

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

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## Moving UP from Here: Recognizing Accomplishments and Looking to Your Future

### Chapter:

**(p. 149)** Moving UP from Here: Recognizing Accomplishments and Looking to Your Future

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### Goals



- To review the important takeaway message of this program
- To evaluate your progress
- To revisit your treatment goals
- To develop a practice plan



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## Homework Review

Did you complete your **Anxiety** and **Depression Scales** (and your **Other Emotion** and **Positive Emotion Scales** if you've chosen to complete them) for the previous week? Have you plotted your scores on your **Progress Record**? Now that we have reached the end of this program, we'll be using it to evaluate how your ratings on these scales have changed throughout treatment. In the last chapter, we discussed the importance of conducting *Emotions Exposures*. Did you create a hierarchy of emotion-producing situations/activities? Have you been facing these situations/activities and writing your experiences down on the **Record of Emotion Exposure Practice Form**? If so, great! The purpose of these exercises is to learn that you can tolerate strong emotions and to practice your skills in response to them. If you haven't been completing your *Emotion Exposures*, you should return to Chapter 11 to familiarize yourself with why this skill is so important to lasting improvement.

### (p. 150) Key Concepts



The main purpose of this chapter is to review the key concepts from this treatment program and to prepare you for what comes next. We will review strategies that will help you continue to strengthen the skills you've been practicing. You've reached the point in this program where you have learned a new way to relate to your emotions when they come up. Without spending so much energy judging your emotional experiences and/or pushing them away, you may be able to pursue new directions in your life. You've reached the top floor of the house you've been building to create a healthy relationship with your emotions (see Figure 13.1).

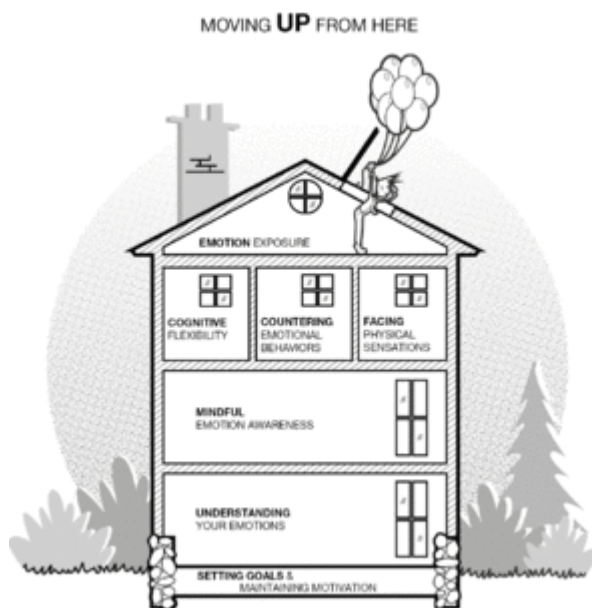


Figure 13.1



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## (p. 151) Important Takeaways from This Program

This treatment program contains a great deal of information on how to develop a more accepting attitude toward your emotions. Here are some of most important takeaway messages:

- All emotions, even the ones that feel negative or uncomfortable, are providing you with important information that can motivate you to take action in helpful ways.
- Staying present in the moment and taking a nonjudgmental view of your emotions can help to prevent emotions from increasing in intensity.
- The way you think about a situation influences how you feel, and how you feel affects the way you interpret a situation.
- Although avoiding uncomfortable emotional experiences can work well in the short term, it isn't an effective long-term coping strategy.

To help you remember all of the skills contained in this program, we have summarized them in the *UP Skills Action Plan* that you can use whenever you notice an emotion starting to build (see Box 13.1). The *UP Skills Action Plan* is rooted in the three-components of an emotion to help you remember it.

### Box 13.1 UP Skills Action Plan

Do a quick three-point check. Use your breath or other chosen cue as an anchor to help bring you out of your head and to anchor yourself in the present moment.

***What are you thinking right now?*** What negative automatic thoughts are you having right now? Are you jumping to conclusions or thinking the worst? Are you responding to a past concern or future worry? Ask yourself whether there are any other ways to interpret this situation that may be more helpful and what are some ways you can cope.

***What are you feeling in your body right now?*** What physical sensations are you noticing? Are you tired, hungry, or rundown? Are your physical sensations intensifying your emotions, or vice versa? Try to stay in the present moment with your physical sensations without trying to control them or to distract yourself.

***What are you doing now, or what do you feel like doing right now?*** Are you avoiding a situation that may trigger an uncomfortable emotion? Remember that countering an emotional behavior involves provoking emotions and engaging in helpful *Alternative Actions*.

(p. 152) To keep your *UP Skills Action Plan* handy, you can make a photocopy of these steps or download a printer-friendly version from Appendix: Forms and Worksheets. Alternatively, some people find it helpful to take a picture of the *UP Skills Action Plan* with their cellphone so that it is easily accessible anytime they are experiencing uncomfortable emotions.

## Evaluating Your Progress



As you approach the end of this treatment program, you may be feeling excited because you've seen improvements in your symptoms. You may also be feeling disappointed that you haven't seen as much improvement as you had hoped. It is important to remember that the

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goal of completing this treatment program is to teach you skills for responding to your emotions in a more helpful way. Although it is very common for people to feel that they have made some noticeable progress in addressing their symptoms, there is often still room for improvement following this short-term treatment. This is because it takes time after learning the skills to see the full effect. As we mentioned in Chapter 2, we have used this treatment with hundreds of patients and over 70% of them saw significant improvements in their symptoms. Our studies on this treatment have also shown that patients continue to see additional improvements in their symptoms for up to a full year after completing it. It is helpful to keep this in mind as you reflect on how your symptoms have changed over the course of this program.

There are several ways that you can evaluate the progress that you've made since you first began this program. One option is to take a look at your **Progress Record**. If you've completed the **Anxiety** and **Depression Scales** (as well as the **Other Emotion** and **Positive Emotion Scales**) from week to week, and logged the data onto your **Progress Record**, it can be a nice visual representation of how some of your symptoms changed. If you are like most people who complete this program, there were probably some ups and downs from one week to the next. However, if you compare your scores at the beginning of the program to now, have there been any decreases in your overall levels of anxiety and feelings of depression? Have you seen decreases in the personally relevant emotion that you tracked? Have you noticed an increase in your experiences of positive emotions? (p. 153) Perhaps some of these changes (e.g., feeling less anxious) have impacted the top problems you identified at the start of treatment.

You can use the **Progress Evaluation Form** to reflect on the progress you have made toward learning new ways of coping with intense, uncomfortable emotions. It is important to set aside time to complete this evaluation thoughtfully. By generating specific examples of how each skill has been helpful, you will be reinforcing the connection in your brain between using the skills and positive changes in your life. We will also ask you to consider where there are opportunities for continued improvement for each skill, which will be helpful in creating your **Practice Plan** later in this chapter. See Appendix B (p. 186) for a completed example of a **Progress Evaluation Form**.

## How to Maintain Your Progress and Your Momentum



As you approach the end of this treatment program, you may find yourself looking forward to taking a break. After all, treatment is hard work! However, consider Newton's first law of motion— an object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion. Right now, you are an object in motion! In other words, it is much easier to maintain all of the positive momentum that you've worked so hard to accumulate over these past few months than it is to get back on track after taking a break. Next we recommend strategies for maintaining your progress and continuing to benefit from treatment.

### Revisit Your Goals

In Chapter 4, you came up with some goals for treatment. Setting goals is a critical part of making changes to your life and maintaining your motivation. Take a look at the **Treatment Goals Form** you completed at the start of this program. Now that you have completed this treatment, you may have made significant progress on some of the goals you set. In order to stay motivated, it can be helpful to take a moment to revisit your goals and update them if necessary. Now that you're feeling better, more possibilities may seem open to you (e.g., starting to date, going back to school, looking for a new job).

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When updating your goals, remember that people tend to feel most motivated when working toward something that is important to them. So (p. 154) choose goals that are personally meaningful to you. Once you have your updated goals in mind, ask yourself the following:

- Are my goals specific and concrete enough for me to easily measure my progress?
- Are my goals manageable and realistic? Remember that the purpose of goals is to motivate you. If you set goals that are unrealistic, you will most likely end up feeling defeated.
- Is the ability to achieve my goals within my control, or is it possible that I fail for reasons beyond my control? For example, if you set a goal to go on two job interviews next month, there are many reasons why you may not be able to achieve your goal that you can't control. However, if you revise your goal to submitting two job applications every week, you can control whether you achieve that goal.

## Create a Practice Plan

The single most effective way to maintain the progress you have made in this program and to keep improving is to continue to practice the skills you've learned. Keep in mind that even if you have made significant progress so far, these are newly learned behaviors that will require time and effort in order to "stick."

The **Practice Plan Form** is designed to help you come up with specific strategies for practicing each of the core skills. Studies have shown that people are more likely to take action when they plan it out in advance. First, the **Practice Plan Form** asks you to think about how each of the treatment skills relates to your long-term treatment goals. For example, if your long-term goal is to improve your relationships with your friends, practicing *Cognitive Flexibility* may stop you from jumping to conclusions when a friend doesn't respond to your text message.

The **Practice Plan Form** also asks you to come up with a plan for how you can practice each skill. Even with the best of intentions, it is hard to follow through with a practice plan unless you get specific about exactly how and when you will practice. For example, someone may plan to work on countering emotional avoidance by not using distraction as a coping strategy during the commute to work. However, that practice plan doesn't specify when or how this person will stop using distraction. Here is a better practice plan: "When I take the subway to and from work, I won't listen to music or read on my phone to distract myself. At each subway (p. 155) stop, I will take a deep breath to anchor myself in the present moment and do a three-point check."

Lastly, the **Practice Plan Form** asks you to come up with a way of holding yourself accountable for following through on your plan. There are many ways that you can hold yourself accountable. You can enlist the help of a friend or family member—sometimes just knowing that someone is going to ask you whether you followed through with your practice plan can motivate you to do it. You can also link your practice plan to other daily behaviors. For example, you could say that you aren't going to brush your teeth in the morning until you complete your straw-breathing exercises. You can also consider whether there are any steps you can take to make it easier to stick with your practice plan. For example, for the person who is planning to not listen to music or read on the phone, it may be helpful to leave headphones at home and to keep the phone powered off for the commute. A completed example of the **Practice Plan Form** can be seen in Appendix B (p. 188). If you would like additional space to develop your practice plan, you can make photocopies of this form or download it from Appendix: Forms and Worksheets.

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## Be Your Own Coach

Whether you completed this treatment program on your own or with the help of a therapist, it is important that you take ownership over your continued progress. Many people find it helpful to schedule time to review their progress and revise their practice plan on a weekly basis. We recommend blocking out this time on your calendar the same way you would for a doctor's appointment or a work meeting. If you use an electronic calendar on your phone or computer, you can even set automatic reminders.

It is often said that the best offense is a strong defense, and the same is true when it comes to monitoring your symptoms. Many people wait until their symptoms start to disrupt their lives again before they make time to address them. However, if you establish the routine of checking in with yourself each week, you will be able to notice any changes in your symptoms before they get out of hand. For example, if you notice that you are starting to avoid situations that trigger intense emotions, you can proactively address it using your practice plan.

It can also be helpful to consider whether there are any upcoming situations that may be particularly challenging for you. You can anticipate (p. 156) some of the negative automatic thoughts that are likely to arise and generate more flexible interpretations ahead of time. You can even review these new interpretations right before entering the challenging situation. You can also predict which emotional behaviors you will be tempted to use in order to lessen the intensity of your emotions and plan which *Alternative Actions* to use instead. When your emotions are likely to be especially intense or overwhelming, planning out your coping strategy in advance can make it easier to actually use it in the moment.

## Anticipating Difficulties and Managing Setbacks



Regardless of the gains you have made in treatment, it is very likely that you will experience intense or uncomfortable emotions at some time in the future. Emotional ups and downs are part of everyday life. You may notice that when you are under stress, your symptoms tend to flare up. This is very normal and similar to the way stress can affect your immune system. In the same way that you are more likely to get sick when you are under a lot of stress, you are more likely to fall back into old patterns of avoiding your emotions. Sometimes, however, it may seem like your symptoms flare up when there hasn't been an increase in stress. Even though this can be very distressing, these fluctuations in symptoms are perfectly natural and normal—they do not necessarily mean that you have relapsed.

The skills that you've learned to manage your emotions in more helpful ways are also applicable to coping with the inevitable ups and downs that will happen over time. For example, responding to an increase in symptoms with criticism and judgment will only intensify the symptoms. It is very easy to start jumping to conclusions and thinking the worst when symptoms flare up. You may find yourself thinking that treatment failed or that you'll never be able to cope with intense emotions. Your *Mindful Emotion Awareness* and *Cognitive Flexibility* skills can be very helpful in these moments.

## (p. 157) Summary



It takes both time and effort to change the way you respond to your emotions, and it is hard work! It is important to remember that you didn't learn these unhelpful ways of coping with intense emotions overnight. It is unrealistic to expect that these learned behaviors will be completely eliminated in a few months. However, with consistent practice, you will be able to replace unhelpful coping strategies with more useful ones and change the way you respond to your emotions. The end of treatment is just the beginning of making more substantial changes in

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your life. To quote Michelangelo, “Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it.” You are the sculptor and you now have the tools—all that’s left is to carve the stone.

## Self-Assessment Quiz



Answer each of the following by circling true (T) or false (F). Answers can be found in Appendix A.

**1.** If you are still struggling with symptoms at the end of treatment, it means that treatment did not work for you.

T    F

**2.** It is natural and normal to experience fluctuations in your symptoms; it does not necessarily mean that you have relapsed.

T    F

**3.** Once treatment is over, you don’t need to practice the skills on a regular basis.

T    F

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