

Slide Transcription for Coping Skills Seminar: Managing Emotions

Coping Skills Seminar

Managing Emotions

Counselling & Psychological Services

University of Waterloo

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In This Seminar...

You will learn how to

- Manage your emotions through distress tolerance skills, mainly
 - distraction;
 - self-soothing; and
 - improving the moment

You will learn a relaxation exercise.

- Safe Place Guided Imagery

Why Focus on Emotions?

Emotions are natural reactions to positive and negative events that happen in our day-to-day lives.

Sometimes emotions can feel out of control.

Why Focus on Emotions?

Imagine that you're in the PAC waiting to begin an exam that you don't feel prepared for. If your emotions start to feel out of control (e.g., stress, anxiety, etc.) you may not be able to concentrate on writing the exam.

If you can keep your emotions under control, you will increase your chances of success.

Emotion-Focused Strategies

Involve taking steps to manage emotional reactions to a situation that is causing distress.

Most appropriate for situations which we cannot change.

Distress Tolerance

- Is the ability to withstand intense emotion
- Is an important skill because many things in life can lead to intense emotional reactions
- Inability to tolerate the emotion can lead to the use of ineffective coping strategies

Distress Tolerance Strategies

- Set of tools to help manage intense emotional states
- Will not eliminate emotional pain or distress, but will temporarily stop you from thinking about your pain or distress
- Give you time to calm down before dealing with the problem to help prevent you from doing something to make the situation worse

Distress Tolerance Strategies

Distraction

- Different from avoidance
 - (E.g., reading for 1/2 vs. staying up playing video games all night)

See handout: The Big List of Pleasurable Activities

Distraction Techniques

For self-destructive behaviours

- Ice cube
- Rubber band

- Crying

Pleasurable activities

- Engage in calming or comforting activities
- Talk to a friend on the phone

Pay attention to someone else

- Do something for someone else
- Go watch other people at the mall
- Focus on someone you care about

Distraction

Distract yourself

- With positive thoughts/memories
 - Think about positive events from the past
 - Focus on nature
- With a 'time out'
 - Put a space between you and the stressor
- With counting
 - Count your breaths
 - Count the geese outside your window...

Let's Practise

See handout: The Big List of Pleasurable Activities.

Create a list of distraction strategies that you can try when you are feeling distressed.

Distress Tolerance Strategies

Self-soothing is comforting, nurturing, and being kind to yourself. It reduces the feelings of stress, anxiety, and/or vulnerability.

- Heart beats slower and blood pressure is reduced
- Thinking is calmer and more suited to solving problems

Self-Soothing

Constructive vs. destructive self-soothing (e.g., alcohol, smoking, overeating, or isolation).

Use constructive methods to change your physiological response and refocus your attention.

Self-Soothing: Use Your Senses

Vision: Look at beautiful things such as flowers, art, old photos

Hearing: Listen to music, attend to the sounds of nature, enjoy the voice of a relative or friend

Smell: Light a scented candle, notice the scents of nature, bake an aromatic recipe

Taste: Enjoy a hearty meal or decadent dessert, experiment with a new flavor, focus on the flavours

Touch: Pet an animal, give someone a hug, have a massage or hot shower/bath, snuggle up in a soft blanket or comfy clothes

Let's Practise

See handout: My Relaxation/Self-Soothing Plan.

Create a list of self-soothing strategies that you can use at home and away from home (e.g., at school, at work).

** Participation is voluntary. If you're not comfortable doing the exercise here, don't do it.**

Improving the Moment

Helps make a situation less distressing by helping you change how you think about it. Live in the present moment.

Avoid time travelling into the future and time travelling into the past.

Improving the Moment

“Where Are You Now?”

- Are you in the present, or in the past?
- Notice and bring your focus back to the present
- Notice how you are breathing
 - Diaphragmatic breathing
 - Alternate nostril breathing

Improving the Moment

1. Notice how your body is feeling and any tension you're holding. Release it with your breath
2. Notice painful emotions created by time travelling and use distress tolerance skills to help soften the pain

Improving the Moment

Self-encouraging coping thoughts

- We all need to hear positive messages to help us cope sometimes

Improving the Moment

Examples of self-encouraging coping thoughts:

“This is temporary”

“I can be anxious and still deal with what is happening right now”

“Just because I think something does not make it true”

“My stress/anxiety/sadness/anger won’t kill me; it just doesn’t feel good right now”

“My thoughts don’t control my life, I do”

“I’m strong enough to handle what’s happening to me right now”

“This is an opportunity for me to learn how to cope with my stress, anxiety, sadness, or anger”

“I can think different thoughts if I want to”

“Even the darkest hour is only 60 minutes”

“I am just learning how to cope with my feelings; I may not be perfect at it but that’s ok too”

Let’s Practise

See handout: Using Coping Thoughts.

Think of a mildly distressing situation. What self-encouraging coping thoughts could you use in that situation?

Participation is voluntary. If you’re not comfortable doing the exercise here, don’t do it.

Relaxation Exercise

Guided imagery is a program of directed thoughts that guide your imagination toward a relaxed, focused state.

This relaxed state can help you feel more in control of your emotions and the thought processes.

Wrapping Up

Questions?

We would appreciate your input and encourage you to take a few moments to help us improve our seminars by completing the online evaluation form.

What's Next?

1. Complete the feedback form
2. Call or visit Counselling Services for more resource information or for an appointment
3. Speak to your Health Care Provider – Campus Health Services, family physician, nutritionist, etc.
4. Develop your own Wellness Plan

Emergency Contacts

On Campus? Call ex. 22222

Contact Campus Police for emergency services on campus at ext. 84911 OR (519) 888-4911

Away from campus? Call 911

In a crisis? Feel unsafe? Worried you might hurt yourself or others?

- Contact someone you trust
- Go to the nearest hospital or safe place
- Call a local help line
- Contact us during regular University of Waterloo hours at Counselling Services, Mental Health, or Health Services and we'll try to find local supports to help you
- See list of Waterloo Region emergency contacts on the next slide
- If you are out of the country we will do our best to accommodate your communication needs and appointment time requirements. Teleconference, phone, etc. can be accommodated as necessary.
- Let us know how we can help!

Emergency Contacts

University of Waterloo Resources

Counselling Services 519-888-4567 x32655

Health Services 519-888-4096

Mental Health 519-888-4567 x 31976

University of Waterloo Police (24/7) 519-888-4911

Region of Waterloo Resources

Crisis Clinic Grand River Hospital 519-742-3611

Good2Talk 1-866-925-5454 or 211

Campus Wellness
Counselling Services



Hear 24/7 1-844-437-3247

Kitchener-Waterloo Distress Line 519-745-1166

Kitchener-Waterloo Sexual Assault Support Centre (24/7) 519-741-8633

Telecare Cambridge Distress Help Line 519-658-5455

Mobile Crisis Team (24/7) 519-744-1813

Waterloo Region Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centre 519-749-6994