Session 4 Agenda

Session Objectives
- Review the CBT Model
- Explain the rationale for down-regulating skills (relaxation and mindfulness skills)
- Identify at least three coping skills to use when emotions are very intense

Topics Covered
- Relaxation and mindfulness

Manual Information
Grades 9-12
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:
- Alien Eating
- Ice Cube Exercise
- Deep Breathing Instructions
- Cloud Relaxation Script
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Print:
- Check-In Sheet
- What is Mindfulness?
- Relaxation and Mindfulness Practice Log

Print or prepare to display:
- CBT Model

Preview and load:
- Mindfulness: Youth Voices
- TRAILS Short Film Series - Relaxation

Gather to bring:
- Group Folders/My TRAILS Notes
- Ice cubes for group members
- Small piece of food or a piece of candy for each group member

Session Overview
1. Warm-Up
2. Homework Check and Session Preview
3. Understanding the Role of Mindfulness and Relaxation Skills
4. Practicing Relaxation and Mindfulness Skills
5. Wrap-Up and Homework
6. Suggestions for Virtual Adaptation
Warm-Up

(10 minutes)

**Say:** “Welcome back! Each week, we are going to check in with ourselves to start recognizing how we are feeling. Over time, we will start paying attention to how certain thoughts and behaviors shape how we are feeling so we can start feeling better.”

**Do:** Have students use the Check-In Sheet to identify their feelings and their intensities.

Homework Check and Session Preview

(10 minutes)

**Do:** Review 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 agenda for the day:

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

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 our hearts racing, 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 skills include a variety of relaxation and mindfulness skills.
Practicing Relaxation and Mindfulness

(30 minutes)

Do: Introduce mindfulness. Show video Mindfulness: Youth Voices and hand out the What is Mindfulness? handout to put in their folder.

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: Practice 1-2 mindfulness exercises from the Mindfulness section on the TRAILS website or use the suggested activities below:
1. Alien Eating: Mindful eating activity which helps ground us using all our senses.
2. Ice Cube Exercise: A mindfulness exercise that 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 experiencing high levels of anxiety and distress.

Do: Encourage students to rerate their feelings after each exercise.

Do: Introduce relaxation: Show the TRAILS video on Relaxation.

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: Practice 1-2 relaxation exercises from the Relaxation section on the TRAILS website or use the suggested activities below:
3. Deep Breathing Instructions: Deep breathing helps us to practice our mindfulness skills by paying attention to one thing, and it serves to relax us by slowing down our heart rate and increasing the availability of oxygen in our bodies.
4. Cloud Relaxation Script: Imagery helps us to practice mindfulness by focusing our attention on one thing.
5. **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**: Systematically tensing and releasing muscles throughout the body to ease muscle tension associated with anxiety, worry, and negative thinking.

**Do:** Encourage students to re-rate their feelings after each exercise.

**Do:** Have students pull out their My TRAILS Notes and record the coping skills practiced today in the Group #4 notes box.

**Discuss:** Discuss which skills group members liked best. Help them think through when they might be able to use each skill.

**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 the importance of using awareness and trying different activities a few times before deciding which relaxation and mindfulness activities they find to be most helpful and enjoyable.

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**Wrap-Up and Homework**

(2 minutes)

**Do:** Introduce the at home practice activity for the week: use 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 videos Mindfulness: Youth Voices and TRAILS video on Relaxation and the TRAILS worksheets, or send the links to students by email to review on their own before or after the lesson.
- When practicing two of the mindfulness and relaxation activities, use screen sharing to display the CBT Model and record on a shared Word Document or Google Document the student comments about if/how the mindfulness and relaxation activities impacted their thoughts and feelings before and after the exercises.
- If completing the Alien Eating activity, email students ahead of time to ensure they are able to find a food item to use during this activity. If they are unable to find an edible item, they can observe any small object in the room without using their sense of taste.
- 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 camera during these practices if it increases comfortability with engagement in the activity.
- If able, emphasize the importance of finding a quiet area in their home/environment in order to practice and focus on relaxation exercises.
- Have students record their coping skills on their My TRAILS Notes.
Session 4:
Leader Reflection

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- Relaxation and mindfulness

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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 CBT model.
- Explained that we can choose activities that can up- or down-regulate, and that relaxation and distress tolerance skills help us down-regulate (lower the intensity of) our emotion.
- Led group members in 3-5 relaxation, mindfulness, and distress tolerance practices.
- 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, relaxation, and distress tolerance, 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 the group and stayed focused throughout (did not multi-task)
- Set an agenda at the beginning of the 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, respectful space for the group