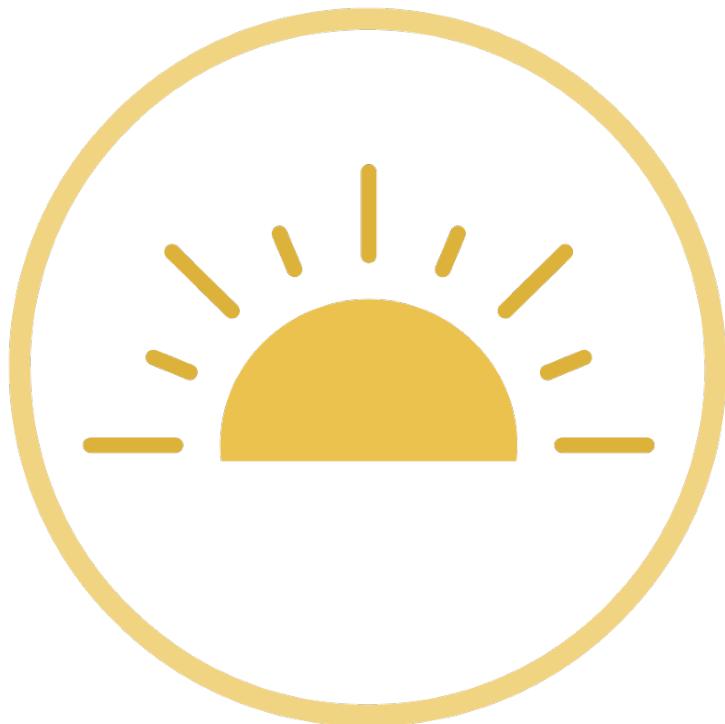


# Closure to Courage

## Student Workbook



*\*Adapted for JMU use with permission from Cal Poly Counseling Services*

# Table of Contents

<b>Welcome</b>	Page 3
<b>Frequently Asked Questions</b>	Page 4
<b>Workshop Series Worksheets</b>	Page 5
<b>Part 1 Worksheets</b>	Page 6
Session 1: First Things First...	Page 7
Session 1: Sitting with and Coping with Feelings	Page 7
Session 1: The Breakup Curve	Page 8
Session 1: 3-Step Process	Page 8
Session 1: Impact Exploration	Page 9
Session 1: Checklist of Common Experiences	Page 10
Session 1: Feelings Wheel	Page 11
Session 1: Riding the Waves	Page 12
Session 1: Reminders and Cues	Page 13
Session 1: Re-learning Your Lifestyle (TLC's)	Page 13
Session 1: The Social Media Monster	Page 14
Session 1: Coping Skills & TLC's	Page 15
Session 1: CBT Worksheet	Page 16
<b>Part 2 Worksheets</b>	Page 18
Session 2: Key Points from Part 1	Page 19
Session 2: Values Exploration	Page 20
Session 2: Wants vs. Needs	Page 21
Session 2: What Does a "Clean Break" Mean?	Page 22
Session 2: Do I Know Me?	Page 23
Session 2: Relationship Investigation?	Page 24
Session 2: Homework Overview	Page 27
<b>Part 3 Worksheets</b>	Page 29
Session 3: Key Points from Part 2	Page 30
Session 3: New Horizons	Page 31
Session 3: Cultural and Family Expectations	Page 39
Session 3: Dating in Modern Times	Page 32
Session 3: Unhelpful Ways of Thinking	Page 34
Session 3: Some Final Thoughts	Page 35
<b>Appendix</b>	Page 37
Pleasant Activities	Page 38
Alternative Response Worksheet	Page 39
Grounding Exercises	Page 43
Breathing Exercises	Page 44
Additional Resources	Page 45

# Welcome!

Welcome to **Closure to Courage**, this is a 3-part specialized workshop series intended to help increase your understanding and knowledge of how to manage after the end of a relationship. The goal is to provide you with some skills and framework to recognize and manage what you may be experiencing. We hope that some of the material sticks and that you find it useful.

It is important to remember that while this program provides valuable skills and tools to manage your breakup, relationships and their conclusions can bring up intense and sometimes painful feelings. Some of the skills and tools discussed may help lessen those feelings, but it is natural and expected to experience a range of emotions after a breakup such as sadness, loss, confusion, guilt, grief, etc. In fact, it can be healthier and more productive to allow oneself to experience authentic emotions given adequate coping and support as opposed to trying to suppress and ignore unpleasant feelings. Our hope is that these three sessions will offer a strong foundation to better understand and navigate your circumstances.

By the end of each workshop, you will have been provided a lot of information, which may seem like a lot at times. You are encouraged to hold onto and practice what you feel “sticks” and works for you. Just as learning a new language or musical instrument, effort and repetition are often associated with the best outcomes. Some skills may come easier than others and that’s okay. Additionally, similar to working out to get into better shape, it may be challenging or annoying to practice some of the skills discussed. All that to say, you are encouraged to do your best to incorporate some of these practices into your daily lifestyle as you see fit.

If at any time you feel that you need additional mental health support services, you can go to the Counseling Center (CC) for a [first-visit](#) appointment to meet with a clinician and explore mental health resource recommendations. JMU Students also have free access to telehealth individual counseling, 24/7 on demand TalkNow support, health coaching, and more through TimelyCare ([www.timelycare.com/jmu](http://www.timelycare.com/jmu)). For more mental health resource information, visit: [jmu.edu/counselingctr](http://jmu.edu/counselingctr) or contact the CC at (540)-568-6552.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### **What is Closure to Courage?**

Closure to Courage is a three-session program designed to help individuals manage after a breakup. The aim of the program is to offer frameworks for understanding experiences and skills / tools to manage intense feelings or navigate difficult communication.

### **Why does Closure to Courage use a 3-part model?**

The three-part workshop series is designed to succinctly provide information, skills, and resources, while also affording individuals time to rehearse and practice between sessions. The three-part model is also designed to align with the demands and obligations common in busy student schedules. However, even attending one of these workshops will give you some skills that will help manage his difficult time.

### **What if I need more than 3 workshop sessions to learn the model?**

Individuals learn at their own pace. Some students will pick up skills faster than others. Like anything worth having, these skills can take time to develop and master. We have a number of other workshops that allow you to continue building your skills.

### **What if I don't feel comfortable in groups?**

It is common to feel some degree of anxiety being in the presence of new individuals! In addition, being in a group setting and discussing an emotionally-charged topic can be challenging. However, simply being present will improve distress tolerance and teach your brain and body that it is okay, safe, and helpful to connect with others in this type of setting. Additionally, you are not required to speak to the entire group if you do not feel comfortable doing so. The facilitators respect each participant's right to share only what they are comfortable sharing and never require you to share sensitive or potentially embarrassing information about yourself.

### **What if I have additional mental health support need(s)?**

If you are currently connected to a provider, follow up with your provider. If you need assistance in connecting with resources, reach out to the [Counseling Center](#) and/or [TimelyCare](#).

# WORKSHOP WORKSHEETS

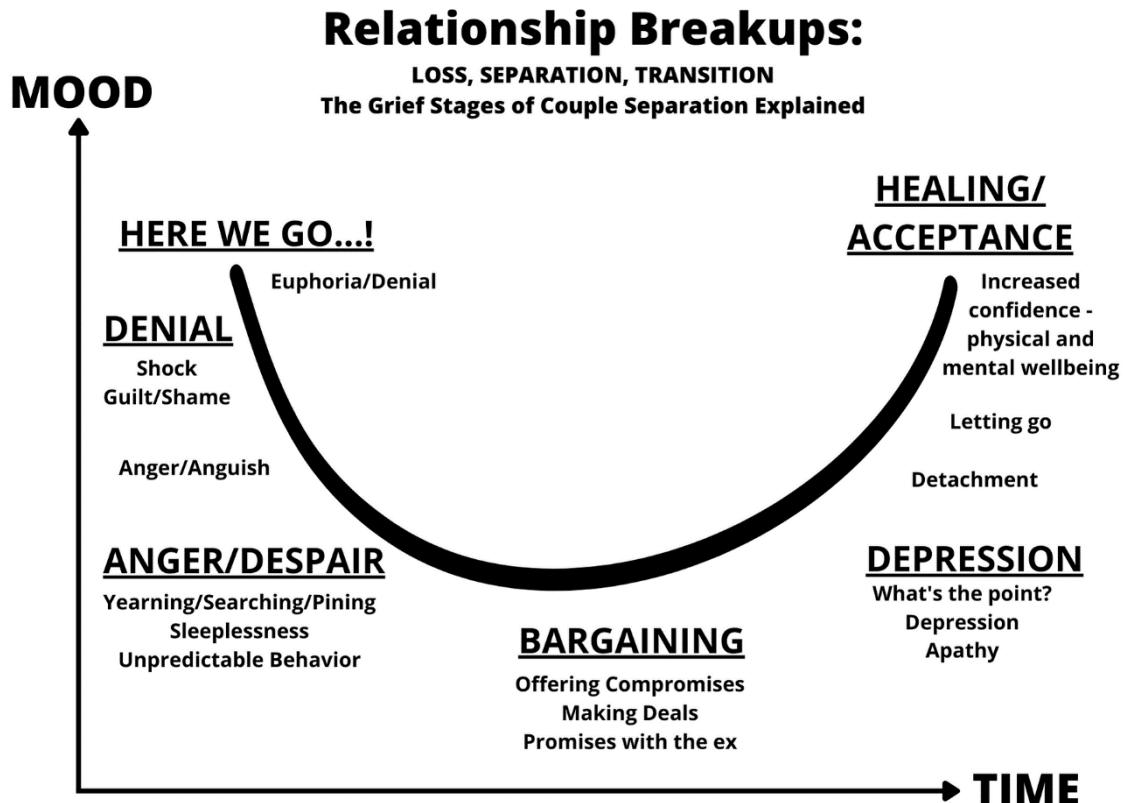
# **PART 1:**

# **Being With Your Feelings**

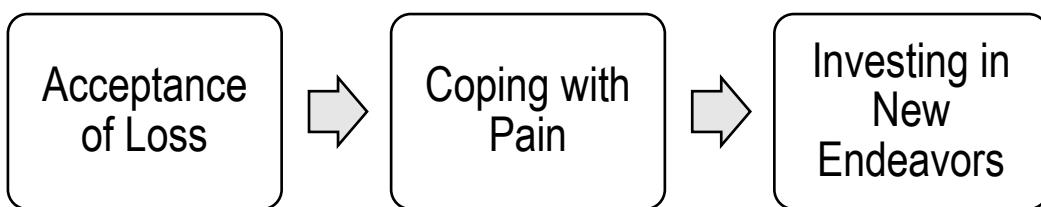
# First Things First...

- **Breakups can be unfortunate and painful**
  - Sigmund Freud said “*We are never so vulnerable as when we are in love*”
- **It is normal to be upset**
  - Crying, sadness, and feelings of grief are a normal part of the end of a relationship
- **Not allowing oneself to experience the accompanying feelings of a breakup can actually slow the process of moving on**
  - Robert Frost said “*The only way out is through*”
- **Humans are wired for attachment and social connection**
  - Romantic partners are just one way to meet these needs
- **Every breakup experience is unique.**
  - And there are often similarities to the experiences of others.
- **Validation and connection can exist without feeling that one's experience is better or worse than another's**

# The Breakup Curve



## 3-Step Coping Process



# **Impact Exploration**

**In order to increase the ability to cope with a breakup, increase your understanding of yourself and your communication with others.**

## **Common feelings after a sudden breakup**

- Acute and sudden losses can be experienced as traumatic and intense
- The context of sudden breakups can play a large role in the impact felt
  - For example, in some instances a sudden breakup can “come out of the blue” due to lack of communication. These types of unexpected breakups tend to have a larger negative impact on the person being broken up with.
  - Another example of a sudden breakup may be due to a critical event taking place. Often associated with conflict or a difficult circumstance (e.g., being cheated on), individuals can be dealt strong feelings to manage.

**Shock ~ Numbness ~ Feeling like the world or the self isn't “real”**

## **Common feelings after an extended breakup**

- Drawn out breakups are not immune from negative consequences
- Breakups that are lengthy can lead to mixed emotions, communication breakdowns, misunderstandings, and in some cases can be experienced as cumulative / compounding trauma (i.e., “death by a thousand cuts”).
  - Drawn out breakups can present as one or multiple partners “taking a break” after conflict or feelings that have changed.
  - More complicated drawn-out breakups could look like partners that split up but still engage in relationship-like behaviors (e.g., texting, sex, maintaining closeness).

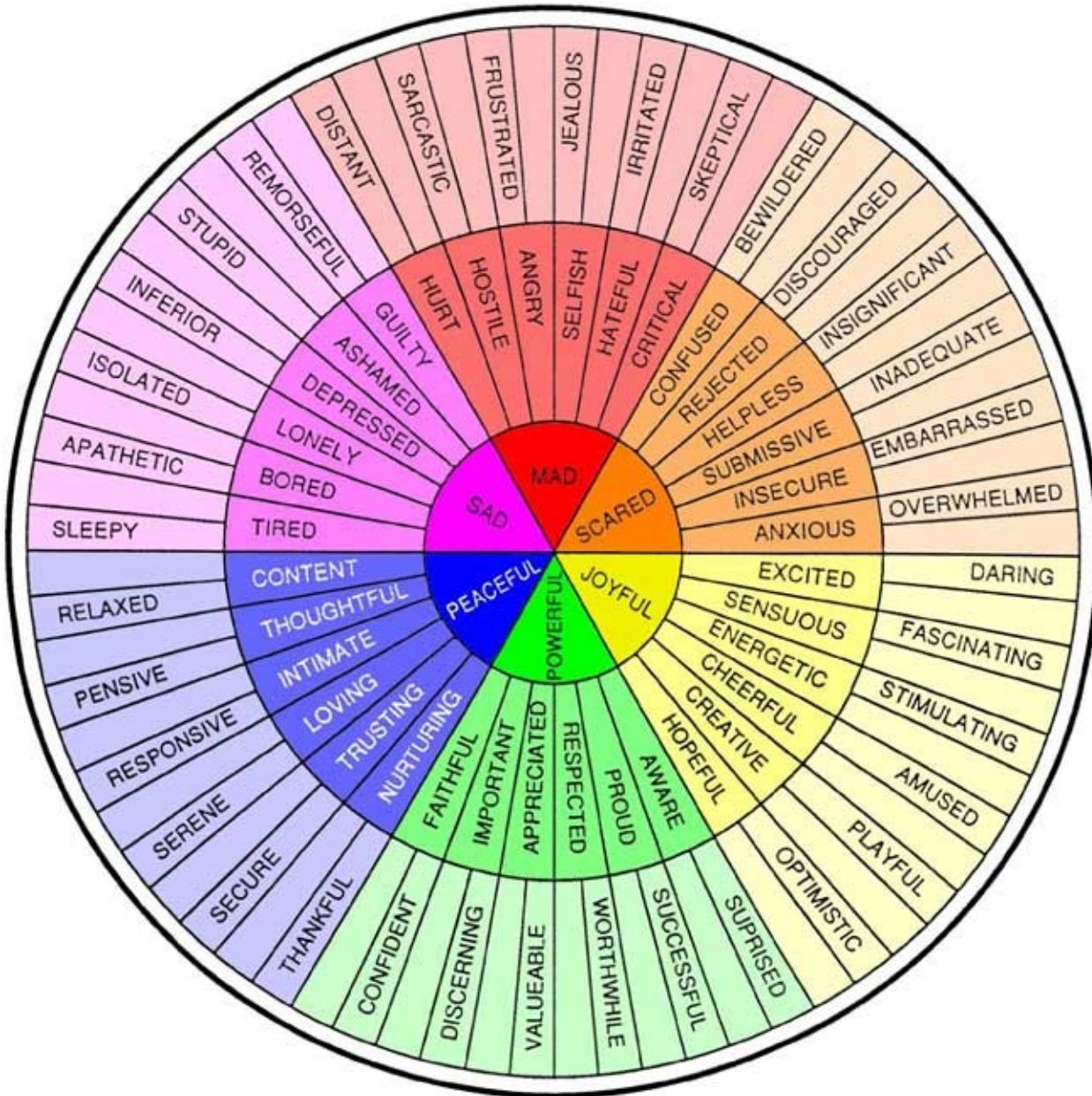
**Grief ~ Confusion ~ Sadness ~ Feeling “Stuck”**

# Checklist of Common Experiences

Thoughts	Emotions	Physiological Reactions	Behaviors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racing thoughts</li> <li>• Fantasies</li> <li>• Trouble concentrating</li> <li>• Blame</li> <li>• Over analyzing</li> <li>• Wanting to get even</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shock</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Sadness</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• Uncertainty</li> <li>• Pain</li> <li>• Loss</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Hopelessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of appetite</li> <li>• Nausea</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Sleep problem</li> <li>• Feeling “sick”</li> <li>• Tense muscles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Withdrawing socially</li> <li>• Losing routine</li> <li>• Misusing substances</li> <li>• Increased sexual activity</li> <li>• Increased time on social media</li> </ul>



# Feelings Wheel



# Waves and Obsessions

- It is common for individuals to experience intense waves of emotions after experiencing a breakup AND:
  - *Just like waves, intense feelings generally subside and become more manageable with time*
- Remember: it's normal for all feelings (those we enjoy and those we do not) to have peaks and valleys.



- It is also common for individuals to experience obsessive thoughts after experiencing a breakup
  - “What did I do wrong?”
  - “Could I have done anything differently?”
  - “Are they interested in someone else?”
  - “Is something wrong with me?”

- If obsessive thoughts are troubling it can be helpful to “de-fuse” from them
  - This means pausing to recognize that you are separate from your thoughts and “thoughts are just thoughts - not objective truths”
- Practicing defusion will lessen the impact of thoughts and they tend to decrease just like a song that gets stuck in your head.

# Reminders & Cues

Reminders and cues of a former partner can present painful experiences after a breakup

It may be worth considering putting away gifts, pictures, phone lock screens, or other reminders to reduce mental and emotional energy strain



## Re-learning Your Lifestyle

The conclusion of a relationship may also force individuals to re-learn their lifestyle



Enlisting the help of friends, family, and social support can help with some of the following common lifestyle and routine factors:

- Who you share meals with
- Who you text or call
- Who you go to UREC with
- Clubs and hobbies that you are involved in
- Where you go and what you do on the weekends
- Who you study with

# The Social Media Monster

Social media surveillance has been shown to correlate with:

- Increased Distress
- More negative feelings
- Sexual desire
- Decreased personal growth

Ask yourself:

- How much time and effort do I want to invest in social media?
- What do I gain from being on social media?  
What do I lose?
- In what ways do I intend to use social media,  
and how do I *actually* use it?



How can you decrease the likelihood of the Social Media Monster negatively impacting your experience?

1.\_\_\_\_\_

2.\_\_\_\_\_

3.\_\_\_\_\_

# Coping Skills and Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes

1. Assess current coping skills (i.e., what current helps you manage?)
2. Identify an area to practice (e.g., physical health, get out into nature, reduce screen time, connect socially, setting boundaries, identifying values, cutting down on substance use)
3. Set a specific goal

## Examples:

- Try to sleep 7-8 hours per night during the week
- Avoid doom scrolling before bed
- Try to eat healthy foods
- Learn to cook a new meal
- Walk to classes or get another form of exercise at UREC
- Connect socially with a different friend each day of the week
- Go for a walk in the Arboretum or in one of the parks or forests (Shenandoah, George Washington)
- Create a list of your values / strengths
- Practice assertive communication
- Try a mindfulness intervention
- Practice taking perspective of thoughts and feelings

\*Example – This week I will walk to classes Mon/Wed/Fri and get lunch with a different friend Tue/Thur

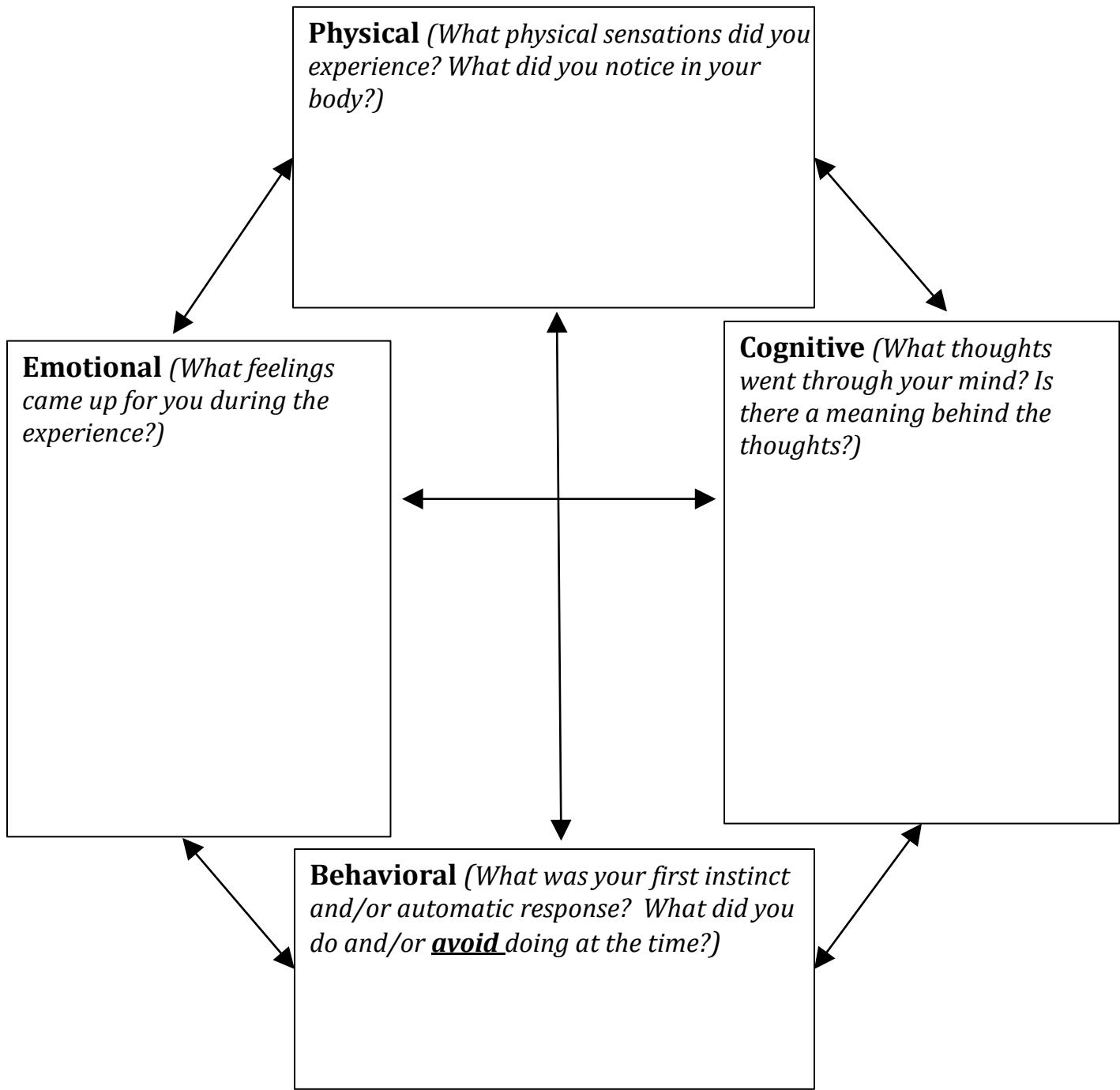
1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# CBT Worksheet

**Describe the situation** (*When? Where? What? With whom?*)



# Part 1: Self Study

**Practice 1:** Complete at least 1 CBT worksheet this week for review at the next session (blank copies provided on pages 16 and 47)

**Practice 2:** Practice one coping skill and 1 therapeutic lifestyle change

**Practice 3:** Identify which stage or process you most identify with

# **PART 2:**

# **Lessons Learned**

# Key Points from Part 1

- **Uncomfortable** and sometimes **painful feelings** are a normal part of the experience of breaking up
  - They can accompany both sudden and extended breakups
  - These feelings tend to come and go like waves – starting as intense and then fading over time
- **Noticing** and **working with** these feelings can be an important step to feeling better
- **Some simple and concrete steps for improving include:**
  - **Re-evaluating social media usage**
  - **Removing cues and reminders**
  - Re-learning your lifestyle
  - Utilizing coping skills and positive experiences
    - Using the CBT worksheet
    - Going for a walk
    - Getting 7-9 hours of sleep/night
    - Practicing breathing exercises

# Values, Needs, and Expectations

- |                |                 |               |                  |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------|
| • Authenticity | • Curiosity     | • Justice     | • Religion       |
| • Achievement  | • Dependability | • Kindness    | • Reputation     |
| • Adventure    | • Determination | • Knowledge   | • Respect        |
| • Authority    | • Fairness      | • Leadership  | • Responsibility |
| • Autonomy     | • Faith         | • Learning    | • Security       |
| • Balance      | • Fame          | • Love        | • Self-Respect   |
| • Beauty       | • Friendships   | • Loyalty     | • Service        |
| • Boldness     | • Fun           | • Meaning     | • Spirituality   |
| • Compassion   | • Growth        | • Openness    | • Stability      |
| • Challenge    | • Happiness     | • Optimism    | • Success        |
| • Citizenship  | • Honesty       | • Peace       | • Status         |
| • Community    | • Humor         | • Pleasure    | • Wealth         |
| • Competency   | • Influence     | • Poise       | • Wisdom         |
| • Contribution | • Inner         | • Popularity  |                  |
| • Creativity   | Harmony         | • Recognition |                  |
- 
-

# Relationship Needs vs. Relationship Wants

Let's take some time to think about what our **needs** are in relationship in comparison to what our **wants** are.

For example: *I may want someone I date to be interested in playing or watching sports, but that is not a "deal breaker." Whereas, communication, support, affection, and love represent needs.*

What are your relationship **wants**?

What are your relationship **needs**?

## Common relationship needs:

- Affection
- Acceptance
- Validation
- Autonomy
- Security
- Trust
- Empathy
- Prioritization
- Connection
- Space

# Importance of a “Clean Break”?

**In most cases, a “clean break” is the best way to end a romantic relationship.** Clean breaks are clear, emphasize healthy boundaries, and allow for the healing process to begin.

- What does a “clean break” mean to you?
  - Consider behaviors, emotions, thoughts, and physical sensations that might accompany a “clean break”.
- In some cases (like divorce) separation is necessary
  - Dividing resources, space, expenses
- Disadvantages of continued contact (Field et al., 2009; Knox et al., 2000):
  - Worse post breakup functioning
  - Prolonged distress
  - Increased longing



**If a clean break isn’t possible, or feels to difficult...**

- Gradually gradual decrease contact and reliance on other
  - Unless there are hurtful, harmful, or manipulative behaviors in which case prompt clean breaks may be more indicated
- What is the intention of continued contact?
  - Is this causing confusion?
  - Is this delaying healing and growth?
  - Is this causing harm to those involved?
- What can I do to get me closer to where I want to be?



# Do I Know Me?

After a breakup, it can be worthwhile to **reflect on who you are** as an individual. The better that you understand yourself, your identities, and where you want to be, the better you can evaluate your relationships.

- What are some words that describe me?(e.g., sister, friend, athlete, adventurer)
- What activities did I enjoy before my most recent partner(s)?
- How would I be described by those that care about me?

# **Relationship Investigation**

While it may involve experiencing difficult or painful emotions and thoughts, **understanding and reflecting** on your most recent relationship can offer new insights and aspects of closure that allow you to move forward.

1. What factors led to this relationship ending?

2. How have you been feeling?

3. What has been the toughest part of the breakup?

4. What thoughts keep coming up for you?

5. What were some negative aspects of your relationship?

6. What were some positive aspects of your relationship?

7. What needs were not met in your relationship?

8. What would you do differently in a next relationship?

9. How do you think this relationship has changed you for the better?

10. What do you want your next relationship to be like?

11. What do you need (e.g. time, care, coping skills) to continue to grow and develop as a person?

## Part 2: Self Study

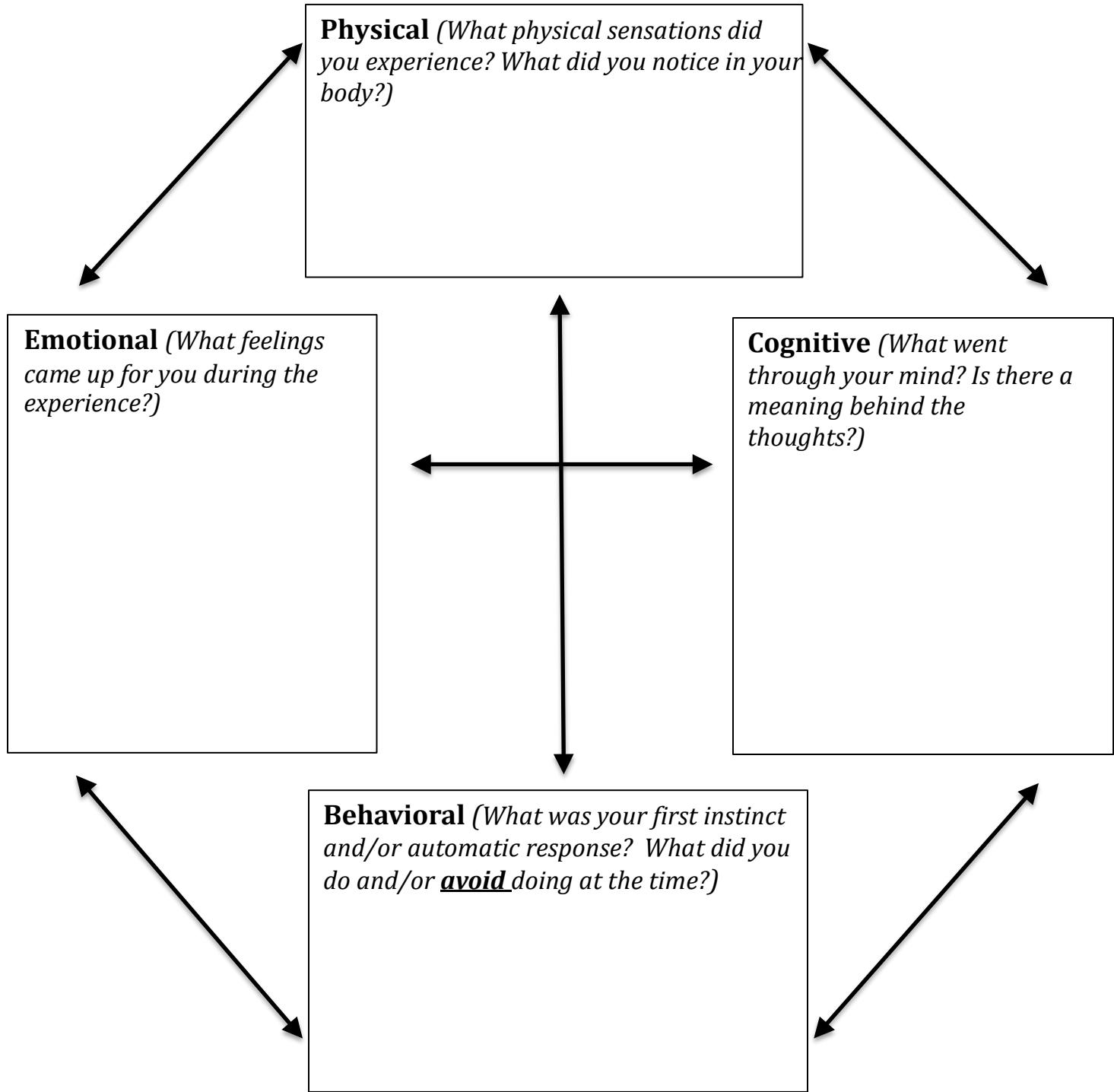
**Practice 1:** Read over your relationship investigation and if you are comfortable, consider sharing it with a trusted friend

**Practice 2:** Write a brief journal entry on where you are now compared to the initial breakup (e.g., feeling better, the same, worse)

- Consider the following questions
  - What did you already know?
  - What did you learn?
  - What surprised you?
  - What are you curious about?

# CBT Worksheet

**Situation** (*When? Where? What? With whom?*)



# **SESSION 3:**

# **New Horizons**

## Key Points from Part 2

- **Identifying needs and wants** in a relationship can help prioritize what's most important to you in a relationship
- It can be helpful to **reflect on yourself** as an individual and to identify your values
- What is a “**clean break**” and how **can it be helpful?**
  - Some relationships may end suddenly and others may end more gradually
  - In many cases, a gradual decrease in contact is less harmful (except in cases of harm or manipulation)
  - Firm boundaries related to contact can be helpful for the recovery process
- **Noticing the patterns** in yourself and in your relationships can help to inform future choices about relationships

# Cultural and Familial Expectations

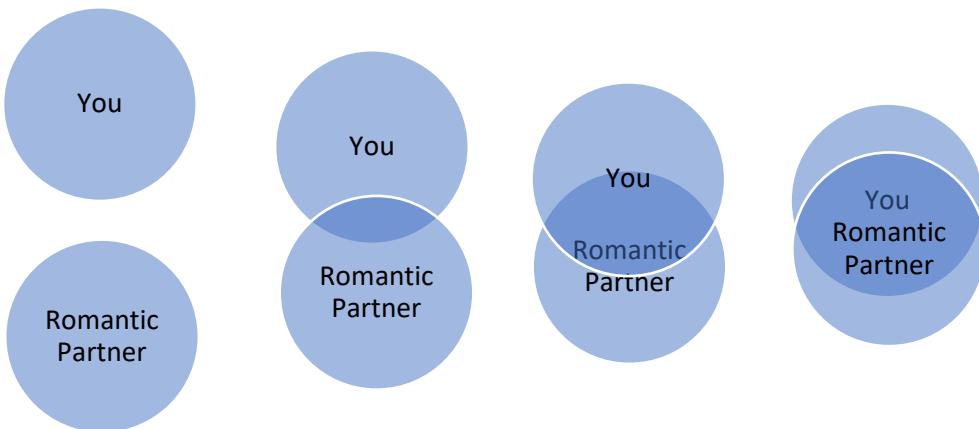
Many individuals feel pressure from aspects of their culture or family norms regarding relationships. Cultivating a better understanding of these pressures may help while navigating conflicts and make it easier to prioritize oneself.

## **Ask yourself:**

1. Do I feel pressure or a need to be in a relationship? If so, what are the sources of those pressures?
  2. What models have been set for me regarding relationships? Am I interested in following those models?

# Relational Overlap

Often, finding a person with similar interests can be a great way to begin a relationship. However, sometimes a mismatch in how much overlap our romantic partners want and how much overlap you want can be difficult to navigate. As such, it can be valuable to consider the degree of “overlap” in your relationship.



How do you want the overlap to look in your next relationship?

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How might the degree of overlap change as the relationship evolves?

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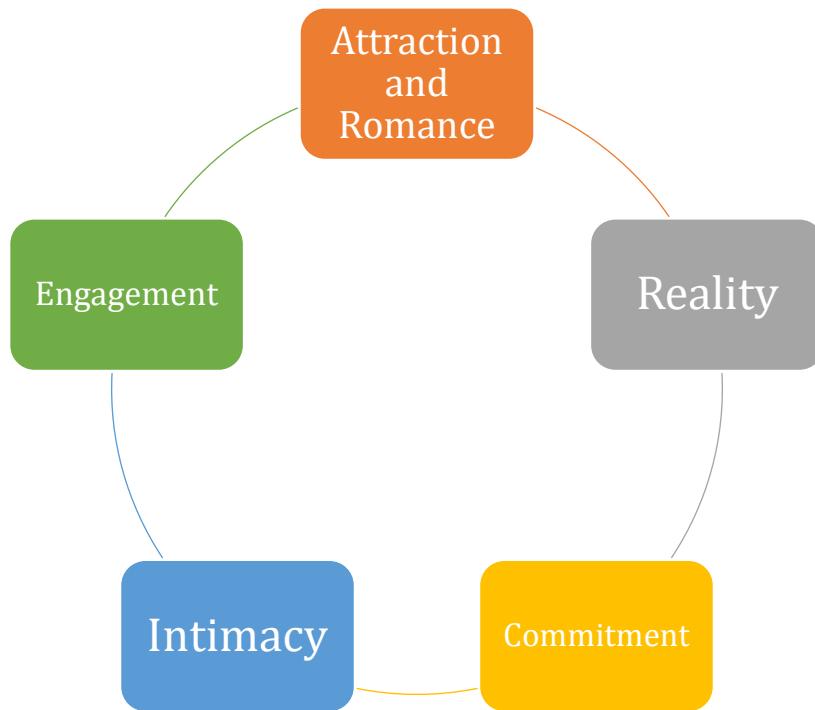
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# Helpful and Healthy Dating Tips

- Be yourself
- Invest in yourself
- Be honest about what you are looking for
- Date for the fun, not for the destination
- If you are going to disappoint, do it early
- Learn to be a good listener
- Reflect on your expectations and how realistic they are
- Prioritize in-person communication

## Moving Forward

- Relationships tend to go through a similar set of phases, for example: the 'honeymoon phase' of attraction and romance.
- Reflect on these phases while considering whether or not to engage in a relationship.



# Unhelpful Ways of Thinking

## All or Nothing

Black-and-white or  
Dichotomous Thinking



Instead of viewing things on a continuum, you see **situations in distinct categories** (e.g., good or bad, success or failure). And, the positive category is difficult to achieve because anything less than perfect is failure.

## Disqualifying the Positive



Frequently **minimizing or discounting** your positive behaviors. You may ignore, reject, or filter out positive experiences in a way that undermines your successes. You may explain away positives by attributing them to something external.

## Mind Reading



**Assuming you know what someone is thinking** and how they'll react. However, you have not actually gotten their feedback or checked the accuracy of your beliefs. This can give you a skewed version of what is really occurring, and keeps you from knowing what people think or how they perceive you.

## Emotional Reasoning



You believe that **because you feel something strongly, that it must be true**, even if there is evidence to the contrary. Intense emotions are difficult to ignore. While our feelings are real, emotions do not necessarily represent reality. Just because you are feeling really anxious during a conversation does not mean it is going badly. Feelings are not facts.

## Magnification or Minimization



**Overly exaggerating or minimizing the importance** of something (e.g., events, achievements, skills, etc.). You may focus on mistakes as overly important and believe your achievements unimportant. Or, you may magnify positive achievements or qualities in others while minimizing or discounting your own strengths and skills.

## Fortune Telling & Catastrophizing



Predicting the future, and **assuming the worst case scenario** even if there's little evidence or it's unlikely to happen. This can lead to avoidance, and can prevent you from gaining new evidence/skills.

## Over Generalization



You see a pattern or set expectations based on one experience/event, and broadly over apply conclusions to different situations. This might look like thinking "**nothing good ever** happens." or "I'll **never** succeed."

## Should Statements



Having **fixed, rigid, beliefs** about how you and everyone should behave and act. These are often precise, somewhat perfectionistic standards. "I **should always** be in control" "I **must always** be perfect" "I **should never** get anxious." This can create extremely high, impractical standards for yourself and/or others.

## Labeling



You apply **concrete, global labels** to yourself, others, and/or situations. Labeling often ignores context, and can prevent you from coping with the situation. Instead, if you use unforgiving, negative labels, that begin to feel true, and often contribute to feeling hopeless and stuck. There is a difference between noticing a mistake you made and labeling yourself a failure.

## Personalization



**Taking responsibility or blaming yourself** for something that happened or another person's actions or feelings, even though it was not because of you. Negative self-talk, self doubt, and feelings of unwarranted guilt or regret can be triggered by this unhelpful way of thinking.

# Setting Some Goals

Goals are excellent for encouraging us to work toward change, and letting us know when we have achieved meaningful change.

**Set two goals** related to **yourself**. These goals might have to do with self-care, establishing new routines, or moving toward your values.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Set two goals** related to **your relationships**. These goals might have to do with establishing boundaries or prioritizing your values in relationships.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Some Final Thoughts

- **There is no “perfect timeline” for how relationships happen.**
- **Short relationships, physical relationships, and friendships** are all legitimate relationships – and the ending of any of these relationships may come with unpleasant feelings of grief and loss. **These feelings are natural** and there's often much to be learned from them.
- **The social comparison game comes at a heavy cost** and rarely offers anything in return.
- **Dating apps are not the only means of meeting people.** Go out and do the things that offer meaning in your life and chances are you will find people.
- If you have to be someone other than yourself for them, they probably aren't “the one”.
- **You miss 100% of the shots your don't take.** Rejection and disappointment are inevitable in life, you may as well take the bat off your shoulder to swing.
- **Pay attention to congruence bewteen words and actions.**

# APPENDIX

JMU CC Feedback Survey



# Pleasant Activities

Acting	Amusing people	Attending a concert	Beachcombing	Being alone	Being with animals	Being at the beach
Being complimented	Being coached	Being counseled	Being in the country	Being at a family get-together	Being at a fraternity/sorority	Being with friends
Being with happy people	Being in the mountains	Being with my roommate	Being with someone I love	Being told I am loved	Being with my parents	Bird-watching
Boating/canoeing	Budgeting my time	Buying things for myself	Buying something for someone I care about	Camping	Caring for plants	Canning/Making preserves
Cheering for something	Collecting things	Combing/brushing my hair	Completing a difficult task	Complimenting or praising someone	Cooking	Counseling someone
Dancing	Dating someone I like	Designing/Drafting	Discussing my favorite hobby	Doing art work	Doing experiments	Doing favors for people I like
Doing housework	Dreaming at night	Driving long distances	Eating good meals	Exploring/Hiking	Expressing love to someone	Feeling the presence of a Higher Power
Fishing	Fixing machines	Gardening/Doing yardwork	Gathering natural objects	Giving gifts	Giving a party for someone	Getting up early
Getting massages	Giving massages	Going to an amusement park/zoo	Going to a barber/beautician	Going to a concert	Going to lectures	Going to a luncheon/potluck
Going to a health club/sauna/spa	Going to the movies	Going to a museum	Going on nature walks/field trips	Going to a play	Going to a restaurant	Going to a reunion
Going to a spiritual/peaceful place	Going to a sports event	Having coffee/tea with friends	Having daydreams	Having friends over to visit	Having a lively talk	Having lunch with friends
Having an original idea	Having spare time	Hearing jokes	Helping someone	Hiking	Horseback riding	Improving my health
Kicking sand/pebbles/leaves	Kissing	Knitting/crocheting	Laughing	Learning something new	Listening to the radio	Listening to music
Looking at the stars/moon	Making charitable donations	Making food to give away	Making a new friend	Meditating/Doing yoga	Planning or organizing something	Playing sports
Playing cards	Playing music	Playing with a pet	Playing in nature	Playing a board game/chess	Photography	Repairing things
Reading	Reminiscing	Riding in an airplane	Running/jogging	Saying prayers	Seeing beautiful scenery	Seeing old friends
Sewing	Shaving	Singing	Sleeping late	Smelling a flower or plant	Seeing good things happen to people	Solving a puzzle/crossword
Speaking a foreign language	Staying up late	Smiling at people	Taking a bath	Using my strengths	Watching TV	Writing in a journal

# Alternative Response Worksheet

**Situation:** (*When? Where? What? With whom?*)

**A student invited me to a party in my residence hall, but I didn't know her very well and felt anxious about going.**

Alternative Thoughts and Images: ( <i>Are these thoughts helpful? Are the anxious thoughts 100% true/accurate, 100% of the time? What are other ways of looking at this? What is the bigger picture?</i> )  <b><i>I may not be as socially awkward as I think.</i></b>  <b><i>If she invited me, she probably wants me there.</i></b>  <b><i>I might still have an okay time even if I am anxious</i></b>	<b>Alternative Behaviors:</b> ( <i>What could you do that would be more helpful for you, others, &amp;/or the situation? What are coping strategies that might be helpful?</i> )  <b>Coping Strategies I Can Use:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Deep breathing</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Distract myself</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Seek support from a friend/ family member</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Do a pleasurable activity</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Use alternative response worksheet</li></ul>	<b>Alternative Feelings:</b> ( <i>What are feelings that are more helpful? What if you acted and thought differently about the situation? How might these changes help you feel differently?</i> )  <b>Excited</b> <b>Wanted</b> <b>Liked</b> <b>Hopeful</b>
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**Original Outcome:** (*What was the original outcome?*) ***I stayed in my room and watched Netflix.***

**Desired Outcome:** (*Using these new alternatives, what would you like the outcome to be in the future?*) ***I want to go to the party so that I can make friends. If I feel too uncomfortable, I can always leave.***

# If you're having trouble, ask yourself these questions:

Whenever we recognize an anxiety-related thought, feeling or behavior, it can be very helpful to ask ourselves the following questions:

## Alternative THOUGHTS:

1. What are other ways of looking at this situation?
2. Am I looking at the whole picture?
3. What might be a more helpful way of picturing this situation?
4. What unhelpful thinking styles might I be using here (see below)?
5. What is the evidence that my thoughts are true? Is there an alternative way of thinking about this situation that is more true?
6. What is the probability that my thoughts will happen? What are some other things that could happen that are equally, if not more, probable?
7. Have I had any experiences in the past that suggests that this thought might not be COMPLETELY true ALL of the time?
8. Can I really predict the future? Is it helpful to try? What is more helpful?
9. Am I exaggerating how bad the result might be? What is more realistic?
10. Can I read people's minds? What else might they be thinking (that's not so negative)?
11. If a friend or loved one were in this situation and had this thought, what would I tell them?

<b><i>Common Cognitive Distortions (Unhelpful Thinking Styles)</i></b>	
<b>All or Nothing Thinking:</b> thinking in absolute, black and white categories	<b>Over-generalizing:</b> seeing a pattern based upon a single event or being overly broad in conclusions we draw
<b>Mental Filter:</b> only paying attention to certain types of evidence (e.g., dwelling on the negatives)	<b>Disqualifying the positive:</b> discounting the good things that have happened
<b>Jumping to Conclusions:</b> <b>Mind reading:</b> imagining we know what others are thinking <b>Fortune telling:</b> predicting the future	<b>Magnification (catastrophizing) and minimization:</b> blowing things out of proportion or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important
<b>Emotional Reasoning:</b> assuming because we feel a certain way, what we think must be true	<b>Should/Must Thinking:</b> Using words like "should", "must", "ought to" or "have to"
<b>Labeling:</b> assigning labels to ourselves or others	<b>Personalization:</b> blaming yourself for something you weren't entirely responsible for OR blaming others and overlooking ways you may have contributed to the outcome

*Alternative BEHAVIORS:*

1. What could I do in the moment that would be more helpful?
2. What's the best thing to do (for me, for others, or for the situation)?
3. If my feared situation happens, how will I cope? What coping skills can I use to handle my feared situation? What have I done in the past that was successful?
4. Am I needing to work on acceptance, letting go of control, being okay with less than perfect, or having faith in the future and myself?
5. Breathe: Focus your attention on your breathing. Imagine you have a balloon in your belly, inflating on the in-breath, deflating on the out-breath.

*Alternative FEELINGS:*

1. What might it feel like if I acted/thought differently?
2. When I'm not feeling this way, do I think about this situation differently?
3. Are there any strengths or positives in me or the situation that I might be ignoring?
4. What else might this anxiety be related to? Is it *really* about feeling \_\_\_\_\_?
5. Tell yourself: "This feeling will pass. It's a normal body reaction."

# Alternative Response Worksheet

**Situation** (*When? Where? What? With whom? What did you feel \_\_\_\_\_ about?*)

<b>Alternative Thoughts and Images:</b> ( <i>Are these thoughts helpful? Are the anxious thoughts 100% true/accurate, 100% of the time? What are other ways of looking at this? What is the bigger picture?</i> )	<b>Alternative Behaviors:</b> ( <i>What could you do that would be more helpful for you, others, &amp;/or the situation? What are coping strategies that might be helpful?</i> )  <b>Coping Strategies I Can Use:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Deep breathing</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Distract myself</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Seek support from a friend/ family member</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Do a pleasurable activity</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Use alternative response worksheet</li></ul>	<b>Alternative Feelings:</b> ( <i>What are feelings that are more helpful? What if you acted and thought differently about the situation? How might these changes help you feel differently?</i> )
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**Original Outcome:** (*What was the original outcome?*)

**Desired Outcome:** (*Using these new alternatives, what would you like the outcome to be in the future?*)

# Grounding Exercises

When people become overwhelmed with distressing thoughts or feelings, including intense anxiety, activities that keep your mind and body connected (called “grounding”) can be helpful in regaining a sense of stability and mental focus. The following are a number of grounding exercises to help firmly anchor you in the present moment. **You may need to try multiple different exercises to find one or two that work best for you.**

1. Remind yourself of who you are now. State your name, age and where you are right now.
2. Take ten slow deep breaths. Focus your attention on each breath on the way in and on the way out. Say the number of the breath to yourself as you exhale.
3. Splash water on your face or place a cool wet cloth on your face.
4. Pay purposeful attention as you hold a cold (non-alcoholic) beverage in your hands. Feel the coldness, and the wetness on the outside. Note the taste as you drink. You can also do this exercise with a warm beverage.
5. Find a “grounding object” to hold, look at, listen to, and/or smell. This could be a soft object such as a pillow or stuffed animal, a smooth stone you found on the beach, a picture of a beautiful scene or loved one, and/or any other object that represents safety or comfort.
6. Listen to music. Pay close attention and listen for something new or different.
7. If you wake up suddenly during the night and feel disoriented or distressed, remind yourself who you are and where you are. Look around the room and notice familiar objects and name them. Feel the bed you are lying on, the softness of the sheets or blankets, the warmth or coldness of the air, and notice any sounds you hear. Remind yourself that you are safe.
8. Feel the clothes on your body, whether your arms and legs are covered or not, and the sensation of your clothes as you move in them.
9. While sitting, feel the chair under you and the weight of your body and legs pressing down on it.

10. If you are lying down, feel the contact between your head, your body and your legs, as they touch the surface you are lying on. Starting from your head, notice how each part feels, all the way down to your feet, on the soft or hard surface.
11. Stop, look, and listen. Notice and name what you can see and hear nearby and in the distance.
12. Look around you, notice what is front of you and to each side, name first large objects and then smaller ones.
13. Get up, walk around, take your time to notice each step as you take one then another.
14. If you can, step outside, notice the temperature, the sounds around you, the ground under your feet, the smell in the air, etc.
15. “54321” Grounding Exercise:
  - Name 5 things you can see in the room with you.
  - Name 4 things you can feel (tactile; e.g. “chair on my back” or “feet on floor”)
  - Name 3 things you can hear right now
  - Name 2 things you can smell right now
  - Name 1 good thing about yourself
16. Write and/or say grounding statements
  - This situation won’t last forever
  - This too shall pass.
  - I can ride this out and not let it get me down.
  - My anxiety/fear/sadness won’t kill me; it just doesn’t feel good right now.
  - These are just my feelings and eventually they’ll go away.

Adapted from: <http://www.livingwell.org.au/well-being/grounding-exercises/>

# Breathing Exercises

## Belly (or Diaphragmatic) Breathing

You can do this exercise in any position, but it is helpful to do this exercise while lying down when first learning belly breathing.

1. Lie comfortably on your back, with a pillow under your head, your knees bent and your back flat. You can stretch your legs out if that's more comfortable.
2. Place one hand on your belly and one hand on your upper chest.
3. Inhale slowly and expand your belly as you breathe so that your lower hand moves with your belly. The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.
4. Slowly exhale, focusing on the movement of your belly and lower hand as it returns to its original position.
5. Repeat steps 3 & 4 for several minutes, always focusing on the movement of the belly as you breathe. If your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to your breathing.

## Breath-Counting Exercise

This exercise focuses on the use of counting with the rhythm of the breath. Start with a short period of time and gradually increase the time. Set a timer so that you do not have to worry about when to stop.

1. Find a comfortable position. Take several deep breaths and settle into yourself. You may either close your eyes or keep them open, depending on your own comfort. If you keep them open, fix them on an object or a spot on the floor about four feet in front of you. Your eyes may be either focused or unfocused.
2. Take deep, comfortable breaths. Notice your inhalation. The pause between inhaling and exhaling, your exhalation, and the pause before starting again.
3. As you inhale, count, "one..." As you exhale, count, "two..." Inhale, "three..." Exhale, "four..." Continue until you reach 10 then start over.
4. If you lose count, simply begin with "one" on your next inhalation.
5. If you notice your mind has wandered, gently notice this, and return your focus back to counting your breath.
6. If you notice any body sensations catching your attention, focus on that sensation until it fades. Then return your attention back to counting your breaths.

# Online Resources

TimelyCare Self-Help Modules (Meditation, Yoga, Breathing)  
[app.timelycare.com/explore](http://app.timelycare.com/explore)

Mayo Clinic Stress Reduction Website  
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/mindfulness-exercises/MY02124>

Meditation Oasis [www.meditationoasis.com](http://www.meditationoasis.com)

Mindful [www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org)

Mindfulness Research Guide <http://www.mindfulexperience.org/>

## Apps for your Smartphone, Tablet, or Computer

ACT Coach

Mindfulness Coach

Breathe2relax

Mindshift

Breathing techniques by Hemalayaa

T2 Mood Tracker

CBTi-Coach

Take a break!

## Additional Counseling Center Resources

Upcoming Counseling Center Workshops:

<https://www.jmu.edu/counselingctr/services/workshops.shtml>

Counseling Center's Oasis (Relaxation) & Studio (Creative Arts) Self Care Spaces <https://www.jmu.edu/counselingctr/services/self-care-spaces.shtml>

Counseling Center Taking Care of Yourself Resources:

<https://www.jmu.edu/counselingctr/self-help/self-care/index.shtml>

Counseling Center Healthy Relationship Resources:

<https://www.jmu.edu/counselingctr/self-help/relationships/index.shtml>

# CBT Worksheet

**Situation** (*When? Where? What? With whom?*)

