

No Hard Feelings – Feel It, Face It, Thrive!

SESSION 8 WORKBOOK



WELCOME TO SESSION 8 – OUR FINAL SESSION

So last session we covered:



- ✓ The role of physical sensations in emotions.
- ✓ How physical sensations are often a big part of why emotions are uncomfortable.
- ✓ How our interpretation of physical sensations determines how distressing they are.
- ✓ Avoiding physical sensations means that you will continue to find them distressing.
- ✓ By repeatedly experiencing the physical sensations you start to get used to them and may eventually even find them boring!

How did you get on with the home tasks?

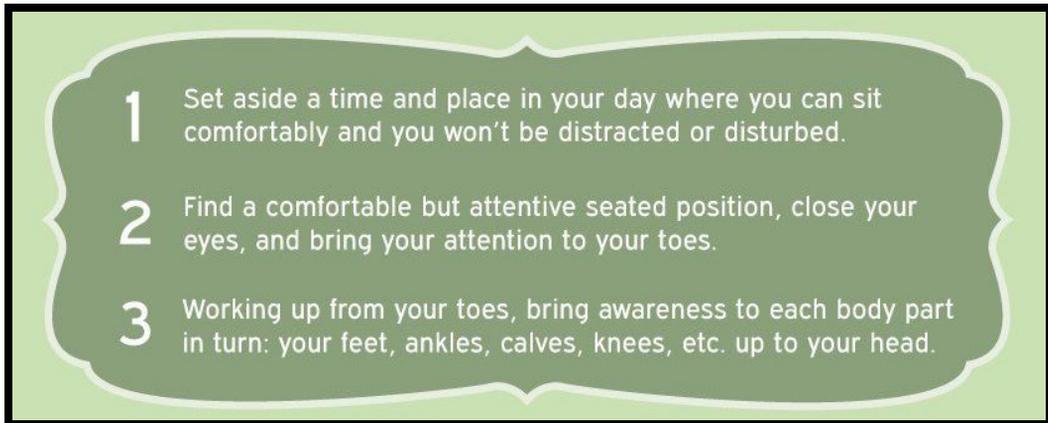
Any questions before we move on to today's material?

Do you remember our discussion around building a new house? This week we are moving into the attic and putting it all into practice.

GOALS FOR TODAY

- ✓ To understand the purpose of Emotion Exposures.
- ✓ To learn how to design effective Emotion Exposure exercises.
- ✓ To develop an Emotion Exposure hierarchy.
- ✓ To repeatedly practice confronting strong emotions through Emotion Exposure Exercises.
- ✓ To bring it all together and move on UP using the Therapy blueprint.

Body scan exercise before moving on.



And now!

KEY CONCEPTS

Part of the focus of today's group is to begin practicing what we will call Emotion Exposures.

We will think about asking you to tackle specific situations and activities that bring up uncomfortable emotions.

Why would we do that?

1. It's the best way to test out your negative beliefs about your emotions (and the situations that produce them) by facing them and seeing what happens.
2. It let you put the skills you have been learning into practice and to gain confidence that you can tolerate any strong emotions that may come up.

Deliberately bringing up strong emotions may sound frightening but you can do this at your own pace and will take it one step at a time.

This is the pinnacle of treatment where we put everything together so we have placed it on the top floor of the house.

THINK OF IT THIS WAY

Imagine learning how to ride a bike by reading a book or having someone tell you how to it?

This would be really difficult.

Unless you put it all together while actually *on* the bike you will never really know how to ride.

The same thing applies here – you must practise the skills we have talked about in response to strong emotions in order to truly learn how to use them.



The way we get you “out on the bike” is through what we call Emotion Exposures.

You have learned all the skills you will need to face your emotions, and now you provide the final ingredients – willingness to step outside your comfort zone and to confront your emotions head on.

WHY WILL THIS HELP ME?

Write down the reasons why this might help you to continue to make progress and reach your goals.

HELPING YOU TO LEARN

Facing strong emotions will help you to learn:

- ✓ That any uncomfortable emotions you feel are temporary.
- ✓ That you can cope with negative emotions better than you thought.
- ✓ That you can perform tasks and activities that are important to you even when experiencing strong emotions.

There are a number of ways to conduct Emotion Exposures. Any situation or active that brings up strong emotions will allow you to practice your skills and help you test your beliefs about emotions.

Let's talk about the different kinds of exposure exercises.

As the name suggests situation based Emotion Exposures are when you enter *situations* that will bring on intense emotions.

Your situations will be personal to you but might include

- ✓ revisiting the location of a traumatic experience
- ✓ putting yourself in an enclosed place for a period of time
- ✓ having a conversation with a stranger
- ✓ making a mistake
- ✓ getting started on a task even though you don't feel motivated
- ✓ touching something dirty
- ✓ giving a speech

You can also face situations that bring up positive emotions like getting together with friends or exercising.



IMAGINAL EMOTION EXPOSURES

You can also conduct Emotion Exposure by imagining difficult situations.

Imaginal Emotion Exposures are particularly useful in three instances:

1. When there are practical barriers to conducting repeated situational Emotion Exposures (such as taking multiple flights).
2. When you believe that simply thinking about a particular topic (eg memories or worries) will cause your emotion to spiral out of control.
3. When you believe that thinking about a particular topic (eg a loved one getting into an accident) will make it happen.

These exercises are best conducted in a quiet setting with your eyes closed.

Picture the scene (the memory of future fear) in as much detail as possible, while noticing any thoughts or physical sensations the exercise brings up.

Sometimes it can be helpful to write out the scenario first and then record yourself reading it so you can concentrate on imagining the scenario as clearly as you can.

Remember the goal is still to bring on strong emotions so try to fully experience whatever comes up when you imagine your situation.

PHYSICAL SENSATIONS EMOTION EXPOSURES

You may also choose to continue to conduct the physical sensations exposures you completed in the last group.

You can add the exercises that bring on bodily sensations to both situational and imaginal exposures to *really* show yourself that you can tolerate your emotions.

For example if you are nervous about participating in groups you might first run in place to elevate your heart rate and then speak up at a meeting at work.

PRACTICING EMOTION EXPOSURES

You may be feeling nervous as you think about completing Emotion Exposures.

That's totally normal – you are being asked to face situations that you have been avoiding for a long time.

Because we know that this will be difficult we start slowly by asking you to make an Emotion Exposure hierarchy.

A hierarchy is a list of the situations/activities that you will face, rated by the amount of distress and avoidance that they produce.

You then work your way through each of these tasks in turn.

You don't need to go from easiest to hardest – we would encourage you to mix up the order.

Remember the purpose is to elicit strong, uncomfortable emotions so try to begin with an exposure that you believe will evoke at least a moderate degree of emotion.

Sally's hierarchy > Sally is fearful about going to busy places . . .

| | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Standing outside house when it is quiet | 1 (the easiest step) |
| Walking to post box near house | |
| Going to local shop with someone | |
| Going to local shop alone | |
| Going to a shopping centre for 30mins | |
| Going to a shopping centre for an hour | |
| Going to the city centre on Tuesday morning | |
| Going to the city centre Saturday afternoon | 10 (the most difficult step) |

TIPS FOR BUILDING YOUR HIERARCHY

- ✓ If possible, plan exposures to take place in a variety of different situations (at home, at work, in public, alone or with others). This can help the lessons you learn about coping with emotions really stick.
- ✓ Try combining more than Emotion Exposure in the same task. Eg, if feeling jittery and talking to strangers both make you anxious you might include “drink a large cup of coffee then introduce myself to a co-worker). Before conducting combination exercises such as this one it can be helpful to practice each part of the task on its own – so you might get used to drinking coffee and also meeting strangers separately before combining the two.
- ✓ You can make your hierarchy longer than 8 items or create a new one once you have completed all the tasks on the first one.

Moving on UP

So let's recap what we have covered:

| Week Number | Topic/ Module |
|-------------|---|
| 1 | Introduction and goal setting |
| 2 | Understanding emotions |
| 3 | Understanding emotions – follow your ARC |
| 4 | Mindful Emotional Awareness |
| 5 | Cognitive Flexibility |
| 6 | Countering Emotional Behaviours |
| 7 | Understanding and Confronting Physical Sensations |
| 8 | Putting it into practice /Moving UP from here |

KEY THINGS TO REMEMBER

- ✓ *Practice, practice, practice!*
- ✓ *You might experience a setback.*
- ✓ *Make it part of your routine.*
- ✓ *Avoid avoidance!*

IMPORTANT TAKE AWAY MESSAGES

- ❖ All emotions are providing us with important information that can motivate us to take action in helpful ways.
- ❖ Staying present in the moment and taking a non-judgemental view of our emotions can help to prevent emotions from increasing in intensity.
- ❖ The way we think about a situation influences how we feel, and how we feel affects the way we interpret situations.
- ❖ Although avoiding uncomfortable emotional experiences can work well in the short term, it isn't an effective long term coping strategy.

SKILLS PRACTICE PLAN

Remember your 3 point check.

Use your breath or other chosen cue as an anchor to help bring you out of your head and to anchor you in the present moment.

What are you thinking right now?

What are you feeling in your body right now?

What are you doing now, or what do you feel like doing now?



EVALUATING YOUR PROGRESS

As we approach the end of the group you may be feeling excited because you have seen improvements in your symptoms or you may feel disappointed as you haven't seen as much improvement as you had hoped.

Remember – the goal of completing these groups was to teach skills for responding to your emotions in a more helpful way. It's common for people to feel that they have made some noticeable progress in addressing their symptoms but there is often still room for improvement following these short term groups.

That's because it takes time after learning the skills to see the full effect.

MAINTAINING PROGRESS AND MOMENTUM

So now that the groups are completed you might find yourself looking forward to taking a break?

Treatment is hard work!

However consider Newton's Law of Motion – an object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion.

Right now you are an object of motion!

In other words it is much easier to maintain all of the positive momentum that you have worked so hard to accumulate over these past few months than it is to get back on track after taking a break.

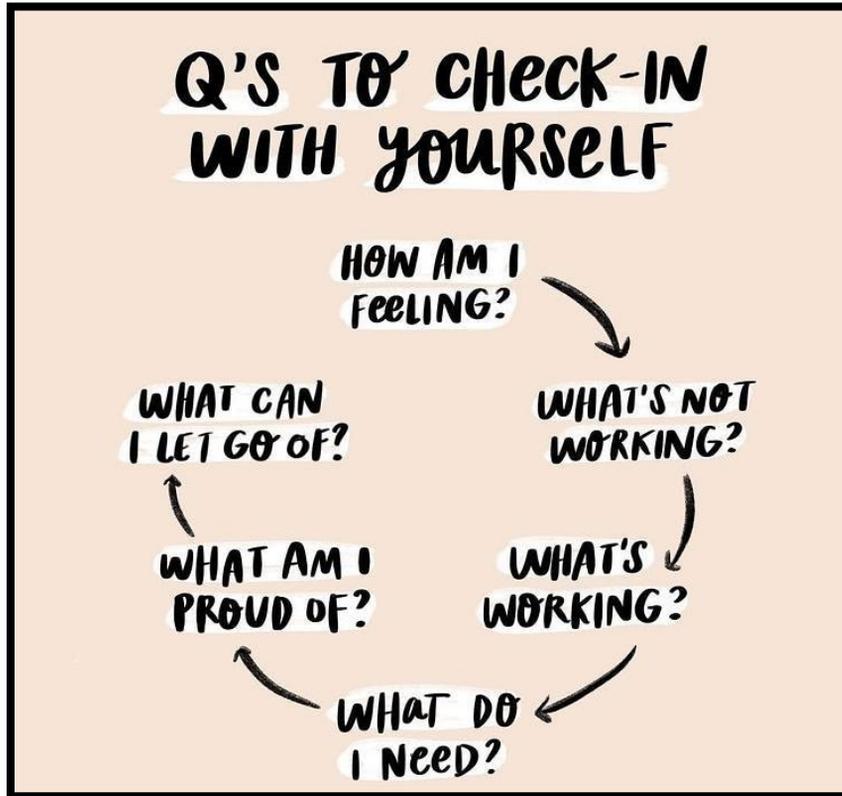
Here are some strategies we recommend for maintaining your progress and continuing to benefit from treatment.

BE YOUR OWN COACH

You have worked so hard to complete this course and its now about us asking you to be your own coach.

To keep up your progress try setting aside time on a weekly basis (maybe the time you were using to do this group) and check in with yourself. Review your goals and progress and think about any issues you are facing. Use your workbooks as a guide.

People often forget to remember to practice and only notice when things are becoming difficult again – checking in with yourself helps you monitor how you are doing.



THERAPY BLUEPRINT

In the Wellbeing Service we ask everyone who has completed any form of therapy to develop a Therapy Blueprint.

Remember we asked you to begin to fill it out last session?

How did people get on – any questions?

SUMMARY

Today we have talked about taking all the skills you have learned and how to apply them to your real life situations.

This is the best way to learn any new skill.

The best approach is *learning by doing* and Emotion Exposures allow you to do just that.



OUR FINAL QUIZ!



1. Emotion Exposures are exercises that are specifically designed to provoke strong emotions.
2. It is unlikely that negative automatic emotions are modified as a result of Emotion Exposures.
3. During an Emotion Exposure it is important to identify emotional behaviours so that these can be addressed.
4. Maintaining control over emotions during exposures is a good strategy for gradually easing into emotionally provoking situations.
5. . If you are still struggling with symptoms at the end of treatment this means that treatment did not work out.
6. It is natural and normal to experience fluctuations in your symptoms, it does not necessarily mean that you have relapsed.
7. Once treatment is over you don't need to practice the skills on a regular basis.



***Well done and thank you for all of your hard work in completing the
No Hard Feelings – Feel it, Face it, Thrive course!***