Session 6 Agenda

Session Objectives
• Identify Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTS)
• Catch and challenge ANTS
• Generate coping thoughts

Topics Covered
• Coping thoughts

Manual Information
Grades 3-5
CBT and Mindfulness
Depression and Anxiety
10 Sessions

What You’ll Need
Access Session Agenda, accompanying Google Slide Deck and Resource PDFs under What You’ll Need on our website.

Review:
☐ Winston's and Cleo's Feeling Thermometers
☐ ANTs and Coping Thoughts activity (See below in the agenda for instructions. Written sticky notes should be prepared prior to group)

Print:
☐ Feelings Thermometer
☐ Being an ANT Detective

Print or prepare to display:
☐ Winston's and Cleo's Feeling Thermometers
☐ How Am I Feeling?
☐ CBT Model

Prepare to bring:
☐ Group Rewards Tracker
☐ Coping Skills Toolbox
☐ Group folders
☐ Prepared sticky notes for ANTs and Coping Thoughts activity

Session Overview
1. Check-In
2. Review and Session Preview
3. Challenging Thoughts: Being an ANT Detective
4. ANTs and Coping Thoughts Activity
5. Coping Skill Practice
6. Coping Skills Toolbox, Group Rewards Tracker, and Wrap-Up
7. Suggestions for Virtual Adaptation
Check-In

(5 minutes)

Do: Display How am I Feeling?

- Hand out markers and Feelings Thermometers to group members as they arrive and ask them to fill out their thermometers as they wait for the group to start. Remind them to list what they are feeling right now, and to fill in the thermometer according to how big or small their feelings are.
- Remind group members we can experience different intensities of feeling. Sometimes we feel a little sad and sometimes we feel a big amount of sadness. There are no right or wrong feelings. Everyone can have different feelings and different sizes of feelings.
- Share how Winston and Cleo are feeling today by displaying a completed Winston's and Cleo's Feelings Thermometers worksheet for the group.

Leader tip: Use Winston's and Cleo's thermometers to help group members learn new feeling words and understand how the intensity of a feeling can vary.

Review and Session Preview

(5 minutes)

Say: “Last week we started learning about our Automatic Negative Thoughts. Remember, ANTs are unhelpful or unkind thoughts that pop into our heads and cause negative feelings, usually without us realizing it!”

Do: Display the CBT Model (think-feel-do cycle), and point out how one or two of the common ANTs mentioned below could impact how you feel and what you might do (e.g., “If I have the thought that I won’t get a part in the play, I will probably feel worried and sad, and not want to even try out.”)

Do: Provide a quick review of the most common ANTs:

- When we assume we know what others are thinking: “They think I look weird.” “The teacher must hate me.”
- When we assume the worst: “I won’t get a part in the play.” “I am going to fail my spelling test.”
- When we give ourselves a label: “I am a loser.” “I am ugly.”
- When we exaggerate: “I never get to do anything fun.” “I always get in trouble.”

Ask: Was anyone able to recognize when they had ANTs pop into their head?

Say: “Sometimes our thoughts are not true. We tend to always believe what pops into our head, but we should try and question our negative thoughts. For example, I might think, ‘I will never be able to draw pictures well.’ But how do I know that for sure? That thought could be incorrect. I may someday learn to draw pictures really well. We need to identify
(or catch) our negative thoughts, challenge those ANTs, and do our best to come up with more helpful thoughts. Today we will practice identifying and catching ANTs. Then we will challenge them by thinking of more helpful thoughts.”

Challenging Thoughts: Being an ANT Detective

(25 minutes)

**Say:** “In order to challenge ANTS, we need to become detectives. Does anyone know what a detective does? This first step of being an ANT detective is to find and identify the ANTs.”

**Explain and do:** After detectives find the problem (the ANT), detectives then try to find out more about the ANT by asking some questions.

- “I wonder if there is any other way to look at this?”
- “Hmmm, this sounds like a tricky thought. It could be true, but maybe it’s not. Let’s get out some paper and try to list some evidence for whether this is true or not true.”
- “What would you tell [name of person, pet, or stuffed animal the thinker really cares about] if they were having these thoughts?”

**Do:** Pass out *Being an ANT Detective* and review the questions together. Then, review the example scenarios on page 2 and encourage group members to identify which questions would be helpful in getting to a more realistic and helpful thought. Generate coping thoughts together as a group. Be sure to model identifying helpful and more realistic thoughts, not simply “positive” thoughts that may be harder to believe.

**Leader tip:** This activity can be challenging. It is helpful to offer suggestions and ask the listed questions out loud to help get students to think of coping thoughts.

**ANTS and Coping Thoughts Activity**

1. In advance, write down the following thoughts on sticky notes and place them throughout the room in visible but non-obvious places.

- “I am the dumbest in the school!”
- “I may not be the smartest kid, but I do okay.”
- “Those kids will never like me.”
- “Once they get to know me, they will like me.”
- “I can’t do this math.”
- “I will keep trying and get help if I need to.”
- “I have no friends.”
- “I have had friends in the past, and I know I can make them again.”
- “This flu shot is going to be horrible!”
- “It will only hurt for a quick second, and then I will be fine.”
- “I am the worst player on the team!”
• “It’s okay if I am not the best player. I have fun playing on the team!”
• “I can’t try out for the talent show. Everyone will laugh at me.”
• “I should try out for the talent show. I’m nervous, but it may be a lot of fun.”

2. Ask group members to go looking for one ANT each. Once they find an ANT, ask students to stick it to the board where everyone can see them.

3. Once everyone has found an ANT, ask group members to then go searching for one coping thought. Have them stick the coping thought to the ANT on the board that it matches best.

4. Ask volunteers to go up to the board and read each ANT, followed by its coping thought.

5. Reflect on the CBT Model (think-feel-do cycle) and show how more helpful thoughts might change a person’s feelings or the intensity of their feelings.

Coping Skill Practice
(5 minutes)

Do: Mindfulness Activity: Lazy 8 Breathing.
Say: “This is a good coping skill to practice that is similar to belly breathing. It helps us calm down and feel in control of ourselves when our emotions get too big.”

Coping Skills Toolbox, Group Rewards Tracker, and Wrap-Up
(2 minutes)

Do: Coping Skills Toolbox and Group Rewards Tracker.

• Ask students to draw a big number 8 in one of the spaces provided on their Coping Skills Toolboxes to represent Lazy 8 Breathing. They can also circle “Catching our ANTs” in their Coping Skills Toolboxes. Let the group know they have earned a pawprint for each of these coping skills! They can also write a specific helpful thought to remember in their coping skills box.

• Add the pawprints to the Group Rewards Tracker for the coping skills practiced and add a bonus paw print if everyone followed the group rules.

Say: “Today we learned to be detectives. We are learning to pay closer attention to our thoughts and learning how to catch and check our ANTs. We now know a few steps to challenge those ANTS:

• We can check to see if there is any evidence that our negative thought is 100% true. What are the facts? Is there another way to look at it?
• We can tell ourselves what we would tell a close friend who was having that thought.”
Suggestions for Virtual Adaptation

Use the suggestions below to modify this lesson for virtual formats.

- Consider using the accompanying TRAILS slide deck to move through the session with more graphics and interactivity.
- Use the screen share function to share the following handouts and worksheets: How Am I Feeling?, Feelings Thermometer, Winston’s and Cleo’s Feelings Thermometers (with fillable form completed prior to sharing), CBT Model Coping Skills Toolbox, and Group Rewards Tracker (fill in points students earned).
- When covering the agenda section “Challenging Thoughts: Being an ANT Detective” share each thought listed one by one, either verbally or on the screen using PowerPoint or Google Slides. Ask students to offer a more helpful thought using the chat function. An adult may have to get the chat started. You may need to ask each group member to complete one example to encourage participation.
Session 6: Leader Reflection

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• Coping thoughts

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Challenging Thoughts: Being an ANT Detective

☐ Reviewed the importance of identifying ANTs
☐ Practiced how to identify ANTs

Coping Thought Practice

☐ Reviewed the difference between an automatic negative thought and a coping thought
☐ Taught group members to evaluate and challenge their automatic negative thoughts (ANTs)
☐ Led an interactive activity on how to identify automatic negative thoughts (ANTs) and coping thoughts.
☐ Encouraged group members to develop their own coping thoughts without trying to convince them of a specific coping thought

Group Skills

☐ Spent 20-30 minutes preparing for the group, reviewing activities, becoming familiar with content, resources to share, videos, activities, etc.
☐ Used materials from the TRAILS website
☐ Protected time for group and stayed focused throughout
☐ Actively participated in skill practice (e.g., activities, coping skills, sharing of feelings, etc.)
☐ Encouraged group member participation, particularly among those who are generally quiet
☐ Created a warm, inviting, respectful space for the group
☐ Kept the group on task related to content and did not go into unrelated topics
☐ Provided examples that were relevant to the group