

NO HARD FEELINGS – FEEL IT, FACE IT, THRIVE!

SESSION 7 WORKBOOK



WELCOME BACK TO SESSION 7



So last session we covered:

- ✓ We discussed emotional behaviours.
- ✓ These strategies often lessen distress in the short term but tend to make things worse in the long term. However because they bring down distress (even if just for a moment) we are likely to keep engaging in them the next time we encounter an uncomfortable emotion.
- ✓ Further, using emotional behaviours perpetuates the idea that we cannot handle a given situation making us likely to rely on them in future.
- ✓ We discussed changing unhelpful emotional behaviours by engaging in Alternative Actions which can help break the cycle by changing the intensity of your emotions. It also increases your confidence that you can handle experiencing the situation/emotion.

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 still on the third floor but we are moving into third room – exploring physical sensations.

GOALS FOR TODAY

- ✓ To identify physical sensations associated with your emotions.
- ✓ To understand how physical sensations impact your experience of emotions.
- ✓ To confront uncomfortable physical sensations through physical exercises.

Before we do that we will practice a Mindful Body Awareness exercise. Just **note how this exercise feels** for you and then we will move on.

Moving on ...

KEY CONCEPTS

The final room on the third floor of the house we are building explores the role physical sensations play in emotional experiences.

Physical sensations refer to any physical symptoms that you might experience during strong emotions (e.g., racing heart, sweating or nausea).

Just like *how we think* and *how we behave* play a situation can influence our emotional experience, so can *how we feel physically*.

In fact, bothersome physical sensations are often a big part of the reason people want to avoid their emotions. But as we will learn today, trying to get away from physical sensations doesn't really work – you will just end up having more physical sensations over time.

THE SOLUTION

The solution is actually to get comfortable having *more* physical sensations.

We do this by practising exercises that get you used to feeling the physical sensations associated with your emotions so that they begin to feel more manageable.

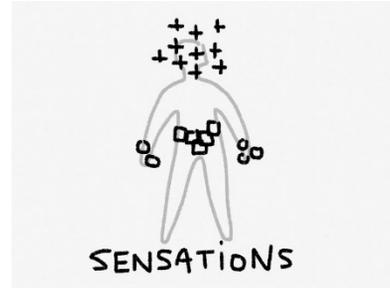
So far our group has zeroed in on two parts of an emotional experience – thoughts and behaviours.

As you know from previous groups there is one more component to explore – how you feel in your body.

PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

Let's start by thinking and writing down how your body feels when you are anxious?

How does your body feel when you are down?



How does your body feel when you are angry?

And what do guilt or shame do to our bodies?

These physical responses are a normal part of feeling these emotions – it's what alerts us to what our emotions are trying to communicate as well as what motivates us to action.



HOW THEY CAN INTENSIFY OUR EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES

Physical sensations can intensify your emotional experiences in a number of ways.

1. They make you feel like you can't cope with the situation you are facing.
2. Intense physical sensations can make you feel as if something bad is about to occur.

Given the physical sensations can intensify it is no surprise that they contribute to the urge to avoid emotions that we discussed at the previous group.

But remember – trying to escape from strong emotions tends to backfire in the long run and the same is said for physical sensations too. They will feel more overwhelming over time and you learn you can't cope with them.

CONTEXT

The context in which physical sensations occur is very important for how we interpret this.

Let's think about children having fun in a playground.

When a child goes down a slide his stomach might drop and he might feel light headed as he gets to the bottom.

What about the roundabout in playgrounds? How do children feel when they are on these?

And what about when playing tag? What feelings do they bring on?

When these feelings (shortness of breath, dizziness, racing heart, sweating, light-headedness) occur to children in a playground they are considered *good* sensations and something that children purposely bring on!

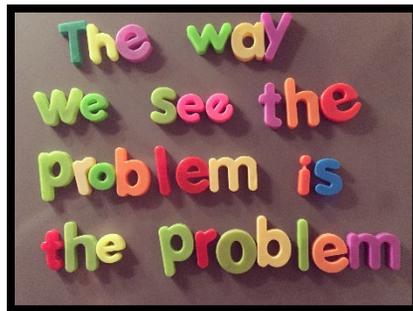


DIFFERENT CONTEXT

But let's consider this . . .

These are the very *same* sensations that can feel so scary and threatening in a different context, like an adult giving a speech or entering a situation that scares you.

This means that the physical sensations themselves are not the problem – instead it's the way we *interpret* them that makes them so scary and uncomfortable.



FACING PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

Your interpretation of your physical sensations is something that can be changed.

In fact you can actually become more comfortable with these feelings over time.

We will do this using physical exercises designed to bring on the very same sensations that come up when you have strong emotions.

We will practice these again and again without doing anything to make them go away.



WHY WOULD WE DO THIS?

We do this for several reasons:

Firstly we do this so that you can notice what a physical sensation feels like on its own apart from any interpretation of what it might mean.

Next, by repeatedly bringing on these sensations you will learn about your ability to cope with them even when you don't do anything to manage them.

And finally, the more you practice feeling these sensations the more you will get used to them. They might start to feel routine to you – even boring!

The idea is...

The idea is that, when these sensations come along with a strong emotion in the real world, you will know that they are safe and tolerable even if they are uncomfortable.

Think about the exercises in this group as getting a vaccine.

In order for your body to know how to cope with an illness, your immune system has to have some exposure to it. That's what a vaccine is – a small dose of the illness your body needs to practice handling.

These exercises work similarly – by exposing yourself to the physical sensations that make you feel uncomfortable, you will learn that you can cope with these feelings and they will feel more tolerable the next time they come unexpectedly.



SO WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

Here are will list four exercises that bring on sensations commonly associated with strong emotions.

In order to conduct these you will need a stopwatch / timer as well as a thin straw.

Let's practice!!

1. Hyperventilation

Take rapid, deep breaths through your mouth, using a lot of force, as if you were blowing up a balloon. This exercise is likely to produce light-headedness, dizziness, and feelings of unreality.

2. Breathe through a thin straw

Breathe through a thin straw or coffee stirrer while blocking air from your nose. Make sure that you're only taking in air through the straw, without breathing around it. This exercise will make it feel like you can't get enough air, and it is designed to make you feel anxious. You'll get the most benefit from it if you stick with it for the full minute.

3. Spin in circles

Stand up and turn around quickly (approximately one full rotation every three seconds). You can do this with your eyes open or closed. Alternatively, you can spin in a chair that swivels. If you conduct this exercise standing, consider doing it near a chair or couch where you can sit down afterwards. This exercise is designed to produce dizziness, light-headedness, and disorientation.

4. Run in place

Run in place while lifting your knees as high as you can. This exercise is designed to cause rapid heart rate, shortness of breath, flushed cheeks, and increased body heat.

RECORD THIS ON THE PHYSICAL SENSATION TEST WORKSHEET ATTACHED.

RECOGNISING OUR THOUGHTS

While you are completing the exercises notice how your thoughts influence the intensity of the experience.

Notice also how you behave in response to this exercise.

Are you sitting back relaxed? Are you sitting forwards in the chair, gripping the armrests? Are you fidgeting?

Notice how different thoughts and different behaviours influence the intensity of the physical sensations you experience when engaging in the exercises.

When you are done put a star next to the exercises that produced a distress and similarity ratings of at least 5.

If none of the exercises brought on sensations that feel distressing and similar, try doing them again. This time for 2 minutes.

Or try to combine two of them such as spinning in a chair for 1 minute and immediately then breath through a straw for one minute.

Finally you can come up with other exercises to try to reproduce the physical feelings you have during strong emotions.

OTHER EXERCISES TO TRY

Sensation	Possible exercise/s
To raise your heart rate	Squats, push ups, walking up and down stairs
To feel hot and sweaty	Burpees, sit in front of a heater, put on a heavy coat indoors
To feel dizzy	Roll your head from side to side; or sit with your head between your legs and raise your head rapidly
To feel disorientated	Look into a mirror with your face just a few inches away, or stare at a bright light or pattern (eg window blinds) and look away suddenly
To feel shaky	Hold books or weights out to the sides of your body until your arms start to shake, or hold a plank position until your body starts to shake
To feel heavy or tired	Wear wrist weights, ankle weights, or a heavy backpack while going about daily activities for 5 minutes
To feel nauseous or full	Drink a large quantity of water and wear a tight belt

REPEATEDLY CONFRONTING PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

Do the exercises over and over again, without taking any breaks, and only pause long enough to make ratings on your Physical Sensations Practice Form.

Keep doing them until you no longer feel very concerned that doing the exercises will have the negative consequences you initially worried about.

It's likely that by doing the exercises repeatedly your distress ratings will also decrease.

Another rule of thumb is to continue doing the exercises until your distress reaches a 3 or less.

This may not happen the first time you do a set of exercises so come back to them another day to practice some more.

WHAT IF I DON'T FIND THE EXERCISES DISTRESSING?

To make sure you get the full benefit of the exercises make sure you do them for the full minute or longer if you are not distressed yet.

You may have the urge to stop before experiencing significant sensations, possibly because the exercise makes you uncomfortable.

This is exactly when it's important to continue doing the exercise!

Feeling uncomfortable, and continuing anyway, teaches you that you're able to handle the experiences that you have avoided in the past.

If your distress never reaches above a 3 do anything you can to make the exercises harder!

- Combine 2 exercises
- Do them in front of people
- Do them when already feeling upset or anxious

SUMMARY

Today we have explored the role of physical sensations in emotions.

We have highlighted how physical sensations are often a big part of why emotions are uncomfortable.

We also talked about how your *interpretation* of physical sensations determines how distressing they are.

Just as avoiding emotions causes them to continue over the long term, avoiding physical sensations ensures that you continue to find them distressing.

The solution is to get more practice experiencing the physical sensations that are most distressing to you, without doing anything to manage or get away from them.

By repeatedly experiencing these physical sensations, you start to get used to them and eventually find them less distressing – maybe even boring!

NEXT STEPS



You now have all of the core skills to begin approaching, accepting and tolerating uncomfortable emotional experiences.

You have learned how to observe your emotions, to be more flexible in your thinking, to counter emotional behaviours and now to get used to uncomfortable physical sensations.

Next session we will bring all of these skills together and you will have the opportunity to apply them to your real life experiences.



1. Physical sensations may make you feel like your emotions, or emotional situations, are more threatening than they really are.
2. It is important to be aware of how we *physically* feel during an emotional experience, just as it is important to recognise what we *think* and what we *do*.
3. When experiencing physical sensations during an emotional experience you should try to reduce their intensity so that you can get your emotions under control.
4. Confronting physical sensations repeatedly can help you learn that they are not dangerous and that they will decrease on their own

HOMEWORK

Homework for the week ahead is:

- ✓ Continue doing the physical exercises on a daily basis and recording your progress in the Physical Sensations Practice form in the workbook.
- ✓ Next session we will be focusing on how to put everything into practice and moving on from the group. We have a therapy blueprint form in this workbook and also downloadable on the website so please can you have a look at this and begin to complete it?

Thank you for attending week 7.

Next week is our final week – Putting it all together. See you then.

Physical Sensation Test

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PROCEDURE	Symptoms Experienced	Distress	Similarity
Hyperventilation (60 seconds)			
Breath through thin straw (60 seconds)			
Spinning while standing (60 seconds)			
Running in place (60 seconds)			
Other: (__ seconds)			
Other: (__ seconds)			
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Therapy Blueprint

A therapy blueprint is a space for you to reflect on how your difficulties developed, what kept them going, and what you learned during therapy. It can help you to plan how you are going to maintain the gains that you have made, review what warning signs you might need to remain aware of and remember what you might find helpful should it feel like your difficulties are ever beginning to return.

What kept the problems going?

Why did the problems not get better on their own?

Consider: avoidance, safety-seeking behaviours, unhelpful beliefs.

Knowledge and skills...

How has therapy helped you to deal with your problem(s)? What have you learned that has been helpful?

What strategies or techniques did you learn? (e.g., challenging my thinking, facing my fears, testing my beliefs)

Describe any behavioural experiments that you conducted: What beliefs did you test? What did you discover?



How I think differently now...

Consider some typical situations which used to trigger strong feelings. Compare your thinking patterns before therapy and now:
How did you interpret these situations then? What do these events mean to you now?

Situation What situations use to trigger a strong response in you?	My thoughts then? Before therapy what thoughts did you have in response to that situation.	How I think now? How do you interpretate/think differently now?

How I do things differently now...

Consider some typical situations which used to trigger you and compare your reactions / responses before therapy and now.

Situation What situations use to trigger a reaction in you?	Previous reaction? Before therapy how did you react in response to that situation?	How I react now? How do you react differently now?



How far I have come and my goals for the future...

What have you achieved so far?

How are you going to build on your achievements?

Setbacks and Obstacles

What could cause a setback and how would you deal with it?

What obstacles do you anticipate might be challenging?

What would you do if your difficulties came back in a way that meant you were struggling?



Message to my future self.

If you could send a message to your future self (something you would not want to forget) what would it be?