Managing Unhelpful Thoughts

What to Expect in this Session

Session Roadmap

1. We will set an agenda for the session.
2. How are you doing? We will complete a quick mood "check-in."
3. We will review the previous session's assignment and any other skills you are using.

Developing New Skills – Managing Unhelpful Thoughts

4. We will review the differences between thoughts and feelings.
5. We will identify common types of unhelpful thoughts.
6. We will look at how Dave used the Managing Unhelpful Thoughts session to address his unhelpful thought patterns.
7. We will identify unhelpful thoughts that are causing you distress.
8. We will introduce coping statements to manage unhelpful thoughts.
9. We will discuss how to evaluate unhelpful thoughts (optional skill).
10. We will develop an action plan to help you meet your goals.

Rate your Mood

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

	Not at all	Several Days	More than half the days	Nearly everyday
1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things.	0	1	2	3
2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless.	0	1	2	3
3. Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or sleeping too much.	0	1	2	3
4. Feeling tired or having little energy.	0	1	2	3
5. Poor appetite or overeating.	0	1	2	3
6. Feeling bad about yourself—or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down.	0	1	2	3
7. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television.	0	1	2	3
8. Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or the opposite—being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around more than usual.	0	1	2	3
9. Thoughts that you would be better off dead, or of hurting yourself in some way.	0	1	2	3

How difficult have these problems made it for you to do your work, take care of things at home, or get along with other people?

Not Difficult at All	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult	Extremely Difficult
0	1	2	3

Feelings vs. Thoughts

Dave's feelings and thoughts

Situation:

Dave didn't feel well and missed his daughter's graduation.

How Dave Feels

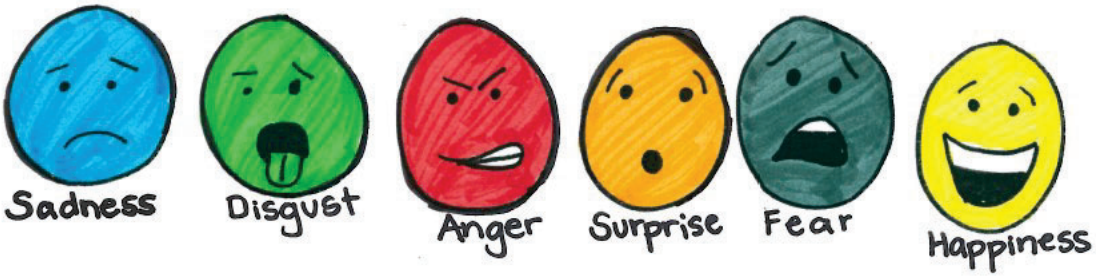
- ***Frustrated***
- ***Sad***

What Dave Thinks

- ***I feel like a failure.***
- ***I'm a terrible father.***

What are feelings?

- eelings (also known as emotions) are core human experiences.
- eelings are best described with <u>one word</u> (sad, worried, happy, satisfied, scared, etc.). *Note: In the example above – the sentence "I feel like a failure" is a thought, not a feeling.*
- Examples of feelings (emotions) include the following:



What are thoughts?

- Thoughts are the things we tell ourselves about an experience.
- They typically involve phrases or full sentences.
- Sometimes thoughts become so automatic that they are not always easy to recognize.

Unhelpful vs. Helpful Thinking

Our thoughts have a great impact on how we feel. Thoughts can be helpful, unhelpful, or something in between.

Unhelpful Thinking

This type of thinking is an interpretation of a situation that is unnecessarily negative and ultimately not helpful. Unhelpful thought patterns can include over-reacting to a situation, exaggerating the negatives, or focusing too much on things that you have no control over.

Example #1: Unhelpful Thinking Pattern

Situation / Experience	Thoughts	Feelings
Busy day at work; a lot of pressure to finish a project that isn't going well.	"I am doing a terrible job today."	Stress Sadness

Helpful Thinking

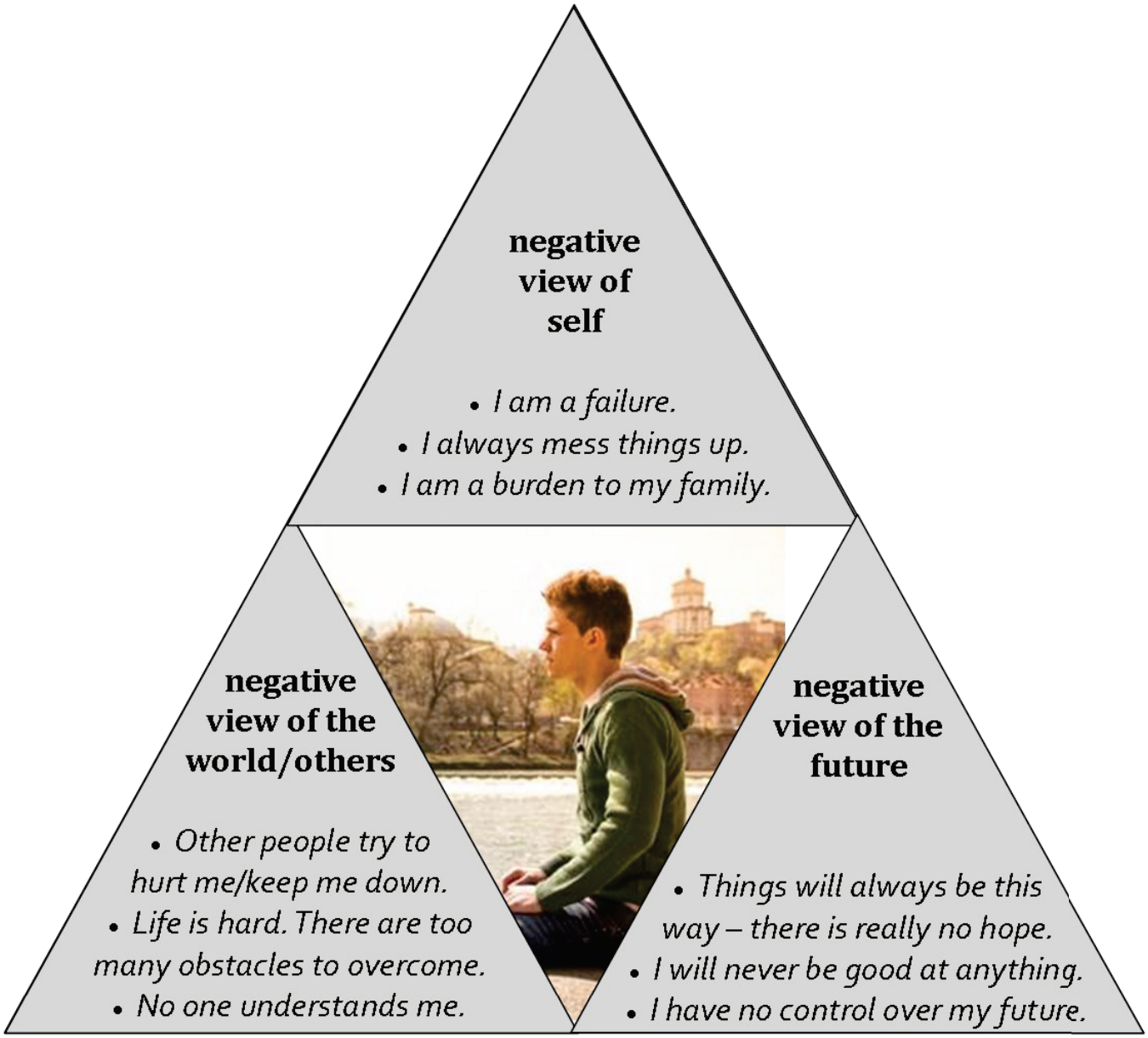
This type of thinking is not always positive or "sunny" but is at least accurate and realistic. Helpful thinking means that you are thinking about situations and reacting in a way that is in your best interest.

Example #2: Helpful Thinking Pattern

Situation / Experience	Thoughts	Feelings
Busy day at work; a lot of pressure to finish a project that isn't going well.	"This is a stressful day, but I have handled stress before."	Stressed Capable/Confident

Common Unhelpful Thinking Patterns when Depressed

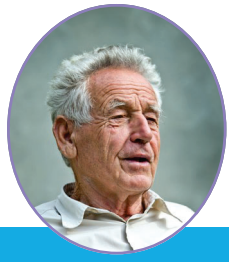
Individuals with depression often have negative (unhelpful) thoughts related to their views about: The Self, The Future, The World.



Do you recognize any of these negative thought patterns in your own life?

Dave's Thought Worksheet

First let's take a look at how Dave's unhelpful thoughts impacted his mood and behaviors. Then, notice how Dave used helpful thinking strategies to improve his mood.



Original thoughts	
Situation	*Sitting at home watching TV during the middle of the day*
Thoughts (What Dave Thinks)	• *I am truly useless now. (negative view of self)* • *This is pathetic – I am wasting my life away. (negative view of future)* • *There is no one helping me and it seems that no one cares. (negative view about others)*
Feelings (How Dave Feels)	• *Depressed* • *Mad / angry* • *Lethargic / without energy*
Behaviors (What Dave is Doing)	• *Stay on the couch – no motivation to get going* • *Isolate from others*
New thoughts	
New / Alternative Thought (What Dave Thinks)	• *Nothing is going to change until I make a change.* • *I will not stand by and waste my life. I insist on taking action.* • *My family is supportive, maybe they just don't know how to help.*
New Feelings (How Dave Feels)	• *Determined* • *Hopeful* • *Motivated*

Identifying Unhelpful Thoughts

	Situation #1:	Situation #2:
Original thoughts		
Situation *What actually happened? Where? When? How?*		
Thoughts *What thoughts went through your mind? What views did you have about yourself, your future, or others?*		
Feelings *What emotions did you feel at the time?*		
Behaviors *What did you do in response? Also include any withdrawal of activities – like staying at home or staying in bed.*		
STOP **New thoughts** STOP		
New/Alternative thoughts *What is another, more helpful, way to think about this situation?*		
New Feelings *What emotions did you feel after identifying alternative thoughts?*		

Using Coping Statements to Manage Unhelpful Thoughts

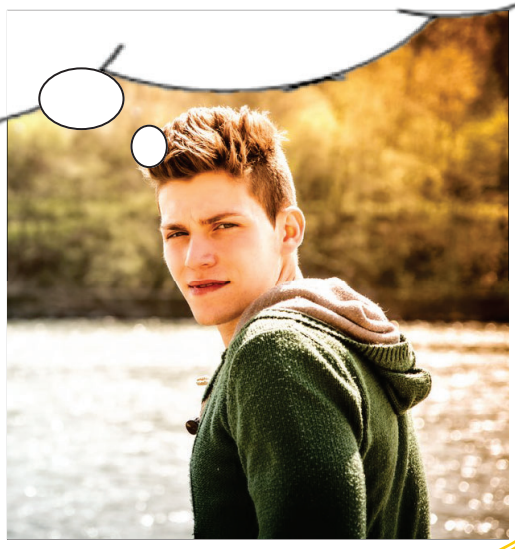
What are Coping Statements?

A coping statement is a statement you make to yourself to help decrease feelings of stress and depression. It is a way to provide “instructions” to yourself to reduce how much negative thoughts get in the way.

Coping statements can serve as "alternative thoughts" when unhelpful thinking patterns are getting you down. Remember, coping statements are not "pie-in-the-sky" statements but, rather, should be statements that you actually believe to be true.

Example Coping Statements:

“I can do what I need to do.”
"Even if I make mistakes, it will be okay.”
“If I take it one step at a time, I can meet this challenge."
“I can take control of my stress by getting up and doing things.”
"I choose to think positively and to remember the things I can still do."
"I am not going to let my pain limit my life.”
“I have people in my life who care about me.”
“I can ask for help when I need it.”

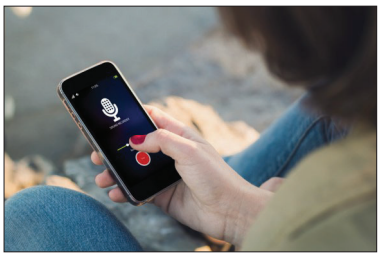


My Coping Statements

Coping Statements I Can Use:	
Stressful Situation	Coping Statement(s)
1.	
2.	
3.	

Tips for Using Coping Statements:

- Don't be afraid to talk to yourself! Say coping statements aloud to yourself instead of just reading them.



- It can sometimes be helpful to audio record the statements and listen to them when necessary.

- Place your coping statements where you will see them regularly (a note on your refrigerator, on your phone, etc.).