Old Dominion University
Office of Counseling Services

Getting Unstuck

Materials and curriculum courtesy of Cal Poly Counseling Services
Welcome!

Getting Unstuck is to help increase your understanding about depression. Please work through it at your own pace, stopping and re-starting when needed.

Goals:
- Provide skills to recognize depressive symptoms
- Introduce tools to manage depressive symptoms you may be experiencing

Important Note: you will receive a lot of information that may feel overwhelming at times. Please remember that like any skill (e.g., learning to ride a bike), these skills take time and practice to master.
Mental Health Hygiene

These skills are a form of “mental health hygiene.”

In the beginning they may seem tedious

You may question why you need to practice these skills so often.

○ Think of it like dental hygiene—you brush your teeth to prevent the buildup of plaque and ultimately to prevent cavities. Like brushing your teeth, daily practice can minimize and prevent the symptoms of depression long-term.

❖ The more you practice, the less tedious they may seem because they become part of daily life.
# Getting Unstuck Sections

#1: Depression 101

#2: Unhelpful Thoughts and Behaviors

#3: Modifying Thoughts and Behaviors – My Personalized Plan
There is no person in this whole world who is a mistake, no matter how different that person may seem.

~Mr. Rogers
#1. Depression 101
Common Depression Symptoms

Do any of these symptoms sound familiar to you?
Sadness vs Depression

**Sadness**
- Is a normal, painful, response to challenging life events
- Usually passes when the challenging event passes
- Something we all experience at some point in our lives

**Depression**
- May or may not include feelings of sadness
- Is more persistent
- Includes a cluster of symptoms
- May or may not arise out of a painful experience, so a person might not identify a reason for symptoms
THE SPIRAL OF DEPRESSION

Depressive symptoms like loss of sleep and poor concentration mean we cope less well and things go wrong.

This leads to still greater levels of despair, negativity and depression with even worse physical symptoms.

Which leaves us even less able to cope ... and so on.
Now What?
Now let's get a fuller picture!

- Explore the interactions between:
  - Situation
  - Physical Sensations
  - Emotional Reactions
  - Behavioral Experiences
  - Cognitive Responses
Cross Sectional Formulation

Let’s Look at an Example...

**Situation (When? Where? What? With whom?)**
I have a group assignment due for my class. I asked a fellow classmate to be my partner, but she declined.
Let’s look at the interactions between:

- Physical Sensations
- Emotional Reactions
- Behavioral Experiences
- Cognitive Responses

**Physical** (When depressed, what physical sensations did you experience? What did you notice in your body?)
Upset stomach, tired, lost my appetite, got really hot.

**Emotional** (What emotions came up for you when you felt depressed?)
Sad, ashamed, embarrassed, rejected, lonely, irritable.

**Cognitive** (What went through your mind when you felt depressed? What did that say or mean about you or the situation?)
I knew I shouldn’t have asked her; she’s way smarter than me and she knows it. If we had worked together, I only would have brought down the grade. I’m so stupid. She must hate me.

**Behavioral** (What was your first instinct and/or response? What did you do and/or avoid doing?)
I want to avoid asking anyone else in case they say no. I left class early and haven’t found a partner to work with. I’ll avoid talking to her in the future.
Now take a minute to think about a time when you felt depressed.

**Situation** *(When? Where? What? With whom?)*
Now take a minute to jot down the corresponding symptoms of depression you experienced.
Check-in...

Were you able to identify a time when you felt depressed?
Did you have any difficulties writing down your symptoms?

Remember, we'll be asking you to continue to practice these so that you can more easily identify your symptoms.
To wrap up, let’s talk about basic self-care.

Good sleep, along with exercise/physical activity and attending to your personal nutritional needs, are the foundation of basic physical and mental health.

Without this foundation, you may find you’re more vulnerable to depressive symptoms.
## Basic Self-Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sleep</th>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Nutrition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research shows you need 7-8 hours of sleep every night. While sleeping, our brain is hard at work. Sleep also helps regulate our mood and weight.</td>
<td>Exercise leads to changes, such as improved mood, more energy, improved memory, coping, and cognitive functioning.</td>
<td>Research shows that deficiencies in vitamins and minerals are linked to mood. Stay hydrated and eat a balanced diet. Speak to a medical doctors about concerns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sleep Hygiene Tips

Get Regular
Go to bed and get up at more or less the same time every day, even on weekends and days off!

Avoid Alcohol
Avoid alcohol for at least 4–6 hours before bed because it interrupts the quality of sleep.

Get up & try again
Go to sleep only when tired. If you haven’t been able to fall asleep after 30 minutes, get up and do something calming, then return to bed and try again.

Bed is for sleeping
Do not use your bed for anything other than sleeping and sex, so that your body comes to associate bed with sleep.

Avoid caffeine & nicotine
Avoid consuming any caffeine (coffee, chocolate) or nicotine (cigarettes) for at least 4–6 hours before going to bed. These act as stimulants and interfere with falling asleep.

The right space
Make your bed and bedroom quiet and comfortable for sleeping. An eye mask and earplugs may help block out light and noise.
Sleep Hygiene Tips

Electronics Curfew
Don’t use back-lit electronics 60 minutes prior to bed, as the artificial light prevents hormones and neurons that promote sleep.

No clock-watching
Checking the clock during the night can wake you up and reinforces negative thoughts such as "Oh no, look how late it is, I’ll never get to sleep."

Keep same daytime routine
Even if you have a bad night sleep it is important that you try to keep your daytime activities the same as planned. That is, don’t avoid activities because you feel tired. This can reinforce the insomnia.

Sleep rituals
Develop rituals to remind your body that it is time to sleep, like relaxing stretches or breathing exercises for 15 minutes before bed.

No naps
Avoid taking naps during the day. If you can’t make it through the day without a nap, make sure it is for less than an hour and before 3pm.
Exercise Tips

**Find Enjoyable Activity**
Choose a pleasurable activity, like playing badminton or doing yoga. Aim for fun, not more work.

**Start Small**
Commit to 10 minutes of exercise a day or add exercise to your daily routine (like walking to school or dancing in your room).

**Get Outside**
The sun provides a mood “pick me up” of its own, producing serotonin in the brain. Take a walk outside or go swimming.

**Schedule it in**
It’s easy to skip exercise when we don’t plan. Put it in your phone as part of your daily to-do’s and celebrate when you check it off.

**Mix it Up**
To avoid feeling bored with exercise, try a number of different activities.

**Team Up**
Depression can be isolating. Ask others to do team activities or find an exercise buddy for accountability and to increase interaction.
Practice

Homework 1: Complete at least one cross sectional formulation

Homework 2: Implement at least 1 sleep hygiene tip and 1 exercise tip
Now take a minute to think about a time when you felt depressed.

**Situation** *(When? Where? What? With whom?)*
Now take a minute to jot down the corresponding symptoms of depression you experienced.
# 2. Unhelpful Thoughts and Behaviors
To begin...

Some of our habitual thinking patterns and behaviors may be keeping us depressed.
Habits...

Important to note:

Our thoughts and behaviors are not driven by conscious intention, but by habits in thinking and behaving.

Habits are formed by what

○ Is pleasurable
○ Avoids pain
○ What we’ve done in the past
When we keep repeating a thought or behavior, the habit is strengthened more by repetition. Our brain does not distinguish between good and bad or helpful and unhelpful thoughts or behaviors! Thus, we maintain the thought or behavior even when we know that it is not helpful. *In other words, we get stuck.*
Do any of these sound familiar?

**Labelling**
Assigning labels to ourselves or other people
- I'm a loser
- I'm completely useless
- They're such an idiot

**Jumping to conclusions**
There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:
- Mind reading (imagining we know what others are thinking)
- Fortune telling (predicting the future)

**Magnification (catastrophising) & minimisation**
Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

**Emotional reasoning**
Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.
- I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot

**Should, must**
Using critical words like ‘should’, ‘must’, or ‘ought’ can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed
- If we apply ‘shoulds’ to other people the result is often frustration
Unhelpful Thoughts (cont.)

Do any of these sound familiar?

- **Personalisation**
  - "this is my fault"
  - Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn’t completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

- **All or nothing thinking**
  - Sometimes called ‘black and white thinking’
  - If I’m not perfect I have failed
  - Either I do it right or not at all

- **Over-generalising**
  - "everything is always rubbish"
  - "nothing good ever happens"
  - Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

- **Mental filter**
  - Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.
  - Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes

- **Disqualifying the positive**
  - Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another
  - That doesn’t count
Unhelpful Behaviors

Do you find yourself doing any of these behaviors?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unhelpful Behavior</th>
<th>Play video games for hours</th>
<th>Constantly monitor social media</th>
<th>Stay in your bed</th>
<th>Stay in your room; don’t leave</th>
<th>Stop talking to your roommate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stop completing tasks</td>
<td>Stop going to work</td>
<td>Stop exercising</td>
<td>Watch a lot of TV</td>
<td>Only eat one meal a day</td>
<td>Argue with other people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop doing your hobbies</td>
<td>Only focus on the negative</td>
<td>Complain a lot</td>
<td>Use recreational drugs</td>
<td>Sleep all day</td>
<td>Don’t move</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only listen to music that makes you sad, angry or upset</td>
<td>Stop smiling and laughing</td>
<td>Stop going to church, meditating or praying</td>
<td>Let your room get really disorganized</td>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>Smoke marijuana</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you find yourself doing any of these behaviors?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unhelpful Behaviors (cont.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Get up at different times every morning</th>
<th>Go to bed at different times every night</th>
<th>Miss class</th>
<th>Don’t do a homework assignment</th>
<th>Wait until the last minute to get something done</th>
<th>Stop washing your hair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stop brushing your teeth</td>
<td>Skip a test</td>
<td>Stop going to team or club meeting</td>
<td>Ignore or decline invites to hang out</td>
<td>Skip a meal</td>
<td>Over eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat lots of junk food</td>
<td>Binge drink</td>
<td>Smoke cigarettes</td>
<td>Stop talking to/actively avoid your friends</td>
<td>Stop talking to/actively avoid your family</td>
<td>Don’t seek help when you are struggling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unhelpful Thoughts & Behaviors

Now let's look at how our thoughts, behaviors and feelings influence each other, helping to create a spiral of depression.

Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviors Youtube Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ngr2kG48Xvw
Our brain is not wired to keep us stuck only in bad habits.
○ We can create and get stuck in good ones too!

When you intentionally create new habits, initial discomfort, they become easier.
Chances are, you’ve been stuck in your current patterns for a long time. It will also take time to create new patterns.
We encourage you to be patient with yourself!
Practice

Homework 1: Complete Managing Habits Worksheet
Homework 2: Complete at least one cross sectional formulation
## Managing Habits Worksheet

**Things I think and do that maintain my depressed mood:**

**Examples of thoughts:** Magnification, disqualifying the positive, emotional reasoning

**Examples of behaviors:** Skip meals, stop exercising, stay up late, stop showering, miss class, avoid friends

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Thoughts</th>
<th>Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sat or Sun)
Managing Habits Worksheet

Things I think and do that help me feel okay, good, and/or accomplished:

Examples of thoughts: Compliment yourself, give yourself credit for doing something, talk back to your negative thoughts, remind yourself to be gentle to yourself, think about a good memory

Examples of behaviors: Read a book for fun, go to a club meeting, brush my teeth at night, go to the library to study, clean/organize my room, eat breakfast, take vitamins, call a friend, go to a coffee shop, do a chore

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<th>Day</th>
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<th>Behaviors</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(Sat or Sun)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now take a minute to think about a time when you felt depressed.

**Situation (When? Where? What? With whom?)**
Now take a minute to jot down the corresponding symptoms of depression you experienced.
# 3. Modifying Thoughts and Behaviors
“Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability but comes through continuous struggle.”

~Martin Luther King Jr.
Making Changes

Let's start by focusing on making changes to our thinking patterns.
Modifying Our Thoughts

Main goal:
Slow down and pay attention to thoughts so that we can intentionally make choices about what to do next.

Let's start with self-affirmations!
Drawing attention to our positive qualities can inhibit or stop the downward spiral.
Let’s take a moment to practice this skill of focusing on our positive qualities.

1. Start your affirmations with “I am” (e.g., “I am a good friend”)
2. Keep them short (we don’t need a novel)
3. Keep them positive (avoid saying “not”)
4. Use feeling words when you can (e.g., “I am proud of myself”)
5. Keep them focused on you (after all, they are self-affirmations)

Examples: “I am proud that I am hard-working” or “I am thankful for my strong legs”

What are Your Self-Affirmations?
Feeling Stuck?

Ask Yourself:

When was a time that you felt proud of yourself and why?
Have you ever forgiven someone who has hurt you?
Have you ever received a compliment that you agree with?
What would your best friend or a loved one say about you?
Tips for Modifying Thoughts

Stopping.
Interrupt a thought as it begins. Use a strong image/word to interrupt the thought. Strongly state it, either internally or aloud.

Distracting.
Redirect your mind to something else internally or externally, preferably something pleasant and engaging.

Mindful Observing.
Watch, label, or log your thoughts. Use the language “I am thinking ...” or “My mind is having the thought that...” to distance from the thought.
More Tips for Modifying Thoughts

Understanding.
Begin to understand where thoughts come from by asking:
What is the purpose of this thought?

Mindfully Letting Go.
Use imagery or words to visualize thoughts passing by. Good examples are clouds in the sky or leaves on a stream.

Gratitude.
Try to focus on something that you are grateful for from the past, present, or future.
Modifying Behaviors

Now let’s shift our attention to creating helpful behavioral habits!

- Choose activities that are do-able for you when you are feeling down.

- The more success you have in doing the little things, the more likely you will be motivated to try more things.

Socializing  Pleasant Activities  Mastery Activities
Socializing

Even though you feel like being alone, feeling less depressed often includes **interacting** with others. The idea is to get out of your depressive environment and **be around people!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Watch a movie with a friend via Chat</th>
<th>Find an online dance class, martial arts class, etc. that you can do virtually with a friend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Play boardgames using Zoom</td>
<td>Join a legitimate online chat room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a Skype study group</td>
<td>After the pandemic plan to eat a meal with a roommate/friend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What will you try?**
Similar to not interacting with others, when people are depressed, they may not feel like doing things that they usually enjoy.

Pleasant activities are those things that feel pleasant to you. They may be related to school, family, friends, sports, clubs, exercise, hobbies, nature, spirituality, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play with a pet</th>
<th>Color/Paint/Draw/Sculpt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Go shopping/window shopping online</td>
<td>Write a poem, music, play, story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fix/tinker with something</td>
<td>Read for fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to music</td>
<td>Watch the sunset/rise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What will you try?
Mastery Activities

When depressed, doing everyday tasks like cleaning or homework can seem like monumental hurdles!!

One way to address this is to start by doing little things that evoke a sense of accomplishment or achievement; these are called mastery experiences.

- Do a load of laundry
- Write that email to your professor
- Return a phone call
- Read a chapter or a page of your homework assignment
- Take out the trash
- Pay a bill

What will you try?
Tips for Modifying Behaviors

- Get Sunlight!
- Practice Yoga
- Get a massage
- Create/Listen to Music
- Laugh & Smile (even if they are fake—it’ll help!)
- Dance
- Journal
- Try a Progressive Muscle Relaxation (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Xp2UzG7UYY)
My Personalized Plan

My Depressive Symptoms
(Find on Slide #7)
1. 
2. 
3. 

My Unhelpful Thinking
(Find on Slides #29-30)
1. 
2. 
3. 

My Unhelpful Behaviors
(Find on slides #31-32)
1. 
2. 
3. 

Basic Self-Care Tools
(Find on Slides #18–21)
1. 
2. 
3. 

Thought Exercises
(Find on Slides #44-48)
1. 
2. 
3. 

Behavioral Tips
(Find on slides # 49-53)
1. 
2. 
3.
Join us on Instagram!
Join Us on Facebook!
Emergency Support

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
- (800) 273-8255
- https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/

Crisis Text Line
- Text “HOME” to 741741
- https://www.crisistextline.org/
Apps for your Smartphone, Tablet, or Computer

- Headspace
- Stop, Think, and Breathe
- Calm
- Talk Space
- Better Help
- Mood Path
- Happify
- The Happiness Trap App with Dr. Russ Harris
THANK YOU For Participating!

Any questions?
You can call Counseling Services at 757-683-4401