Session 9 Agenda

Session Objectives
- Build a fear ladder
- Learn how to get the most out of facing your fears

Topics Covered
- Practicing exposure

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
- Icebreaker: Look and Yell

Print:
- Feelings Thermometer
- Fear Ladder Worksheet
- Mindful Finger Maze
- Facing My Fears Worksheet (to send home)

Preview and load:
- How to Use Exposure Therapy to Overcome Phobias

Print or prepare to display:
- Cleo’s Fear Ladder (completed in previous group)
- Situations I Avoid (completed in previous group)
- CBT Model

Prepare to bring:
- Coping Skills Toolbox
- Group Rewards Tracker
- Group folders

Session Overview
1. Check-In and Warm-Up
2. Review and Session Preview
3. Review Exposure
4. Coping Skill Practice
5. Coping Skills Toolbox, Group Rewards Tracker, and Wrap-Up
Check-In and Warm-Up

(10 minutes)

Do: Display How Am I Feeling?

- Hand out markers and Feelings Thermometers to group members as they arrive and ask them to fill their thermometers out as they wait for the group to start. Ask how they are feeling right now, and how big or small their feelings are.
- Remind group members that there are different intensities of our feelings. 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 posting up or displaying a filled-in Winston’s and Cleo’s Feelings Thermometers worksheet for the group.

Do: Complete a warm-up activity such as Icebreaker: Look and Yell. This is a fun exposure activity for those who may have social anxiety.

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)

Do: Project or draw the CBT Model (think-feel-do cycle) and review how our thoughts impact how we feel, which impacts what we do or how we behave.

Review Cleo’s fear of swimming from Cleo’s Fear Ladder discussed in the last group. Apply the CBT model to Cleo’s situation (learning to swim):

- Thoughts: “What if I sink to the bottom?” “I will never get my fur to look the same.”
- Feelings: scared, nervous
- Behaviors: avoid the water
- New Situation: never get to swim with my friends

Do: Preview today’s lesson.

Say: “Last week, we discussed how facing our fears one step at a time can help us approach things we need or want to do but have avoided in the past because of fear. This week we’re going to get a little more practice with building our fear ladders, and we’ll discuss helpful tips on how to practice and not give up!”

Ask: Did anyone think about situations or activities they avoid but would like to do?
Review Exposure (Facing Your Fears)

(20 minutes)

Do: Show a video on exposure: How to Use Exposure Therapy to Overcome Phobias. After the video, engage the group in a discussion about how to face their own fears.

Say: "In this video, Dr. Mattu wants to get over his fear of bees. He gradually works his way up to facing his fear, then waits until that task gets boring before moving on to something harder. Another way to do exposure is to jump in the deep end or rip the band aid off by doing something that’s really hard right away. What do you think might work better for you?"

Do: Pass out the Fear Ladder Worksheet.

- Ask group members to think of something they have a hard time doing because of fear or nervous feelings. If they struggle to identify a fear, review their Situations I Avoid worksheet and ask them to pick something they circled. Students will likely require assistance identifying what fear they would like to face or what they would like to accomplish.
- Have them write in the fear they choose at the very top of the ladder.
- Ask them to think of smaller challenging steps on their ladder to help them face their top challenge.
- Ask them to rate how scary each step would make them feel on their ladder using the feeling thermometer scale of 1-10, 10 being the scariest. In order for this ladder to work, we want each step to be at least a 3-4 on the thermometer.
- Remind them that it is okay to feel nervous and afraid, and that these feelings will become less intense the more they face their fears.
- To make the fear ladder work best, it is important to pick a step on the ladder and do it over and over again, until the intensity of our fear comes down a little on our feelings thermometer. We then can try another step.

Leader tip: To save time, pick a common fear for this age group, and have students work on this sheet together as a group. Some ideas include: trying a new sport, raising your hand in class, being around dogs, or facing a fear of heights.

Help group members plan to practice facing their fears:

1. Ask group members to pick one or two steps on their ladders to practice facing their fear over the next week. Emphasize that they should pick a step on the ladder that is somewhat difficult and that causes an increased level of anxiety.
2. Encourage them to think about what might get in the way of them facing their fear, and to problem-solve solutions ahead of time.
3. Parents or school staff should help identify appropriate rewards for students who are able to practice facing their fears.
4. Encourage students to record their practice using the Facing My Fears worksheet.
5. Send students home with the Fear Ladder Worksheet and Facing My Fears worksheet, along with the parent/caregiver letter for session 9. Emphasize the importance of rewards.

Coping Skill Practice

(20 minutes)

Do: Complete the Mindful Finger Maze.

Leader tip: If there isn’t enough time to complete this activity in full, leaders can introduce the activity and ask group members to put it into their folders as an option for later.

Coping Skills Toolbox, Group Rewards Tracker, and Wrap up

(5 minutes)

Do: Coping Skills Toolbox and Group Rewards Tracker.

- Ask students to circle “Try something new” and “Finger maze” in their Coping Skills Toolboxes and let the group know they have earned a pawprint for each of these coping skills! They can also write down a specific activity they would like to try but have been too nervous to try in the past.
- Add the pawprints to the Group Rewards Tracker for learning about facing our fears. Add a bonus pawprint if everyone followed the group rules. Remind students to practice something on their Facing My Fears worksheet. Make sure they have a parent or caregiver supporting them and rewarding them for their brave effort!

Say: “The more we practice the steps on our fear ladder, the less scary facing our fears becomes, and the closer we get to our goals! For each situation to get easier, we must stick with it even when we feel scared and want to quit or avoid. Once you’ve practiced, be sure to recognize the hard work you are doing. Have an adult cheer you on and help you choose a reward for even small steps you take. Be sure to share with the group all that you try over the next week.”
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), How to Use Exposure Therapy to Overcome Phobias, CBT Model, Coping Skills Toolbox, Fear Ladder Worksheet, Situations I Avoid, Facing My Fears, Cleo’s Fear Ladder, and Group Rewards Tracker (fill in points students earned).
- Replace Icebreaker: Look and Yell with the Quirky Movement Game. Ask the group to turn on their cameras and start by snapping their fingers. Now snap your fingers with your other hand. Whistle. Poke out your tongue and curl its sides so that it looks a bit like the letter U. Can you do it the other way, i.e., an upside-down U? No? Can you touch your nose with your tongue? Take one hand and place it behind your back over your shoulder, while extending the other hand around your side so that it touches your other hand. Swap arms. Click your tongue in your mouth. Make a silly face. Nice!
- Provide the Fear Ladder Worksheet to students via the chat function or email. Ask students to complete the worksheet. Allow students to ask questions and to share their fear ladders using screen share once they have completed the worksheet.
Session 9: Leader Reflection

Topics Covered
• Practicing exposure

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

Practicing Exposure
☐ Reviewed the CBT model
☐ Demonstrated facing fears through exposure in group (through video)
☐ Emphasized the importance of feeling anxious during exposures and repetitive practice
☐ Assigned out-of-session practice to encourage independent use of exposure and rewards

Group Skills
☐ Spent 20-30 minutes preparing for the group, reviewing activities, becoming familiar with content, resources to share, videos, activities, etc.
☐ Set an agenda at the beginning of the session
☐ 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)
☐ 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