

ANXIETY TOOLBOX

Clinician Manual: SESSION THREE



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SESSION THREE

Supplies Needed: Clock/timer, pens, extra student workbooks

Introduction (7 minutes) :00 -- :07

Welcome back. Let's start again by **practicing the deep breathing skill**. First, let's take a **thermometer reading** of our current anxiety level. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being very low to non-existent and 10 being the most severe anxiety you've experienced where are you right now? You don't have to say it out loud, but please jot down what is your number right now?

Okay. Now let's take some deep breaths. Taking a deep breath in through our nose, counting in our mind 1...2...3...4. Imagining using the air we breathe fill our stomach. Holding for a count of 2, then breathing out through our mouth for 1...2...3...4 and pausing before starting again.

Now, let's all try. Breathe in for a count of 4, hold for a count of 2 and breathe out for a count of 4 (*Pause...*) Let's try it again. Breathe in for a count of 4, hold for a count of 2 and breathe out for a count of 4.

Okay. Now, let's take a new thermometer reading. Please rate your current level of anxiety on the scale from 1 (very low to none) to 10 (most severe). Did anyone notice a shift in their numbers?

Clinician: wait for responses and then validate

Okay, great. Now, let's go around the room and say your first name, and one thing you are grateful for today.

Agenda (1 minute) :07-- :08

We will begin by summarizing what we have discussed in the past two sessions and reviewing your homework. Then we will shift into today's topic which is focused on cognitive restructuring and self-care. We'll wrap up by putting it all together and creating an action plan for managing your anxiety.

Review last week (2 minutes) :08 -- :10

During the last two seminars, we:

- Discussed the interaction between the 4 anxiety symptom clusters which includes thoughts, feelings, behaviors and physical sensations.
- Learned about automatic thoughts
- Began to identify and address unhelpful thinking styles.

We have been using the cross sectional formulation worksheet to help solidify these concepts. You were asked to complete a cross sectional formulation worksheet over the past week, focusing specifically on noticing unhelpful thought patterns. How did that go? Would anyone like to share what they noticed?

Clinician: Pause for responses

Did anyone have any questions or challenges that came up for them while attempting to complete the assignment?

Clinician: Pause for responses

Okay, so now we're going to transition into taking an alternative look at the cross sectional formulation.

Alternative Response Formulation (15 minutes) :10 -- :25

By now, you are all probably **experts on the cross sectional formulation** and can probably explain it to your friends, but let's take another look at it before incorporating the next component. You begin the simple cross sectional formulation by identifying an anxiety provoking event and then noting the interactions of your experiences of anxiety symptoms.

We have found that the **cognitive component is heavily weighted** such that the way you think about or interpret a situation can perpetuate the anxiety and then trigger other symptoms. We spent the majority of last week talking about the impact of automatic and unhelpful thoughts.

You may be asking yourself, so now what? What do I do about it? Remember that we have done 2 activities to address the physical symptoms directly (deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation) and that by addressing the physical symptoms directly you are freeing up mental energy to address other symptoms.

Also, remember that completing the cross sectional formulation is a tool. It requires that you slow down and detangle the symptoms you are feeling.

Okay, so now let's focus on how to address the thoughts directly through **cognitive restructuring**. What we mean by cognitive restructuring is to take a different thinking approach to the anxiety provoking situation. This involves purposefully slowing down, challenging your automatic and unhelpful thinking patterns and giving yourself a **broader perspective on the situation**. This takes time and lots of practice. So be patient with yourself.

Here's how it works. When you start to notice anxiety, think to yourself: **"Stop, pay attention and get perspective."** This means, stop, pay attention to **what is going on in your mind and body** and then **be intentional** about what happens next.

What we want to do here is to slow down the process so that you don't get caught up in the anxiety and so that you feel more able to manage the anxious thoughts and feelings. The ultimate goal is for the "stop and pay attention" mantra to become second nature so that you use it even before experiencing anxiety. That is going to take time and lots of practice.

To better understand this "stop and pay attention" mantra, let's work through an **example of alternative responses** to anxiety. I want to highlight that when we are doing the alternative response we are **not saying "just think positive"**, because you have probably heard that

before and it's not that simple. What we are saying is, let's look at the situation from a broader perspective.

For example, using the same anxiety provoking situation of being invited to a party and feeling anxious about going, one of the alternative responses is "I might still have an okay time." It is important to remember that you're probably not going to jump from the thought: "I'm gonna have a terrible time" to the thought: "I'm gonna have a great time." Make sure your alternative thoughts are **realistic and believable**. Don't try to just jump to the positive extreme as this would be an example of an unhelpful thinking style of black and white thinking.

We will be filling out an Alternative Response Worksheet which corresponds to an anxiety provoking event that we used as an example during the first week. Let's review the example on **page 29** of your workbook.

Clinician: Review example of alternative response.

Now, using the anxiety event from one of your homework assignments from last week, fill out the blank **Alternative Response Worksheet on page 32**. Use pages 30-31 "If you're having trouble, ask yourself these questions" as a guide. These questions are intended to guide you to think of alternative responses until they become second nature, which is going to take a lot of time and practice.

Are there any questions?

Clinician: Give students 5 minutes to complete alternative response worksheet.

So we've spent a lot of time talking about thoughts; this is only one of several ways to cope with your symptoms. Let's shift into other strategies you can add to your toolbox.

Grounding (5 minutes) :25 -- :30

Let's start with a technique called "grounding." Grounding is a re-centering technique used to pause, re-focus, get unstuck, and come back to the moment; it's a sensory experience that you can use anywhere, anytime. We're going to practice one technique together. This technique is called the "**54321**" **technique**:

Without saying it out loud, observe 5 things you can see in the room. *(Clinician pause 10 seconds...)* Observe 4 things you can feel, such as "the chair on my back" or "my feet on the floor." *(Clinician pause 10 seconds.)* Observe 3 things you can hear right now. *(Clinician pause 10 seconds)* Observe 2 things you can smell right now. *(Clinician pause 10 seconds)* And think of 1 good thing about yourself *(Clinician pause 5 seconds).*

How was that for everyone?

Clinician: Allow for and acknowledge responses.

That exercise may have resonated with some of you and not with others. Remember, not every coping strategy we teach will automatically work or work in every situation. It takes practice to figure out the tools that work best for you and in which circumstances. What we hope is that you are creating a tool box for anxiety and using the tools you need when you need them. You get to choose what you put in that toolbox and what you take out of it.

In your appendix on **pages 41-42**, there's information about a number of other grounding strategies to try and add to your tool box. Take a moment to review these pages. Star, highlight, or circle the all the potential strategies that could work for you.

Clinician: Wait 1 minute for students to review and mark strategies

Additional Self-Care (2 minutes) :30 -- :32

Another aspect to keep in mind while focusing on addressing anxiety is your overall self-care. Like we talked about in the first workshop, sleep hygiene is one of the best self-care strategies because it affects everything else about your health. In addition to practicing good sleep hygiene, exercise, a balanced diet, minimal caffeine use and pleasurable activities are also important in maintaining a healthy mind and body.

Page 35 provides information on **pleasant activities** that can also be used for self-care and as coping strategies. Take a minute to review the sheet. As you review the worksheet, highlight or circle the information that you believe you could start to incorporate into your daily or weekly routines.

Clinician: Wait 1 minute for students to review and mark strategies

Putting it all together (12 minutes) :32 -- :44

Now let's put everything we have learned into an **action plan for managing anxiety**. On **pages 36-37** in your workbook is a worksheet with a number of questions about recognizing symptoms and triggers and implementing some of the coping strategies we've discussed. We're going to spend a good amount of time on this, so that you can come up with your own plan to take with you today. Go ahead and start, and please feel free to ask me any questions as you go along if you need to.

Clinician: Give student 8 minutes to work on action plan, answer any questions that come up.

Before we conclude, let's take a moment to figure out how you are going to **remind yourself** that you have a **plan for managing anxiety** and that you have set goals.

It may be helpful to review your plan in the morning, before you go to bed, or before an anxiety-provoking situation. Some people find it helpful to take a picture of their plan and have it easily accessible in

their phone. You could write post-it notes of your goals and keep them visible. Maybe you could ask a friend to check-in with you about your goals.

What are some ways that you can remind yourself about your plan?
Please write them on the bottom of **page 37**.

Clinician: Give student 1 minute note their reminder.

Summary / Conclusion (6 minutes) :44 -- :50

Okay, so let's talk about what we learned in these 3 seminars. We discussed anxiety symptoms focused on the ways in which thoughts, behaviors, feelings, and physical symptoms interact. We also increased awareness of your triggers and unhelpful thinking styles and identified coping strategies for dealing with these symptoms.

Remember that we have to **practice these strategies regularly** to effectively manage anxiety. Remember that **some amount of anxiety is normal** in the human experience. With consistent practice, the coping strategies we learned in this seminar will help maintain our ability to manage anxiety and prevent feeling overwhelmed from anxiety.

We created a personalized action plan to continue to practice in the future. Make sure to use your plan even when your anxiety is low as a maintenance measure. In fact, it can be more helpful to practice when your anxiety is low because practicing when your anxiety is low, makes the skills become more second nature so that when you do feel anxious, the skills come more easily.

Please complete an evaluation on the ipad to let us know your thoughts about this workshop series. When you turn your evaluation into the front desk, you will have the opportunity to schedule a debrief appointment with your referring clinician.

If you feel like you need more support, schedule a debriefing to talk about further options with your initial consultation provider. Some options may include participating our other workshops or groups.

Thank you for your participation.