

# SESSION 5: OVERCOMING EMOTIONAL OBSTACLES

# Session 5

- Target Skills:
  - Identify automatic thoughts
  - Labeling cognitive distortions
  - Defusing distressing feelings by challenging & revising automatic thoughts
- In- session work:
  - Identify & revise cognitive distortions
- Take Home Exercise:
  - Identify and correct automatic thoughts

# Overcoming Emotional Obstacles

## Agenda:

- -Review previous week homework
- -How emotions affect efficiency
- -The Cognitive Behavioural Model
- -Identifying Automatic thoughts
- -Identifying Cognitive Distortions
- -Developing Rational Responses

# Take Home Assignment Review

- Urgency/ Importance grid
  - Outcomes
  - Issues/ concerns/ successes

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	<u>Quadrant I</u> <i>urgent and important</i> <b>DO</b>	<u>Quadrant II</u> <i>not urgent but important</i> <b>PLAN</b>
NOT IMPORTANT	<u>Quadrant III</u> <i>urgent but not important</i> <b>DELEGATE</b>	<u>Quadrant IV</u> <i>not urgent and not important</i> <b>ELIMINATE</b>

# How Emotions Affect Efficiency

- procrastination & avoidance stemming from anxiety & depression
- Depression--> demoralization & hopelessness
- Anxiety--> need for perfection, total control, certainty

# The Cognitive Behavioural Model

- Emotions and behaviours are influenced by thoughts/ interpretations of events/ situations
- thoughts are "automatic", occur without much effort; evaluations of events happen quickly
- evaluations may or may not be accurate
- How to identify automatic thoughts
  - become an observer, notice thoughts that trigger emotions & behaviours
  - 1: take note of change in feelings
  - 2: label emotion
  - 3: ask questions: "What just went through my mind?", "What were the words, images"

# If the feeling is:

- anxiety--> possible thoughts "what ifs"
- depression--> possible thoughts: self-criticism
- anger--> negative prediction, being taken advantage of

# Cognitive Distortions

- Also known “unhelpful thinking patterns”
- Biases in thinking, can impact emotions

All or nothing	Personalization
Overgeneralization	Catastrophizing
Mental filter	Emotional reasoning
Disqualifying the positive	Should statements
Jumping to conclusions-mind reading/ fortune telling	Labeling

# All-or-Nothing Thinking / Polarized Thinking

Also known as “Black-and-White Thinking,” this distortion manifests as an inability or unwillingness to see shades of gray. In other words, you see things in terms of extremes – something is either fantastic or awful, you believe you are either perfect or a total failure.

# Overgeneralization

- This sneaky distortion takes one instance or example and generalizes it to an overall pattern. For example, a student may receive a C on one test and conclude that she is stupid and a failure. Overgeneralizing can lead to overly negative thoughts about yourself and your environment based on only one or two experiences.

# Mental Filter

- Similar to overgeneralization, the mental filter distortion focuses on a single negative piece of information and excludes all the positive ones. An example of this distortion is one partner in a romantic relationship dwelling on a single negative comment made by the other partner and viewing the relationship as hopelessly lost, while ignoring the years of positive comments and experiences.

# Disqualifying the Positive

- Acknowledges positive experiences but rejects them instead of embracing them.
- For example, a person who receives a positive review at work might reject the idea that they are a competent employee and attribute the positive review to political correctness, or to their boss simply not wanting to talk about their employee's performance problems.
- can facilitate the continuation of negative thought patterns even in the face of strong evidence to the contrary.

# Jumping to Conclusions -Mind Reading

- This “Jumping to Conclusions” distortion manifests as the inaccurate belief that we know what another person is thinking. Of course, it is possible to have an idea of what other people are thinking, but this distortion refers to the negative interpretations that we jump to.

# Jumping to Conclusions – Fortune Telling

- A sister distortion to mind reading, fortune telling refers to the tendency to make conclusions and predictions based on little to no evidence and holding them as gospel truth.

# Magnification (Catastrophizing) or Minimization

- skewing of your perspective, involves exaggerating or minimizing the meaning, importance, or likelihood of things.

# Emotional Reasoning

- refers to the acceptance of one's emotions as fact. It can be described as "*I feel it, therefore it must be true.*" Just because we feel something doesn't mean it is true; for example, we may become jealous and think our partner has feelings for someone else, but that doesn't make it true.

# Should Statements

- statements that you make to yourself about what you “should” do, what you “ought” to do, or what you “must” do. They can also be applied to others, imposing a set of expectations that will likely not be met.
- “shoulds” about self → guilt
- “shoulds” about others → disappointment, anger and resentment.

# Labeling and Mislabeled

- basically extreme forms of overgeneralization, in which we assign judgments of value to ourselves or to others based on one instance or experience.
- Mislabeled refers to the application of highly emotional, loaded, and inaccurate or unreasonable language when labeling.

# Personalization

- involves taking everything personally or assigning blame to yourself without any logical reason to believe you are to blame.

# Where do Cognitive Distortions Come From?

- Negative core beliefs: "Incompetent", "stupid", "not good enough"
- strongly held beliefs about self
- criticisms, demoralization in childhood due to mistakes

# Identifying Cognitive Distortions

- Exercise using examples

# Example 1

- Identify relevant cognitive distortions & rational response
- **Situation:** Boss asked you to take on important project
- **Thought**→ “I will fail at this, I always fail so it would be better if I don’t take it on at all.”
- **Cognitive distortions:**
- **Rational response:**

## Example 2

- **Situation:** You get a “C” or “average” rating on a test or other form of evaluation
- **Thoughts**→ “I guess I’m really not very smart at all. I’m never going to be a success in school/at this job
- **Cognitive distortions:**
- **Rational response:**

## Example 3:

- **Situation:** You just completed something you've been putting off for months
- **Thoughts** → “I should have been able to do this a long time ago. I still haven't gotten around to doing.....”
- **Cognitive distortions:**
- **Rational response:**

## Example 4:

- **Situation:** The night before a job
- **Thoughts:** “I’m worried about how well I am going to do. I always get nervous and I never present myself in the best light. I’ll never find another job like this, this will always happen to me”
- **Cognitive distortions:**
- **Rational response:**

# Questions to Challenge Cognitive Distortions:

- What is the evidence that the automatic thought is true?
- What is the evidence that the automatic thought is not true?
- Is there an alternative explanation?
- What's the worst that can happen?
- Could I live through it?
- What is the worst that can happen?
- What is the best that can happen?
- What is the most realistic outcome?
- What is the effect of my believing the automatic thought?
- What could be the effect of changing my automatic thought?
- What should I do about it?
- What would I tell a friend in this situation?

What are more rational thoughts in response to this situation?

Outcome: How do you feel now? How did the situation end?

# Home Practice-Identifying and correcting automatic thoughts:

When you notice procrastination, emotional distress when starting a task, activity, chore complete recording exercise:

- 1) Notice & identify emotions
- 2) Identify current situation, event, task
- 3) Record automatic thoughts
- 4) Identify cognitive distortions being used in thoughts
- 5) Challenge distortions by asking yourself questions
- 6) Develop more rational response
- 7) Evaluate outcome