



Unified Protocol for Transdiagnostic Treatment of Emotional Disorders: Workbook (2 edn)

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Previous Edition (1 ed.)

Publisher: Oxford University Press
Print ISBN-13: 9780190686017
DOI: 10.1093/med-psych/
9780190686017.001.0001

Print Publication Date: Nov 2017
Published online: Jan 2018

About This Treatment

Chapter: (p. 11) About This Treatment

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Goals



- To provide an overview of the skills you will learn in this treatment
- To highlight the importance of practicing these skills
- To describe how this treatment can be used in combination with other treatments like medication and other types of therapy
- To determine if now is the right time to begin this program

In the previous chapter, we discussed some of the problems that this treatment can address. Now let's explore whether this treatment program is right for you.



Outline of the Treatment

Each chapter of this workbook will teach you new skills to manage your emotions. As a reminder, the overall goal of this treatment is to become more accepting of your emotions when they come up in order to respond to them in more productive ways.

You can think of building a healthier relationship with your emotions as similar to building a new house (see Figure 2.1). You have to start by laying a solid foundation. We will begin by encouraging you to identify your personal reasons for making the changes outlined in this program in order to motivate you to put your best effort into developing these skills (**Setting Goals and Maintaining Motivation—Chapter 4**). (p. 12) After solidifying the necessary foundation for success, the ground floor of this program involves developing a greater understanding of your own emotional experiences. Given that accepting and approaching emotions may sound very different than what you expected, we will discuss why we have emotions in the first place and how they actually help us. We will also teach you to break your emotions down into more manageable parts. Specifically, we will ask you to pay attention to your thoughts (what you tell yourself), physical sensations (what you feel in your body), and behaviors (what you do). This will help you understand how your emotions can escalate and become overwhelming for you (**Understanding Your Emotions—Chapters 5 and 6**). We will continue talking about these three components (thoughts, physical sensations, and behaviors) throughout this treatment.



Figure 2.1

After we've discussed why it makes sense to accept emotions as they come up, we will teach you a skill that will help you relate to your emotions in (p. 13) a more accepting way. The skill is called **Mindful Emotion Awareness (Chapter 7)**. You can think of this like going up to the second floor of the house to gain a different perspective on your emotional experiences. Specifically, we will ask you to look down on your thoughts, physical sensations, and behaviors in a nonjudgmental way. In other words, you will practice going easier on yourself for having emotional reactions because beating yourself up only makes you feel worse.

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The next step will be to zero in on each of the three components of an emotion: thoughts, physical sensations, and behaviors. These three components each occupy a room on the third floor of our house—behind each door is a new coping skill. First, you will learn about how the way you think about situations in your life can really color how you feel about them. We will teach you a skill called **Cognitive Flexibility (Chapter 8)** that will encourage you to question your first impressions so that you can think about things in a more balanced way. Next, we will focus on a skill called **Countering Emotional Behaviors (Chapter 9)**. Here we will ask you to begin to act in ways that approach emotions, rather than pushing them away. Finally, you will learn a skill called **Understanding and Confronting Physical Sensations (Chapter 10)**. We will discuss the way that physical sensations contribute to how you experience emotions. We will also teach you exercises that will help you become more comfortable experiencing the physical sensations that go along with your emotions.

After you have learned skills to cope with strong emotions, it is important to put them into practice. The best way to do this is by facing situations or activities that bring up strong emotions. We call these practices **Emotion Exposures (Chapter 11)**. In addition to helping you practice your new skills, emotion exposures allow you to learn important information about emotions themselves. By facing emotions, we learn that they are temporary and that we can actually tolerate them more than we thought we could. Seeing this firsthand (versus reading about it in this workbook) is a very powerful way to develop that accepting attitude toward emotions we've been talking about. This is the pinnacle of treatment and occupies the attic of the house.

Finally, the last chapter in the book, **Moving UP from Here (Chapter 13)**, is dedicated to making sure you maintain the gains you made throughout your hard work with this treatment.

(p. 14) How Should You Use This Treatment Manual?



This program is designed for you to go through at your own pace, but we recommend spending enough time on each chapter to really get comfortable using the skills. Each chapter ends with a quiz to test how well you understood the skill introduced in that chapter. The answers to these quizzes can be found in Appendix A. If you find yourself struggling with the answers to these quizzes, go back and read through the chapter again.

Each chapter also has exercises to help you practice the skills in response to strong emotions in your own life. Practice is extremely important! Reading this book is not enough—you have to make real changes in the way you cope with your emotions in order to see improvements in how you feel. Think of it like deciding to enter a marathon. You can't just sign-up and expect to be able to run 26 miles. You have to exercise a bit more every day until you finally build the strength to carry you through. That's why we discuss **Setting Goals and Maintaining Motivation (Chapter 4)** to make sure you are ready to fully commit to this program.

Can You Do this Treatment at the Same Time as Other Treatments?



If you are involved in another treatment program to help you cope with your overwhelming emotions, you should wait until that program is finished before starting this one. Different treatment programs can sometimes provide mixed messages about what you should be doing to manage your symptoms. If you have just started a different program, you might want to give it a chance to show results. If you are still struggling at the end of treatment, you can give this program a try. On the other hand, if you are seeing a therapist for another reason (e.g., supportive counseling, marital counseling), there is no reason why you can't do both at the same time.

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If you are currently taking medications for your symptoms, you can continue to take them throughout this program. Keep in mind that certain medications are designed to dampen your emotions, including common prescriptions like Xanax or Klonopin. Since the goal of this program is to help you practice coping more effectively with emotions as you experience them, these medications may make it more difficult to get the full benefit of the program. **Chapter 12, The Role of Medication in the Treatment of Emotional Disorders**, will provide more information about the types (p. 15) of drugs that are often prescribed for people struggling with difficult emotions and how those medications may impact this treatment.

We recommend that you work through this program with the help of your healthcare provider or therapist. However, this program can also be done on your own.

What Are the Benefits of This Program?



This treatment was developed at the Center for Anxiety and Related Disorders at Boston University. Our center is dedicated to conducting cutting-edge research on understanding how emotional disorders develop, as well as the best way to treat them. Researchers at our center have a long history of creating successful treatments for common mental health disorders. We have now used this treatment program with hundreds of patients, and approximately 70% of them experienced significant improvements. The majority of patients report being able to use the skills taught in this program to better cope with their emotions. Additionally, many patients also report significantly improved ability to achieve goals in many aspects of their lives (e.g., improved relationships, improved performance at work). You will be able to monitor your own progress throughout treatment by completing brief questionnaires each week. This progress monitoring will be described in **Chapter 3, Learning to Record Your Experiences**. This treatment is a chance to gain back a part of your life that may be missing now because of your symptoms.

Of course, we cannot promise that these skills will lead to significant improvements for everyone. However, the biggest predictor of success is the amount of effort you dedicate to this program. The more you put into this treatment, the more you will get out of it.

What Are the Costs of This Program?



Like most important goals, changing how you cope with your emotions takes work. The biggest cost of using the program in this workbook is time and effort. You should be prepared to set aside time each day to practice the skills you're learning. Additionally, it is best if you continue to move through the skills without long breaks. Think of it like signing up for a course in school—for the three to four months you're enrolled, (p. 16) you are learning new concepts and regularly doing homework to practice what you have learned. If you are unable to make this commitment, it may not be the right time to try this program. In order to really give this program a chance to work, you have to be willing to see it through from beginning to end. Keep in mind that many people feel nervous about committing to confront difficult emotions. However, when they take it step-by-step, they surprise themselves.

Summary



This chapter provided an overview of the skills included in this program to address the ways you are responding to your emotions that may be maintaining your difficulties. These skills are most helpful when practiced regularly. You can work through the program on your own, but we find that enlisting the help of a therapist can be useful. You can also continue to use medications for your symptoms and can refer to Chapter 12 for information on the role of medication in treating emotional disorders. Overall, the majority of people who complete this

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treatment see at least some improvement in their symptoms, with most making significant gains. In the next chapter, we will discuss monitoring your experiences so that you can get the most out of this program.