Session 3 Agenda

Cognitive Coping: Thinking Traps & Coping Thoughts

Session Objectives:
- Understand how thinking can contribute to anxious mood
- Increase cognitive flexibility
- Identify several automatic negative thoughts and thinking traps
- Understand techniques for challenging automatic negative thoughts
- Generate meaningful coping thoughts

Materials Needed:
- Feeling Faces Chart
- Relaxation Resource Guide
- Coping Skills Practice Log
- CBT Flowshape
- Video viewing equipment
- Types of Thinking Traps Handout
- Automatic and Coping Thoughts Handout
- 5 Steps to Untwisting Your Thinking Handout
- Reflecting on Difficult Situations Worksheet

Session Overview:
1. Check-in and coping skill practice
2. Homework review and session preview
3. Understanding automatic thoughts
4. Kally’s video
5. Recognizing thinking traps
6. Coping thoughts
7. Steps for challenging inaccurate or unhelpful thoughts
8. Wrap-up and homework assignment

Warm-up:
(5 min) Welcome back!
Check-in: How are we feeling? Why? Use the Feeling Faces Chart.
Coping skill practice using the Coping Skills Practice Log: Select a relaxation, mindfulness, or distress tolerance skill from the Relaxation Resource Guide Handout that was not practiced in group last week to complete for a warm-up today. Encourage the group to reflect on how the activity changes the feelings or intensity of feelings they are experiencing.
Homework Check and Agenda Preview:
(5 min)
Homework review/check: Review Coping Skills Practice Log. Identify which skills were practiced or liked by group members.

Preview agenda for the day: “Today we’re going to be examining the “thoughts” piece of the CBT flowshape and learning how our thoughts impact our feelings and behaviors. We’re going to learn how to identify and talk back to our automatic negative thoughts and thinking traps, and replace them with coping thoughts. Coping thoughts are alternative thoughts that are more helpful or more accurate.”

Automatic Thoughts:
(5 min)
Review of the CBT Flowshape
Situation ➔ Thoughts ➔ Feelings ➔ Behavior

Review: “So far we’ve practiced changing feelings by using mindfulness and relaxation skills. The CBT flowshape shows us that our behavior is what impacts our situation, but our thoughts and feelings drive our behavior.

Let’s look at the “thoughts” piece of the CBT flowshape:
• Automatic thoughts are our immediate interpretations of situations and events, and a lot of times these thoughts happen without us even realizing it. Automatic thoughts can be positive, negative, or even neutral. What are some examples of positive thoughts? Neutral thoughts? We are going to focus on the negative ones, because when these thoughts seem true, they make us feel badly.
• Anxiety makes us more vulnerable to exaggerated/unrealistic/illogical thoughts—these are called automatic negative thoughts (ANTS).
• When these ANTs are very strong or loud, sometimes physical coping skills aren’t enough to help us change our feelings or our behavior. In these times, working with our thoughts is another helpful tool.”
• Solicit additional examples of ANTs (solicit at least as many ANTs as there are group members):
  Eg. 1: “I’m never going to graduate.”
  Eg. 2: “I mess up everything.”
  Eg. 3: “Everyone is going to think I’m an idiot.”

“A key piece of feeling better is learning to recognize when ANTs are present and are contributing to anxiety and depression. Today and next week, we’re going to practice some ways to become more aware of these thoughts, notice when they are happening (“catch them”), check them out, and begin to change these thoughts so that ANTs don’t impact our feelings and behavior as much.”

(5 min)
Kally’s Video
Discussion:
• What situations or triggers brought on Kally’s automatic thoughts?
• What were her automatic thoughts like? How were they different from regular thoughts?
• What kinds of situations bring on automatic thoughts for you? What are those thoughts like?
Understanding Thinking Traps:
(5 min) Introduce the concept of thinking traps. “One of the things we know from studying people’s automatic thoughts, is that these automatic thoughts often fall into certain patterns called thinking traps—types of thoughts that don’t tell the whole story.”

Types of Thinking Traps Handout
Have students read descriptions out loud and check off on their copy if they experience that kind of thinking trap.

Coping Thoughts:
(10 min) Read through Automatic and Coping Thoughts Handout
Have students select 1-2 automatic thoughts that feel most relevant to thoughts they are likely to have in the sample situation (upcoming test) and then pick 2-3 coping thoughts that feel most helpful. Review what the group has learned about ANTs:
• Some thoughts are illogical/unreasonable.
• Some thoughts are true, but unhelpful.
• Coping thoughts can help us with both.

Challenging Thoughts:
(15 min) Review together 5 Steps to Untwisting Your Thinking Handout
Using 1-2 example situations (below), practice using questions from 5 Steps to Untwisting Your Thinking handout to challenge unhelpful ANTs and then develop coping thoughts:
• You walk into your favorite pizza place, and see a group of your classmates. They look at you and start laughing.
• Your boyfriend/girlfriend breaks up with you.
• You get a bad grade on a test.
• You got caught cheating on a test and you’re about to talk to the principal.
• A big event you’ve been looking forward to just got cancelled.
• You’re sitting in class and don’t understand what the teacher is talking about.
• You walk into the lunchroom and don’t know where to sit.
• It’s Friday night and you have no plans all weekend.

The Hot Seat Activity:
Use sample scenarios, or real situations, and ask one student to identify a possible automatic thought. Ask the rest of the group to generate alternative coping thoughts using the strategies outlined in “5 steps”. Aim for 2-3 coping thoughts per automatic thought.
(OPTIONAL: Switch roles to have group give automatic thoughts and hot seat person has to generate helpful coping thoughts.)

Wrap-up:
(2 min.) Assign homework for the week: Reflecting on Difficult Situations Worksheet
Students should reflect on at least one challenging situation that occurs during the week. They should use and check off which questions on the 5 Steps to Untwisting Your Thinking Handout were most helpful. Remind students that this is a hard skill to learn, and that it is ok to still have negative thoughts. We just want to notice when they happen and try to choose the most helpful thoughts we can.
Session 3 Leader Reflection

Cognitive Coping: Thinking Traps & Coping Thoughts

- reviewed the CBT flow shape and explained that cognitive coping interrupts the flow shape at the "thoughts" point of the flow shape, leading to changes in feelings and behaviors
- taught group members how to distinguish between thoughts and feelings
- explained the difference between automatic thoughts and thinking traps
- led a group exercise in which group members practiced identifying possible automatic thoughts for a variety of situations
- helped group members identify their common thinking traps
- reviewed the difference between an automatic thought and a thinking trap, and discussed how these differ from a coping thought
- taught group members to evaluate the truthfulness and helpfulness of their automatic negative thoughts
- encouraged group members to develop their own coping thought without trying to convince them of a specific coping thought
- encouraged group members to notice how alternative coping thoughts can improve negative feelings/behaviors

Group Skills

- spent 20-30 minutes preparing for group, reviewing activities, becoming familiar with content, resources to share, videos, activities, etc.
- used materials from the TRAILS website, including videos or worksheets, while working with group members
- protected time for group and stayed focused throughout (did not multi-task)
- set an agenda at the beginning of group
- kept the group on task related to content and did not go into unrelated topics
- encouraged group member participation, particularly among those who are generally quiet
- created a warm, inviting, safe space for the group
- provided examples that were relevant to the group