COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY FOR ANXIETY

WEEK 3

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WELCOME TO WEEK THREE!

AGENDA

- Thought Records
- Goal Setting
- Exposure Therapy
- Grounding Exercises
- Discussion
- Homework
- Next Week

REFRESH ON AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

- We all have fleeting automatic thoughts often based on assumptions from our past experiences and not on "facts"

- Automatic thoughts can be very believable but can be inaccurate and cause stress and agony
  - These thoughts have the potential to trigger intense negative emotions
  - The interpretations of a situation based on automatic thoughts that can actually increase stressors

- What we think influences the way we feel and how we respond!

THOUGHT RECORDS

•According to CBT it makes more sense for us to become aware of our thoughts vs. our core beliefs because core beliefs are so deeply ingrained into our worldview (subconscious level) that these are difficult to identify

-Keeping record of our automatic thoughts can help us to compile enough 'evidence' so that we can look at potential themes that may reveal core beliefs that are negative and self-limiting

- Automatic thought records are important because it requires a level of consciousness and puts us into the position of the observer so that we can start to separate from our thoughts
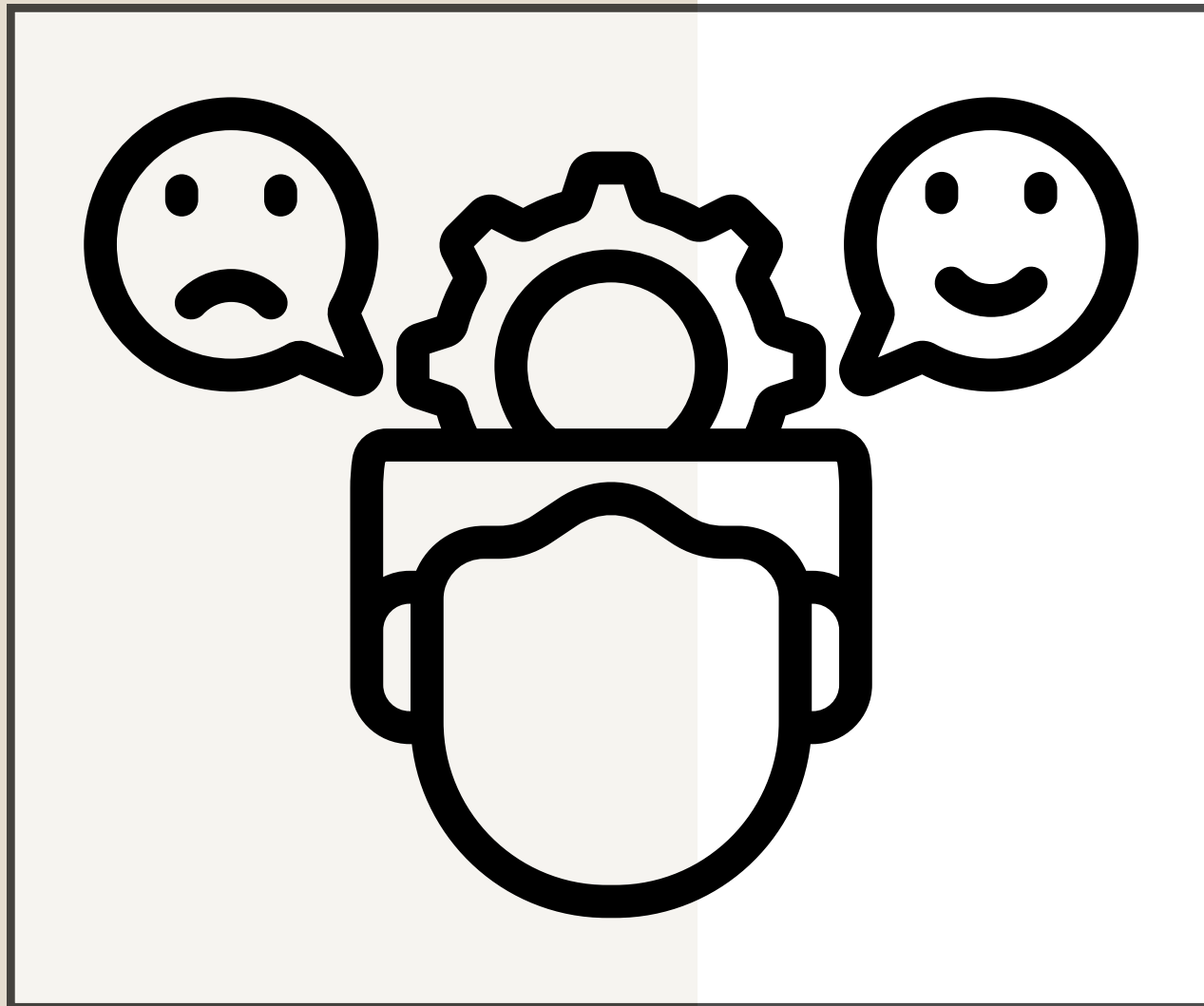
THOUGHT RECORD

•Thought records help to highlight negative automatic thoughts to become 'visible', identify cognitions distortions, and encourages us to make the conscious effort to notice our thought patterns and opportunity to make adjustments accordingly

•To 'catch' these automatic thoughts we need to pay attention to our thought patterns, especially at times of activation (e.g., stress, anxiety)

•A traditional CBT approach is to 'challenge the evidence' that backs our negative thoughts through a process of "checking" for evidence that supports or discredits the validity of the thought

Think of this process as being a court case:

•The negative thought is on trial
•Defense supports the thoughts truth
•Prosecution argues the thoughts false
•The 'truth' is in the judge –
•Our job is to be all roles and to examine the 'evidence' to support or dismiss the thought
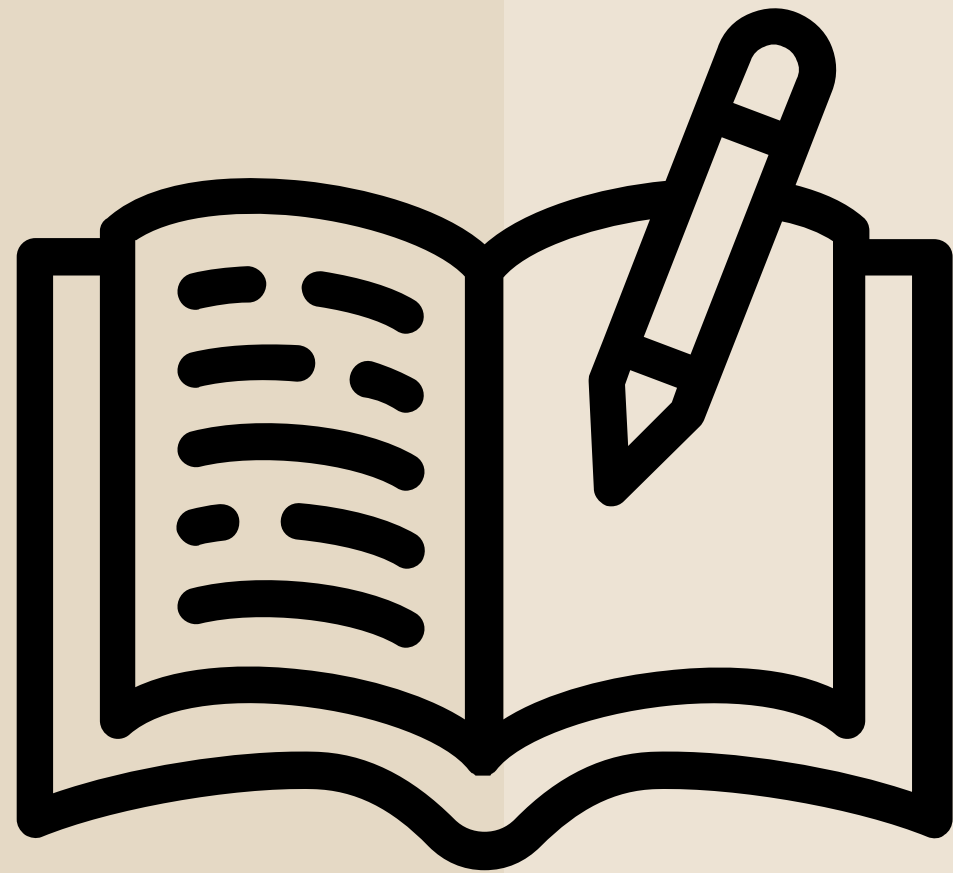
THOUGHT RECORD FORMAT

Situation	Thought	Feeling	Behaviour

1.State the situation in one sentence or less

2.Identify the automatic thoughts running through your mind at the time

3.Label the emotions that arose

4.Describe the response to the situation

THOUGHT RECORD

•Once we start to gather evidence around our automatic thoughts around a situation, the feelings, and responses, we can begin to identify our core beliefs through the themes that arise

–Themes will reveal the core beliefs underlie our worldview to help us to identify what part of our past continues to influence and shape our current perception of our life (the future, present, and past)

–Thought records provide the opportunity to bring a level of observational consciousness and autonomy over our responses to current situations that may trigger us, which can grow feelings of confidence in our ability to choose something different vs. feelings of helplessness and compliancy to subconscious patterns that no longer serve us today

–We want to get to a point where we can use intentional neutrality and when we are flooded with automatic thoughts (especially when triggered) so that we can move towards a place of self-acceptance which is an act of 'self-love'

•It is important to remain gentle and consistent with this type of work because we want to move towards fostering healthy coping mechanisms through a neutral sense of self vs. negative self-perception that fuels negative beliefs which fuels negative thoughts (the cycle continues on and on...)
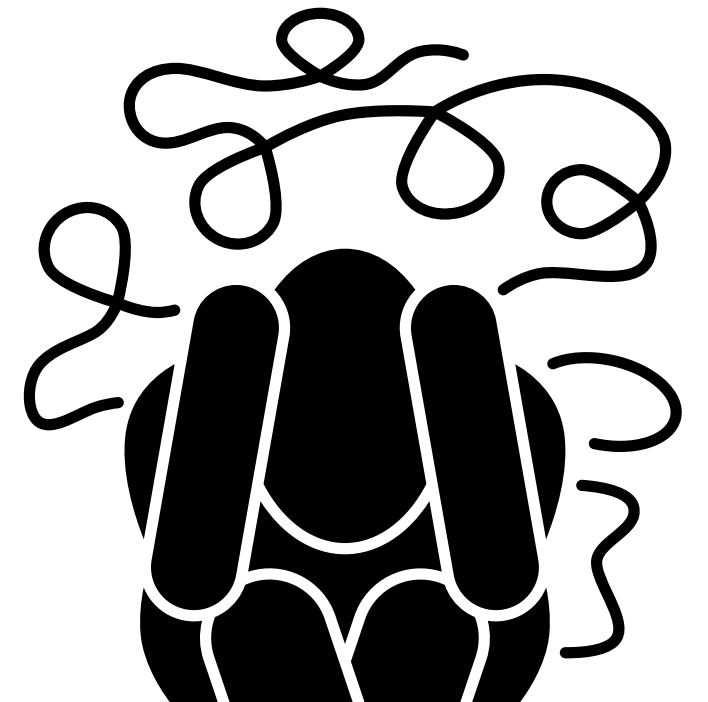
HOMEWORK

- Start your own thought record

- Identify common themes

- Do you notice any potential limiting core beliefs?

GOAL SETTING IN THERAPY

Goal setting is an essential part of CBT because it provides clarity and direction towards what we want to achieve

Benefits with goal setting in therapy include focus, clarity, accountability and the opportunity to foster intrinsic motivation

Keeping a thought record can reveal to us over time the changes we want to make!

BENEFITS OF GOAL SETTING IN THERAPY

Focus and Clarity:

•Clear and specific goals help us to develop a defined roadmap that we can follow

•Specific objectives help us to re-examine the purpose of goals as a reminder of why we are working towards whatever it is we want to integrate

•It is important to maintain the role of an observer in our behaviour in conjunction to interrupt the subconscious mode of thinking (which is our default) and prioritize the change it is we desire

Intrinsic motivation and accountability:

•When we meet the goals in accordance to our roadmap, we feel intrinsic motivation to continue

•Accountability comes from continual check-ins with our road map to measure our progress

•When we reach the check points in our goal setting journey we build our skill set, and in turn our confidence which promotes a positive change that we are capable of doing which boosts our confidence!

CYCLE OF ANXIETY

Setting SMART goals

BiteSize Learning

Specific	Measurable	Attainable	Relevant	Timely
The goal is concrete and tangible - everyone knows what it looks like.	The goal has an objective measure of success that everyone can understand.	The goal is challenging, but should be achievable with the resources available.	The goal meaningfully contributes to larger objectives like the overall mission.	This goal has a deadline or, better yet, a timeline of progress milestones.

Specific: Goals are well-defined and explicit (what is it you exactly want to accomplish?)

Measurable: Goals must contain a method for tracking progress (how can we quantify our progress?)

Achievable: Goals need to be attainable (what makes sense for me and my circumstances?)

Realistic: Goals are relevant to our own needs, values, and priorities

Time-bound: Goals are time-bound in order to create a sense of urgency and motivation

SMART GOALS IN CBT

•Chunking

–To reduce the overwhelm of our "big" goals, make the goals more digestible and break down these into sub-goals

•Make Adjustments Accordingly

–Review and revise our sub-goals on a regular basis and make the appropriate adjustments when necessary as our needs and goals may change

•Celebrate our success!

–Keep track of our progress (e.g., journal, progress chart) and celebrate our accomplishments to encourage ourselves!

HOW DO WE START ?

Goal Setting: Understanding the Problem

Start vs. Stop Goals:

- "Start" goals are the behaviours we want to introduce whereas "stop" goals are behaviours we want to stop

- "Start" goals encourage measurable problem solving solving skills

  » These goals work to minimize negative emotions emotions attached to the idea that we are a "failure" if we don't stop a behaviour

Step 1: Develop a specific and concrete understanding of what we want to change

– Identify issues and/or concerns have negative impacts on us

– Define the problem from an objective perspective to separate ourselves from the 'issue' (e.g., work with the facts not feelings)

Step 2: Describe what that problem looks like in our life (be specific)

– What are the specific thoughts, actions, and emotions that go along with the identified issues?

• When we start a thought record, we can reflect on how our core beliefs have influence on our interpretations and experiences

• This 'evidence' can provide a clarity around what it is we want to change or what is keeping us "stuck"

EXPOSURE THERAPY

• Exposure therapy is one of the most effective ways to address anxiety with gradual and repeated exposures of what it is we are anxious about

• The theory is that the more we exposure ourselves to the anxiety, the less fearful we become due to the "fear" not happening which builds sense of confidence

• Exposure is not dangerous and will not make the fear worse (remember, when we avoid we assure the anxiety that its existence is required in order to keep us "safe" while giving power to the anxiety)

• Requires clear goals and a comprehensive plan that we can follow and measure our progress towards decreasing the anxiety associated with said fear

• The length of exposure therapy is unique to each person in accordance to their own situation, fears, and experiences and how these fears disrupt their quality of life

– Some people may find that they require a few, while others may benefit from several sessions, everybody has a different journey

• Therapy is most effective when we are committed to the process and we stay consistent with our goals and what it is we want to address!

– Please remember that any progress is "good" progress even if we feel defeated!

HOW EXPOSURE IS PRACTICED

- **Graded exposure**

  –We create a 'fear hierarchy' in which the feared objects, activities or situations are ranked according how scary it is

  –We begin with the less scary and move towards the more difficult fears and ultimately the 'root' fear (the exposure)

- **Flooding**

  –Use the exposure fear hierarchy to begin exposure with the most difficult tasks and move into less difficult ones

- **Systematic desensitization**

  –Exposure is combined with relaxation exercises in an effort to reduce stress associated with exposure to make exposure less 'scary'
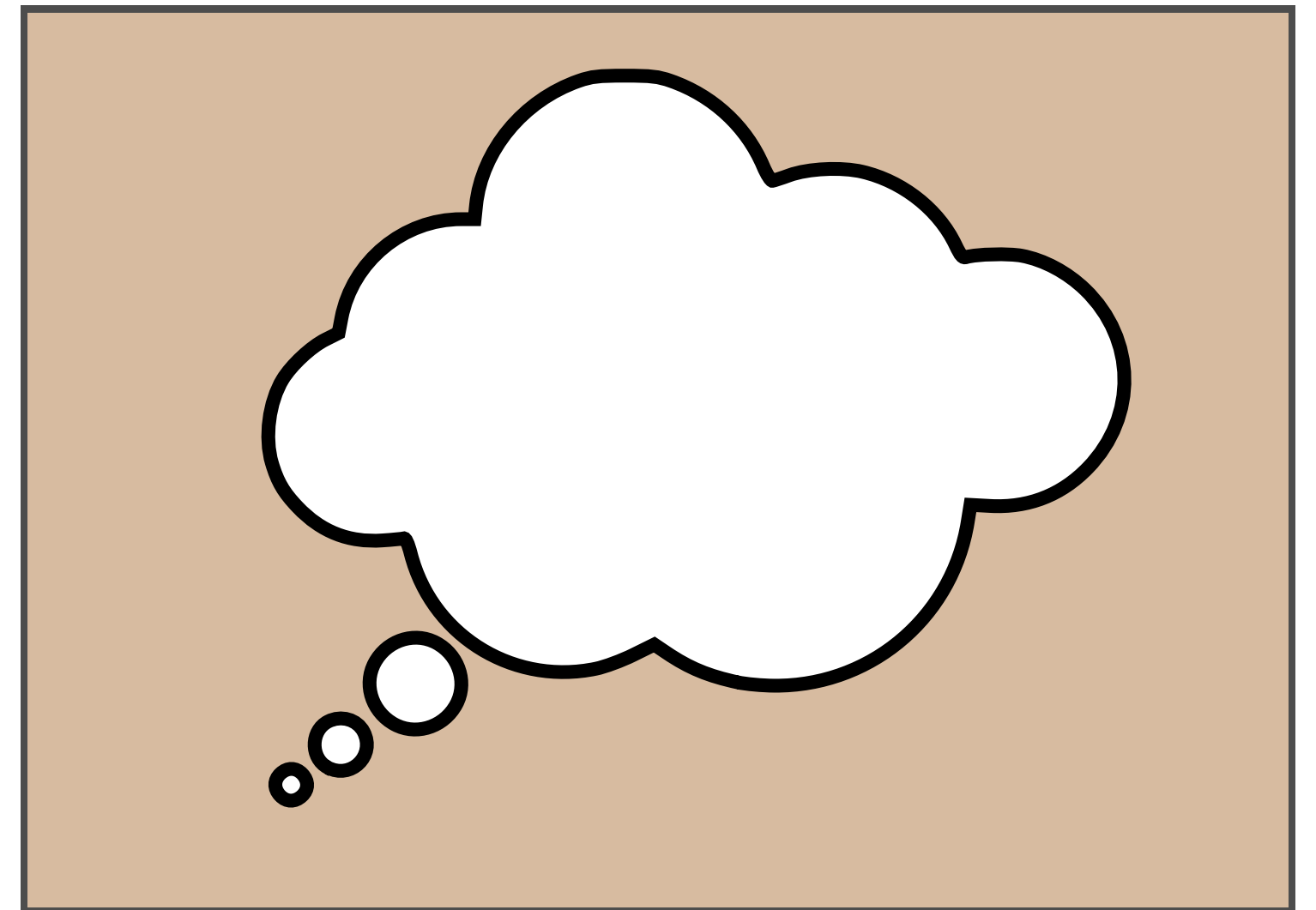
HOW EXPOSURE HELPS

- **Habituation**

–People feel less of a fear reaction to trigger over time

- **Extinction**

–The learned associations around the fear weakens

- **Self-efficacy**

–Builds the skill set to work through fears and increase sense of ability

- **Emotional processing**

–Become more tolerant to the experiences of fear and process the 'deeper' meaning behind the fear itself and allow us to process emotions that are 'under the surface' (what are we really afraid of?)
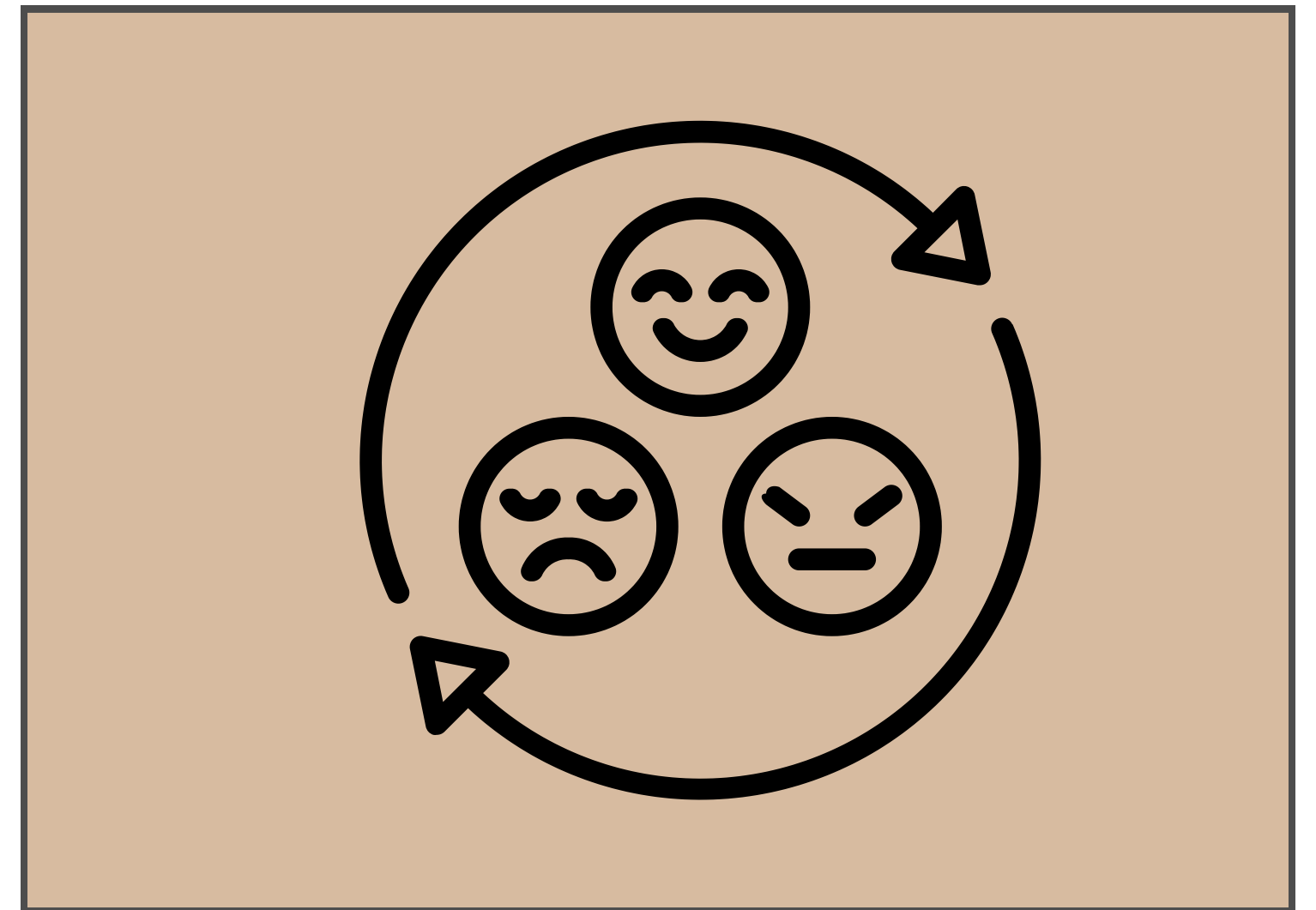
EXPOSURE LADDER

•Exposure ladders are a way that we can contextualize our fear and break down the goal of 'conquering' the fear down to measurable sub goals but first we need to reflect on the following questions:

•Identifying the specific fear - what is it that we are afraid of?

•Creating a list of triggers – which situations, activities, thoughts, or feelings evoke fear? What do we avoid due to fear?

•Exploring what increases or decreases the anxiety (fear) around the trigger? How do we typically cope with this?

To get started on the fear ladder, we need to rank the 'triggers' (of the same situation) from least scary to most scary and give each item a anticipated fear rating from 0 – 100

For this example, use the graded mode of exposure to rank the scariest stimulus at the top of the ladder and least scary at the bottom (build confidence to address these fears as we move up the ladder)
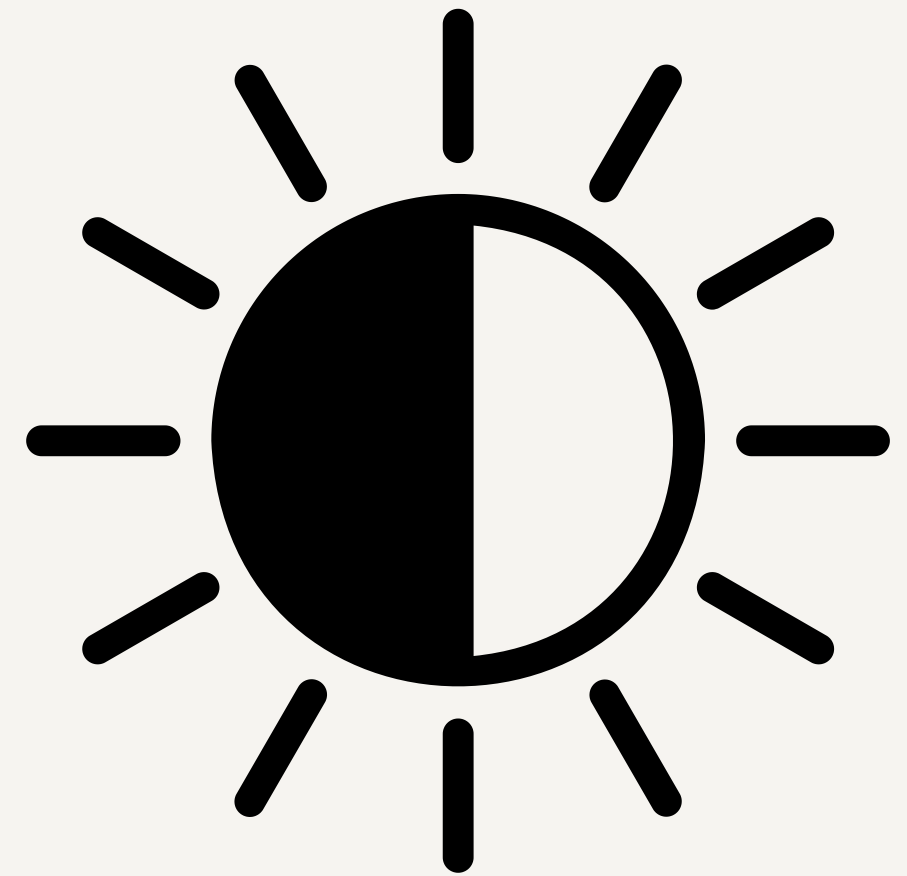
FEAR LADDER EXAMPLE

Fear Ladder (Sample)

What is my goal? _____ *Touch objects in public places (malls)* _____

_____

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 - 10
No Fear   **Moderate Fear**   **Extreme Fear**

| STEP		FEAR RATING
13	Use toilet at mall	10+/**10**
12	Use hands to open and close stall door	10/**10**
11	Touch counter and taps in mall bathroom	9/**10**
10	Touch knob on mall bathroom door	9/**10**
9	Touch garbage can in the mall	8/**10**
8	Use public phone at mall	8/**10**
7	Use hands to push open doors to mall entrance	7/**10**
6	Touch table in the food court	7/**10**
5	Sit on bench at mall and touch bench with hands	6/**10**
4	Touch railing at mall	6/**10**
3	Touch items in a store	5/**10**
2	Sit on bench at mall	4/**10**
1	Walk around public places, such as the mall	2/**10**

GROUNDING EXERCISES

•Grounding exercises are a type of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) technique that incorporates mindfulness to bring us back to the present moment when feeling activated

–These can be used when we are experiencing distress from negative thoughts, memories, situations

–It is important to identify when our body is activated so that we can implement grounding exercises to bring us back into the present moment and regulate our physiological responses to distress

MENTAL GROUNDING
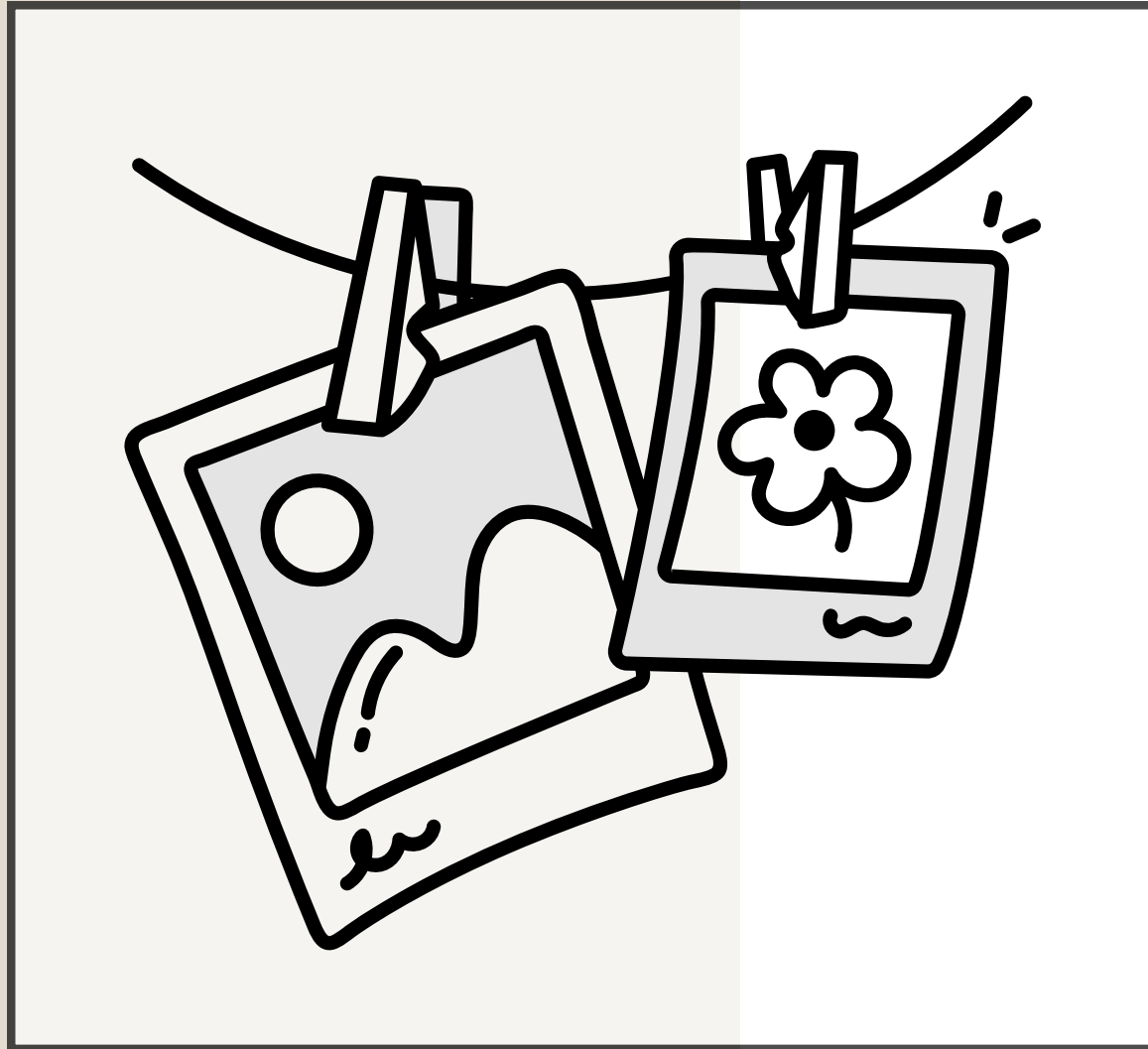
- These grounding strategies focuses on our environment in an effort to regulate (e.g., 5-3-4-2-1 strategy - <u>video</u>)

- Distraction can be helpful to redirect distress and focus on negative automatic thoughts or uncomfortable physical sensations (e.g., listen to music, read poetry, watch videos)

- Write and recite a script that reaffirms our sense of safety and autonomy

- Engage with mental calculations (e.g., counting)

- Closing our eyes to visualize a safe and comfortable place

PHYSICAL GROUNDING
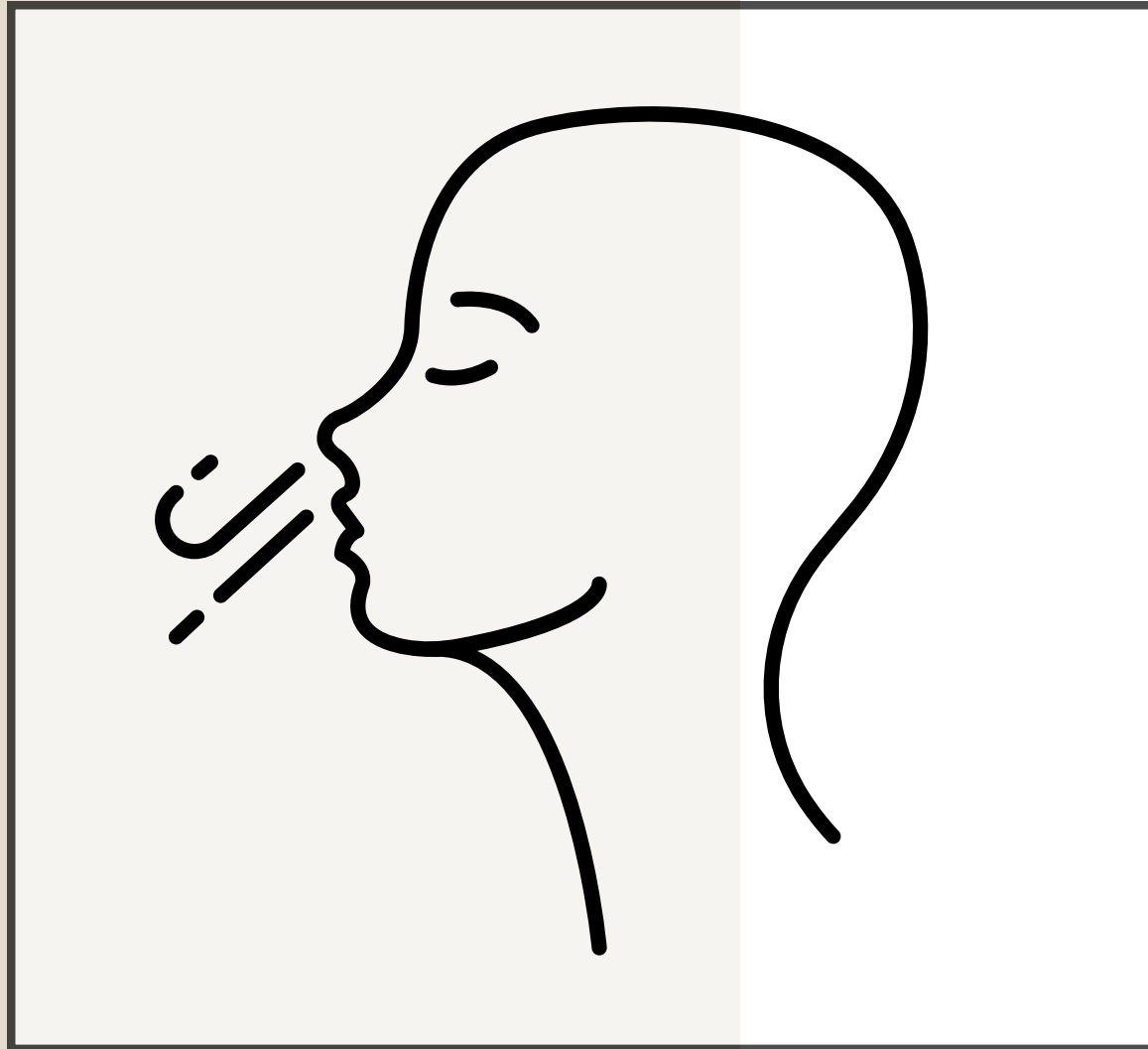
•Breathing exercises (e.g, box breathing)

–Box Breathing Exercise – 2:47 (time)

•Touch or hold onto an object tightly

•Put weight on our heels and physically connect with the ground

•Muscle relaxation practice by tensing our body and focusing on slowly releasing from our forehead to toes or vice versa

–Progressive Muscle Relaxation – 6:32 (time)

DISCUSSION

- Is there a particular grounding technique you could foresee being helpful?

- Is a thought record something that you integrate into your daily routine?

LET'S START TO THINK ABOUT GOAL SETTING FOR NEXT WEEK

Step 1: Write down your ultimate goals. These will be changes in each of the general issues you described above.

Step 2: As you already did with your general issue, you will now make your ultimate goal more specific. What does this goal mean? How will you know if you have met this goal? Use your specific description of the issues to guide you.

Step 3: Highlight actions that are consistent with your goals so you know if you're getting closer to reaching them.

NEXT WEEK

• Overview homework on automatic thoughts

– Explore core beliefs

– Self-reflective practice: what have I discovered about myself?

• Practice goal setting

• Create an exposure ladder

• Explore further coping strategies

SEE YOU NEXT WEEK!