Session 3 Agenda

Session Objectives

- Review the CBT model (think-feel-do cycle)
- Identify and rate the intensity of emotions
- Explain the rationale for practicing mindfulness and relaxation skills
- Identify at least three coping skills to help manage emotions

Topics Covered

- Relaxation
- Mindfulness

Manual Information

Grades 6-8
CBT and Mindfulness
Anxiety
7 Sessions

What You’ll Need

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

Review:

- Ice Cube Exercise
- Deep Breathing Instructions
- Cloud Relaxation Script
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation for Kids

Print:

- Check-In Sheet
- What Is Mindfulness?
- Coping Skills Toolbox

Prepare to Bring:

- Ice cubes
- Group folders

Session Overview

1. Session Preview and Homework Review
2. Identifying and Rating Emotions
3. Understanding the Role of Relaxation and Mindfulness
4. Practicing Relaxation and Mindfulness Skills
5. Wrap-Up and Homework
6. Suggestions for Virtual Adaptation
Homework Review and Session Preview

(10 minutes)

Do: Display the CBT Model and ask group members to take out their homework. Group members took home a CBT Model Worksheet and filled it out for one situation that occurred the previous week. How did they do?

Do: Review the CBT Model (think-feel-do cycle). Walk through one or two examples from the group. Remind students how to distinguish between the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors associated with emotional situations. Direct their attention to the feelings portion of the model, as this will be the focus of the skills taught in today’s session.

Do: Preview session for the day:

Say: “Today we are going to be practicing coping skills that help us slow down and pay more attention to our emotional and physical feelings and our surroundings. These skills will help us feel more in control of ourselves when feeling anxious or overwhelmed. It’s important to have a variety of coping skills so we can use them in all different kinds of situations and settings.”

Identifying and Rating Emotions

(5 minutes)

Say: “We rarely take time out of our busy days to pay attention to how we are feeling and the intensity of our feelings. This is helpful to do, because if we start paying attention to our bodies and minds we can practice skills to help manage feelings before they feel like they take control of us and our behaviors.”

Do: Pass out the Check-In Sheet and remind students that there can be many degrees of an emotion.

Explain: Review how to fill in the Check-In Sheet:

- The feelings thermometer is a way to measure the intensity level of our current emotion. The higher the temperature, the stronger the emotion. For example, if we are feeling the happiest we have ever felt in our entire lives, we would give our feeling a rating of “10.” If we are feeling very happy but not the happiest we have ever felt, we might give our happy feeling a rating of “7” or “8.” This is the same for any other emotion we might be feeling: sad, angry, worried, etc.
- At the beginning of each group, we will take 2-5 minutes to check in with ourselves and identify and rate our feelings.
- Right now, we will only be filling out the Rating #1 column.
- Later, we will practice a skill together and rate our feeling after the activity in the Rating #2 column.

Leader tip: Make sure group members know they do not have to share how they are feeling with the group.
Understanding the Role of Mindfulness and Relaxation

(2 minutes)

**Explain:**

- When we’re anxious or very distressed, our body can respond in strong ways, such as a racing heart, faster breathing, etc. Our brain is sending the fight, flight, or freeze message to the rest of our body.
- We all experience different levels of stress, sadness, worry, and anxiety at different times.
- Today we are going to focus on skills that help us calm or soothe our intense emotions and energy. These include a variety of relaxation and mindfulness skills.

Practicing Relaxation and Mindfulness Skills

(30 minutes)

**Do:** Introduce mindfulness. Show the video [Release](https://example.com) and hand out [What Is Mindfulness?](https://example.com) for students to put in their folders.

**Explain:** Mindfulness helps us:

- Pay attention to what is happening in and around us
- Focus on the present moment
- Give our brain a break from worrying about the past or future
- Accept and manage our experience
- Keep our emotions from running the show
- Be kind and non-judgmental to ourselves and others

**Say:** “Being kind and non-judgmental to ourselves is a very important part of mindfulness that many of us have a hard time doing. When we are paying attention to our thoughts and feelings and what is happening around us, we need to practice not being critical, judgmental, or unkind, and only being objective observers of what is happening.”

**Do:** Introduce relaxation skills:

**Explain:**

- Relaxation skills help us find ways to feel better by slowing down, calming our bodies, and reducing physical discomfort caused by intense emotions.
- We want to get in the habit of using relaxation skills every day as part of taking good regular care of ourselves.

**Do:** Introduce the concept of building a ‘coping skills toolbox.’

**Say:** “Throughout the group, we will be learning many skills to help us get through tough times. Some will be more helpful for you than others, but sometimes it takes trying a skill a few times to know whether it really works for us. Your job is to learn and try all the skills so..."
that you have them in your own coping toolbox. That way, when you go through a difficult time in the future, you will have some strategies that you already know how to use.*

Do: Hand out Coping Skills Toolbox and ask students to circle the skills they practice with their group today.

Do: Practice 1-2 relaxation exercises from the Relaxation section on the TRAILS website or choose from the suggested activities below. Encourage students to rerate their feelings after each exercise. Discuss which skills group members liked best and help them think through when they might be able to use each skill.

1. Deep Breathing Instructions: Deep breathing helps us to practice our mindfulness skills by paying attention to just one thing, and it serves to relax us by slowing down our heart rate and increasing the availability of oxygen in our bodies.

2. Cloud Relaxation Script: Imagery helps us to practice mindfulness by focusing our attention on just one thing.

3. Ice Cube Exercise: This mindfulness exercise helps us to focus our attention in the here and now while we wait for emotions to naturally decrease in intensity. This activity is most helpful when we are experiencing high levels of anxiety and distress.

4. Progressive Muscle Relaxation for Kids: Systematically tensing and releasing muscles throughout the body can help us ease the muscle tension associated with anxiety, worry, and negative thinking.

Explain: Not everyone will enjoy or benefit from every relaxation and mindfulness skill that we practice—that’s why we practice many different ones. Emphasize to students the importance of trying each relaxation and mindfulness activity a few times before deciding which ones they find most helpful and enjoyable.

Wrap-Up and Homework

(2 minutes)

Do: Introduce the at-home practice activity for the week: using the Relaxation and Mindfulness Practice Log to keep track of practicing coping skills and how they work. Encourage the practice of different types of coping skills.
Suggestions for Virtual Adaptation

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

- Consider using the accompanying TRAILS slide deck for this lesson.
- Use screen sharing to display the lesson's video, Release, along with the lesson's worksheets, or send the links to students by email to review on their own before or after the lesson.
- When practicing the mindfulness and relaxation activities, use screen sharing to display the CBT Model and use a shared Word or Google document to record students’ comments about if/how the activities impacted their thoughts and feelings both before and after the exercises.
- During relaxation practices, encourage students to close their eyes or look down as they would in person. Allow students the opportunity to turn off their cameras during these practices if it helps them feel more comfortable engaging in the activity.
- Encourage students to choose a quiet place in their environments, if possible, in which to practice and focus on relaxation exercises.
- Use screen sharing to display the homework, Relaxation and Mindfulness Practice Log. Have students save this worksheet on their computers or print a copy for next week.
Session 3:

Leader Reflection

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- Relaxation
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Relaxation and Mindfulness

☑ Reviewed the CBT model and identified that relaxation and mindfulness skills interrupt the cycle at the “feelings” point of the model
☑ Led group members in 3-5 relaxation and mindfulness activities
☑ Worked with group members to identify specific practices that would be helpful for individual physical symptoms and experiences
☑ Directed group members to the best times to practice mindfulness and relaxation and emphasized the importance of out-of-session practice

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, 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
☑ 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
☑ Actively participated in skill practice (e.g., coping skills, sharing of feelings, etc.)