



# My Emotions: General Skills for Understanding & Coping with Feelings

## Session 13

### Coping with Upset Feelings through Actions



*Review Content and the Practice Exercise from Session 12*



*Focusing In-Session Practice Exercise*

Sometimes when we feel upset, those emotions may affect our actions badly. Here are 2 different ways that upset feelings can influence our actions:

- **Lack of Action:** We may stop trying to do things when we feel overwhelmed. When this happens, we may act as though we are paralyzed. We see this when a person just wants to stay in bed or just sit still. It often goes along with isolating from others.



**A Fork In The Road**

- **Impulsive Action:** Other times when we are feeling upset, we may do something impulsive. Some of these actions may include running away, harming yourself, fighting, breaking things, or getting high.



It goes both ways:

Emotions affect our actions, **and** our actions affect how we feel.



**Discussion:** Think of ways that your actions have affected the way you have felt.

## Coping with Upset Feelings through Positive Actions

**Tell Someone-** If you are feeling like shutting down and withdrawing, or doing something impulsive, tell someone how you are feeling. Telling someone often takes the edge off the feeling. This can give you additional self-control. Choose someone who is kind. Sometimes that person may also help you think of things to do instead.



**Limit Isolating-** Sometimes we all need quiet time by ourselves. However, if you notice that you're isolating a lot, give yourself a time limit.



After that, push yourself to be around people. Look for people who have been positive.

**Positive Activities-** Taking part in a safe, enjoyable activity can also help you cope with upset feelings.

### *Positive Activities Group Brainstorm*

***After the whole exercise is done, here is some space to write down some of the activities you choose from that group exercise.***

Positive Activities I Can Do	
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



*Review and Discuss the Real-Life Practice Exercise*

# My Emotions: General Skills for Understanding & Coping with Feelings

## Session 14

### Coping with Upset Feelings through Thoughts & Imagery



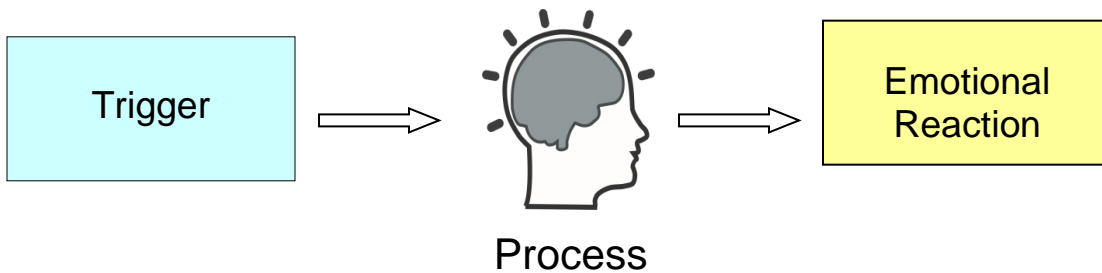
*Review Content and the Practice Exercise from Session 13*



*ABC In-Session Practice Exercise*

Last time, we looked at how we can cope with upset feelings through actions. Today we focus on how we can cope with difficult emotions with our thoughts and imagination.

We've already seen that our feelings aren't directly caused by what happens, but rather by how we process it:



Knowing this gives us another way to cope. It allows us to change how we process things. This means that we change the way we talk to ourselves about what happens and what it means to us. We can think about things in a different way.

**Notice how different ways of thinking can affect how we feel. Circle the thoughts below that would be likely to lead to negative feelings.**

**“I’ll never be able to do this time.”**

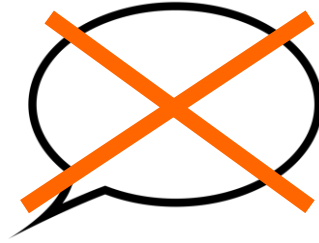
**“I’ve made it through worse things- I’ll make it through this.”**



**“My life has no meaning.”**

**“I’ll just take it one day at a time.”**

## Thought Errors



Thought Error	Description	Example
All-or-Nothing Thinking	Thinking in extremes. Often includes words like always, never, all, nothing, everybody, & nobody.	<i>"Nothing ever goes right for me!"</i>
Mind-reading	Believing you know what other people think or feel.	<i>"They thought I was stupid."</i>
Negative Self-Talk	Thoughts that put you down & make you feel bad about yourself (look back at the Self-Acceptance topic in Unit 1 for more information)	<i>"I'm ugly." "I can't do anything right."</i>
Expecting the Worst	Telling yourself that things are not going to work out.	<i>"I'll never get out of here."</i>



Look at the thoughts you circled on the bottom of the previous page, the ones that are likely to lead to upset feelings. Which thought errors do they show? Some negative thoughts contain more than one thought error.

## Coping with Upset Feelings by Replacing Thought Errors

Most of us make some thought errors. This happens more when we're stressed out or when we're not feeling well physically. The idea is not to beat yourself up when that happens. Instead, calmly notice these thought errors. Replace them with more realistic, kinder thoughts. This is just like when we replaced negative self-talk with positive self-talk in the Self-Acceptance session.

Here are some examples of replacing thought errors. These are not the only examples that would work here. There are many ways to replace thought errors. You and your group will fill in the last 2.



Thought Error	Thought Error Examples	Replacing Thought Errors
All-or-Nothing Thinking	<i>"Nothing ever goes right for me!"</i>	<i>"I'm really disappointed about what just happened, but it doesn't mean that nothing ever goes right for me."</i>
Mind-reading	<i>"They thought I was stupid."</i>	<i>"I'm embarrassed. I have no way of knowing what they were thinking unless I ask them."</i>
Negative Self-Talk	<i>"I'm no good, just like my parents said."</i>	<i>"They were wrong to say that to me. I've made mistakes. I'm doing the best I can to do better."</i>
	<i>"I can't do anything right."</i>	
Expecting the Worst	<i>"I'll never get out of here."</i>	

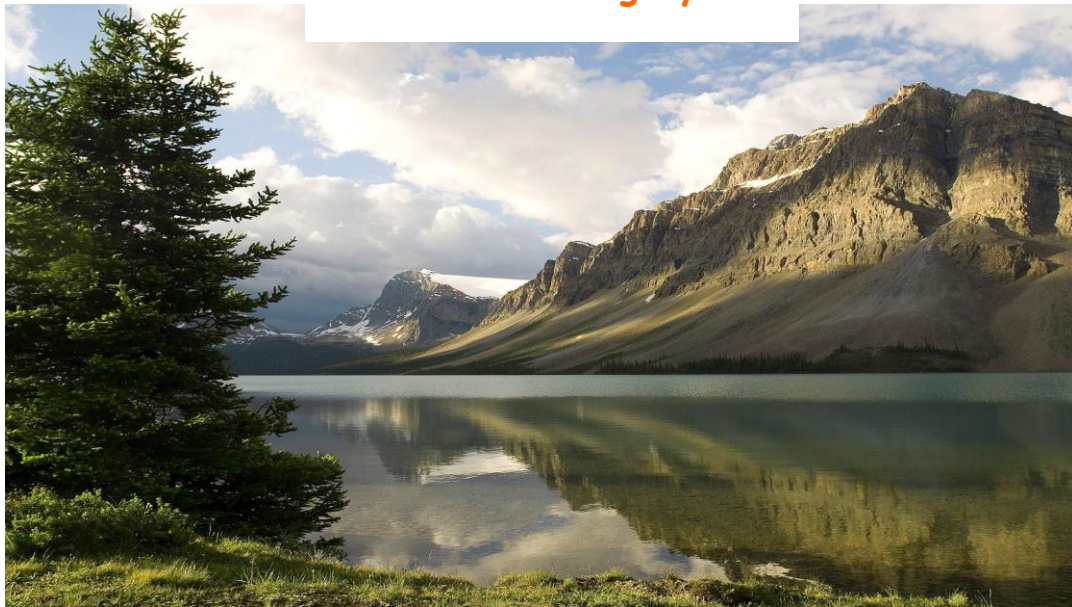
## Coping with Upset Feelings through Imagery

Another way you can cope with upset feelings is through imagery. This means using your imagination to picture scenes that make you feel relaxed and happy.

Your group leader will lead you through an imagery exercise, so that you can try out this coping skill.



### Nature Imagery



*Review and Discuss the Real-Life Practice Exercise*

## My Emotions: Coping with Some Specific Difficult Emotions

### Session 15 Recognizing & Coping with Depression



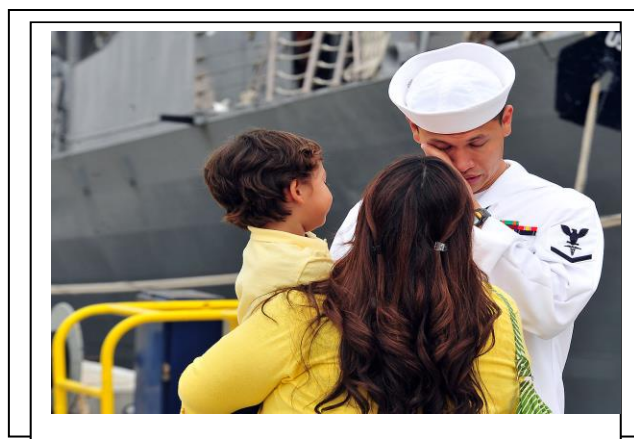
*Review Content and the Practice Exercise from Session 14*



*Focusing In-Session Practice Exercise*

Many people have noticed that some sad feelings come along with living a full life. Accomplishments can also bring about sadness, particularly when you transition away from people and places you enjoyed.

*What do you think about this?*



It's normal to feel sad sometimes. However, feeling sad most of the time can be a sign of depression. Today we'll focus on recognizing and understanding depression. Then we will look at ways to cope with depression.

## Information about Depression

### Signs of Depression:

Here are some common signs of depression:

- ❖ **Sadness**- with or without crying
- ❖ **Feeling numb**- not having any feeling about anything
- ❖ **Nothing feels fun**- hard to enjoy things you used to like to do
- ❖ **Appetite changes**- either you lost your appetite or are hungry all the time
- ❖ **Sleep pattern changes**- can't fall asleep at night, waking up early and can't fall back asleep, or wanting to sleep all the time
- ❖ **Feeling guilty** for no reason, or like you don't deserve a good life
- ❖ Quick to lose your **temper**, or a crabby mood
- ❖ **Concentration problems**- can't keep your mind on what you want to
- ❖ **Isolating**- don't feel like being around people
- ❖ **Hopelessness**- feeling like life is bad and never going to get better
- ❖ **Thinking about death a lot**- could include thoughts of suicide and/or thoughts about death in general
- ❖ **Feeling restless**- like you can't sit still, or **tired** and **slowed down**



**Depression is not a sign of weakness.  
It's a medical problem that is helped by treatment.**

### Getting Help:

A person who is depressed may not notice feeling sad, even if other people think they seem down. If a person is showing signs of depression, they should see someone who can help. This may include a counselor, a doctor, or a social worker. This person can help them figure out if they are depressed and need treatment. Treatment may include therapy and medication. Treatment helps depression.

### Thoughts about Death & Suicide:

Talking about death a lot or having suicidal thoughts are signs of risk. If you or someone else you know, experience a lot of thoughts about death, talk right away with someone who can help. Even though most people who are depressed do not commit suicide, suicidal thoughts and ideas should always be taken seriously.



## Coping with Depression through Actions

### ❖ Push Yourself to do Positive Things

**Self-Care:** Some people don't take care of themselves as well when they're depressed. They may not eat regular meals or brush their teeth. This can make them feel worse. Push yourself to take care of yourself, even if you don't feel like it.

**Self-Soothe:** Try doing some kind things that bring positive sights, sounds, and other senses into your life. Listen to music you like. Hang up a positive picture. Take a warm shower, etc.

**Activities:** Here again, you may not feel like doing positive activities when you're depressed. Push yourself to participate in positive activities. It often helps to make plans with someone. You may not enjoy the activities at first. Over time, being active helps. Physical exercise can make you feel better.

**Ask for Support:** Tell some of the kind people in your life what you're going through. Ask them for support. Be specific about what would be helpful. For example, *"Would you hang out and listen to music with me?"*

### ❖ Participate Actively, if you are in Treatment

**Medication:** If medication is prescribed, take it as prescribed. Medications for depression are called antidepressants. Those medications take a while to have a full effect. Sometimes people stop taking them before really giving the medication a chance to work. Also, sometimes when people feel better because of taking antidepressants, they think their depression is over. They may stop taking the medication when they really still need it.

**Therapy:** If you are scheduled for psychotherapy to help with depression, go to your sessions regularly. Talk openly about what's on your mind.



## Coping with Depression through Thought & Imagery

Depression increases the chance that we believe these negative messages. This makes it hard for us to take chances to make things better. Knowing this ahead of time can help us see these thought errors when they happen. Then we can replace them with more hopeful messages.

### ❖ Monitor & Change your Thoughts

- **Watch for Thought Errors:**
  - When we're depressed, we're a lot more likely to make thought errors.
  - We say things like, *"Everything bad happens to me because I'm no good, and nothing's ever going to help."*
  - Which thought errors do you recognize in that statement?
    - All or Nothing Thinking
    - Negative Self-Talk
    - Mind Reading
    - Expecting the Worst
- **Talk to Yourself the Way You'd Talk to a Friend**
  - Instead of telling yourself, *"Stop being lazy, get out of bed,"* say, *"Come on, just get out of bed- you'll feel better."*
  - Instead of *"Why bother going to therapy- it's a waste of time,"* say, *"I'm worth the help."*

### ❖ Cope with Depression through Imagery

- Picture yourself taking care of yourself in a positive way.
- Use positive imagery to take a little break from your depression; imagine yourself in a happy situation.
- Picture yourself feeling better again.



*Review and Discuss the Real-Life Practice Exercise*

## My Emotions: Coping with Some Specific Difficult Emotions

### Session 16 Coping with Anger



*Review Content and the Practice Exercise from Session 15*



*ABC In-Session Practice Exercise*



We've already looked at the idea that emotions are helpful. Sometimes people think of anger as a dangerous or bad emotion. Just as with all the other emotions, anger can be positive and useful. How?

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*How can anger be a problem?*

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## Coping with Anger: Recognize your Triggers & Signs

Most problems with anger happen when people suddenly act out their anger in an impulsive way. We can have additional control over anger by recognizing our triggers and signs of anger early. This allows us to make decisions about how we'd like to respond.

### Anger Triggers

Notice what triggers your anger. You'll be more likely to recognize when you're headed toward an angry reaction. Put a check by each of the situations below that may trigger your anger. Fill in additional triggers that you and your group think of.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> being physically threatened or hurt                        | <input type="checkbox"/> being put down or criticized  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> being told what to do (bossed)                             | <input type="checkbox"/> losing a privilege or freedom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> envy (someone has what you want)                           | <input type="checkbox"/> unfair treatment              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> being blamed for something you did                         | <input type="checkbox"/> being hurt                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> being blamed for something you didn't do                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> having to stop doing something you enjoy                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> being blocked from getting what you want                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> finding out someone was talking about you behind your back |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> .....  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> .....  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> .....  |  |

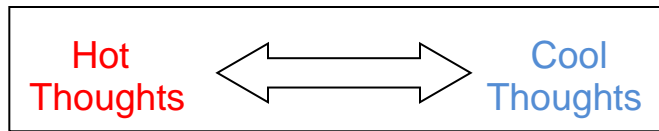


### Signs of Anger

Here are some signs of anger that many people notice. Check the ones that are your signs:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> muscles tense (arms, jaw, neck)              | <input type="checkbox"/> breathing faster                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> voice gets louder                            | <input type="checkbox"/> heart pounds                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> everything gets on your nerves               | <input type="checkbox"/> pacing                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> feeling keyed up, wired                      | <input type="checkbox"/> clenching fists                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> face gets red                                | <input type="checkbox"/> pointing and shaking your finger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> pupils (the black part of the eye) get small | <input type="checkbox"/> use foul language                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> .....  | <input type="checkbox"/> .....                            |

## Coping with Anger: Preventing Impulsive Actions



Impulsive angry reactions cause many problems. This can include legal difficulties, physical harm, relationship damage, and feeling badly about oneself. When you recognize your anger triggers and signs, you can use the skills on this page to increase self-control and prevent acting out.

- **Slow Down**
  - Take a couple of slow, deep breaths.
  - Tell yourself, *“I don’t need to do anything right away.”*
  - Actions taken when you’re all keyed up are likely to create a bigger problem. Try doing something else.
- **Consider:**
  - Relaxation breathing
  - Checking your pulse. If fast, wait for it to slow down.
  - Doing something that will get your mind off the situation for a while, like watching television.
- **Change Your Thoughts-** Just as with other emotional reactions, how we think about things affects how we behave.
  - **Replace Hot Thoughts with Cool Thoughts**
    - Hot thoughts get us pumped up and angry. Here are examples of hot thoughts:
      - *“What a jerk!”*
      - *“No one cares!”*
      - *“I’m not gonna take this!”*
    - Cool thoughts help us calm down and chill. Here are some cool thoughts:
      - *“Chill”*
      - *“No big deal”*
      - *“Let it go”*

## Coping with Anger: Preventing Impulsive Actions, continued

- **Notice Thought Errors & Replace those Thoughts**
  - Instead of *“Everyone breaks my stuff like my things don’t matter,”* Tell yourself- *“Sometimes stuff gets broken. It was probably just an accident.”*
  - Instead of *“My new cellie will probably be awful,”* Tell yourself- *“I’ll wait and see; maybe the she will be ok.”*
- **Think it Through**

When you’re planning to do something to express your anger, think it through. Some ways of expressing anger are likely to work out well and some aren’t. Here are things to think about:

  - How is the other person likely to react? Is that the result I’m hoping for?
  - How does this way of expressing my anger fit with my values?
  - Is the action against the law? If so, it puts me at risk for legal consequences and lost freedoms and privileges.
  - Are there other options for dealing with this problem that are likely to work out better?
- **Seek Support**
  - Consider asking a responsible and supportive person for some feedback about your options.
  - Take time to think about the feedback you received.
- **Be Selective**
  - Also, some people say *“Pick your battles.”* This means that we can’t always take a stand about every single thing that bothers us. If we do, we may appear to be always complaining. Our complaints may be ignored.
  - Save your energy for what’s most important.



*Review and Discuss the Real-Life Practice Exercise*

## My Emotions: Coping with Some Specific Difficult Emotions

### Session 17

### Coping with Worry & Anxiety




*Review Content and the Practice Exercise from Session 16*



*Focusing In-Session Practice Exercise*

Worry, anxiety and fear are related emotions. Here is a reminder from the “How to Recognize and Talk about Feelings” chart.

Emotion	Clues	Feeling Words
<b>Fear &amp; Anxiety</b> 	<b>Upset stomach, eyes widen, hands trembling, looking around quickly, keyed up, body feels tense, thinking you or someone you care about is going to be harmed, difficulty falling asleep</b>	<b>afraid, nervous, anxious, worried, “freaked,” “nerved up,” frightened, terrified, “worked up”, “keyed up”</b>

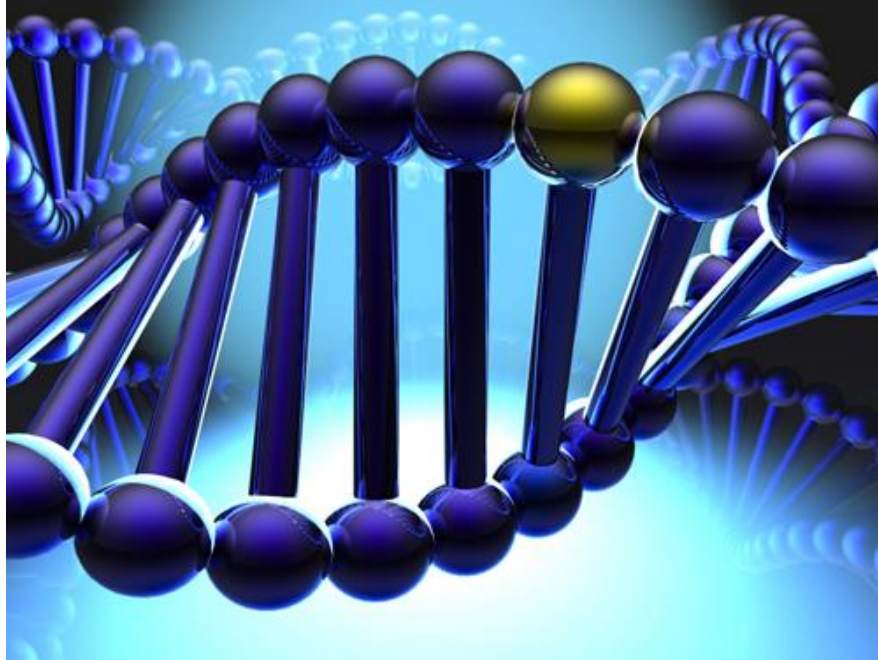
Worry, anxiety and fear are uncomfortable feelings. Just as with the other emotions we’ve discussed so far, anxiety can have a useful purpose.

#### **Purposes of Anxiety**

- **Signal:** Anxiety can give you a useful signal. When you’re anxious or worried, it can be a sign of any of these things:
  - You are picking up on some danger or risk around you.
  - You are doing something that doesn’t fit your values.
  - You are concerned about someone else, and feel they are in risk.
  - You are faced with more than you think you can handle.
  
- **Motivation:** The geared-up feeling of anxiety can help you get going. It can allow you to take care of something you’ve been avoiding. But it takes the right amount of anxiety. When you have too little, it’s easy to forget about the task. When you have too much, you may feel like staying away from the task.

## Additional Information about Anxiety

- Some people are naturally more anxious than others. This is partly determined by genes. Research has shown differences even in newborn babies.



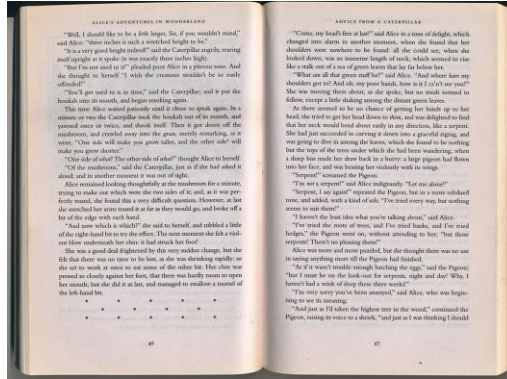
- Sometimes a person may be feeling anxious or nervous and not even realize it. Some people were taught not to pay attention to their feelings.
- Sometimes people get in the habit of using drugs and alcohol to numb anxious feelings. After a while, they get used to not feeling anxiety. They forget how to deal with anxiety without using drugs or alcohol. When they stop using, they may have a hard time dealing with the anxiety or knowing how to cope with it.
- Anxiety may have started out as a useful signal, like an alarm bell. After a while, the alarm may have started going off in too many situations. So it may seem like there is danger, when there really isn't. The problem gets worse when you start to avoid situations because of that alarm signal. Then you don't get a chance to find out that it's really ok.





## Anxiety & Avoidance

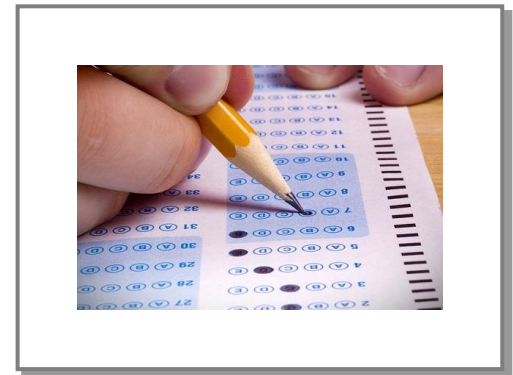
This story gives an example of how anxiety and avoidance may feed into each other-



Tonya had difficulty learning to read when she was a kid. Shee had a learning disability, but she hadn't gotten the help she needed. A couple of times the other kids made fun of her reading problem. She started to get anxious every time she had reading class. She felt nervous and sick to her stomach, and he couldn't sit still. As time went on, Tonya started to feel anxiety every time she was in a situation that could involve reading. This included things like ordering from a menu, filling out an application, or reading signs.

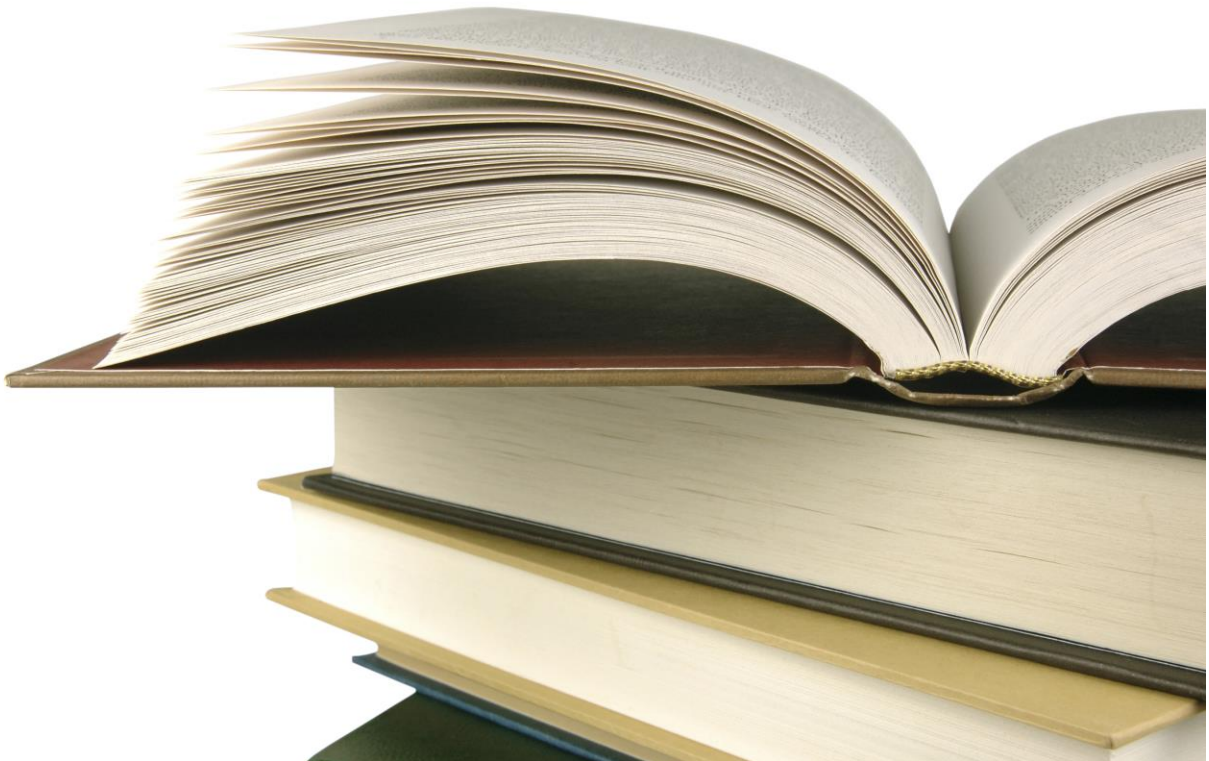
### ***How did Tonya's anxiety get linked together with so many situations?***

Tonya started to make excuses to stay away from situations that could involve reading. Even though there were some people in her life who were willing to help her learn to read better, she just had the feeling that it wasn't going to be ok. She didn't try to learn from them. She never got a chance to see that learning to read better could be ok. So, that anxious feeling stayed connected with reading.



*Can you think of other examples in which avoiding something you're anxious about might make the feelings worse?*

After many years of avoiding reading, Tonya got really tired of her problem. She participated in a literacy program for adults. When she was going to face situations involving reading, she had to use some coping skills like the ones on the "Coping with Worry & Anxiety" page of this workbook. Over time, Tonya's anxiety about reading was reduced. She started to learn to read better.



**The story about Tonya shows several things:**

- For some people, going through trauma or being hurt can increase the likelihood of anxiety problems.
- Anxiety problems can get better. Coping skills help a lot. Sometimes additional treatment may be needed, including talk therapy and/or medication. By participating in treatment, including learning and practicing new coping skills, anxiety problems are very likely to get better.

## Coping with Worry & Anxiety

**Put it into words-** Saying what you're worried about can help you calm down. It may also allow you to get support.

**Face your Fear-** Do your best to do the thing that makes you anxious, even if you have to go slowly. For example, if you're afraid to try something new, first use imagery to see yourself doing the new task well. Next just look for opportunities to try the new task and attempt something new. Avoiding something often makes anxiety worse.



**Take a Couple of Deep Breaths & Use Calming Self-Talk-** Say things to yourself that help you calm down-

- *"It'll be all right."*
- *"I can do this."*

**Try Self-Soothing-** If you know you're going to be in a situation that makes you anxious, bring something soothing with you, like a positive picture. If you suddenly end up somewhere that makes you anxious, look for a soothing sight, sound, etc. For example, if you're on a bus that ends up in traffic, and you start to feel anxious, look out the window at the interesting patterns and colors in the store signs.

**Try a Relaxation Exercise-** This is a pattern used to slow down your breathing and relax your body. Your group leader will teach you how to do this.



*Review and Discuss the Real-Life Practice Exercise*

## My Emotions: Coping with Some Specific Difficult Emotions

### Session 18 Coping with Loss & Grief



*Review Content and the Practice Exercise from Session 17*



*ABC In-Session Practice Exercise*

The “circle of life” includes many beginnings and endings. Loss and grief are a part of life, as much as we sometimes wish they weren’t.



There’s an old saying-

**“Better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all.”**

Not everyone agrees with this saying. It means that even though it may hurt to say goodbye, having the relationship was worth it.

Some people decide that they’re tired of experiencing losses. They say they’re not going to let themselves get attached again. Sometimes people slowly become willing to take a risk to connect with others again. They may have become more confident that they can deal with loss.

## About Loss & Grief: Ideas for Discussion



We think about losses caused by sad or tragic events, but people often experience some loss or grief when good things happen, too.

*How could this be?*

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People who grow up in highly stressful environments tend to have had more loss experiences.

*Can you think of some reasons for this?*

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Often grief comes out looking like anger.

*Why do you think this happens?*

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## Ways to Cope with Loss & Grief

### **Tell kind people in your life what you're going through.**

Ask for their help. Try to be specific about what would be helpful.

Here are types of help you may want to ask for:

- Listening to you talk about the person you are mourning.
- Looking at pictures with you.
- Going with you to a memorial service, etc.
- Helping you find a support group, or going with you to a meeting.



### **Give yourself healthy ways to express your feelings of loss.**

This might include drawing, writing, music, collage, or finding something that represents that person.



### **When you know ahead of time that you'll be parting ways with someone important to you, say "goodbye."**

Even though this can be painful, many people find it helps them in the long run. How can you say "goodbye"?

- Tell them what they've meant to you.
- You can give them a note or something you make.
- This may be hard, just do your best.

## Ways to Cope with Loss & Grief, continued

### **Treasure the Positives**

Remind yourself of a strength or positive quality in yourself that you got through knowing the person you're missing.

### **Reduce Self-Blame**

Remember that people may make their grief worse by blaming themselves for things that were completely out of their control. If you notice yourself doing that, give yourself a break. Replace negative self-talk with kind thoughts toward yourself.

### **Don't Judge your Timetable of Grief**

Often people make their grief worse by telling themselves that they should be over it already. Sometimes others even tell them that. There is not a "one size fits all" timetable for grief. If you or others notice that signs of depression have started, it is time to ask for additional help.



Here's a way to think about grief that may be helpful to you. It's like an enormous boulder lands in a lake while you're swimming nearby. At first the waves come so quickly and are so large that you can hardly catch your breath. You just keep treading water. Over time the waves get smaller, and come less often. As time goes on, waves of grief become less frequent and less intense.

Sometimes people come to a time after a loss when they are doing well. Then they may start to feel the grief again. This can make them feel confused or upset. Understanding that grief often happens this way can help you accept these ups and downs. This allows you to give yourself a break.



*Review and Discuss the Real-Life Practice Exercise*