

Skills for Well-Being Group

Week 6: Controlling Stress for Life

Homework

- Any questions about:
 - Assertiveness Techniques
 - The Values wheel
 - Your Sleep diary

Aims of the session

- Sleep Hygiene
- Setback Management
- Feedback Form

How common are sleep disorders?



Why is sleep important?

- Alongside eating and drinking, sleeping is one of the most important factors for us to function on a daily basis.
- We can survive longer without food than we can without sleep.
- Sleep deprivation can lead to issues with concentration, problem solving, mood, hallucinations and many other areas.
- 17 hours without sleep can lead to the same performance impairments as 2 alcoholic drinks.

Is sleep an issue for you?



Here are some tips to help...

Sleep – Some Basics

- Make sure your bedroom is comfortable – not too cold, warm (18°C ideal), noisy (earplugs?) or bright (blackout curtains?).
- Get a comfortable mattress (mattress lifespan is approximately 8 years).
- Put the day to rest long before bedtime (worry time).
- Wind down during the evening and don't do anything mentally or physically challenging within 90 minutes of bedtime – stick to a routine. Establish a bedtime. No bright lights before bed.
- Keep sleep for bedtime only – no napping during the day in armchair/sofa/bed.
- Cut down on caffeine/alcohol (no caffeine after 3pm).

Sleep – Some Basics

Cortisol: King of the Stress Hormone

- Cortisol is the rise and shine hormone – it gets us out of bed and feeling good when produced in the right amounts. However, regular stress driven stimulation of cortisol will mean that production can peak through the night and prevent us from sleeping.
- Caffeine stimulates cortisol production - one mug of coffee can increase circulating levels by 30% and this can remain in the bloodstream for up to 18 hours depending on your activity levels.
- Caffeine inhibits the production of serotonin, which may influence the effectiveness of anti-depressants

If Sleep Basics are Not Enough

- You might want to consider the *sleep retraining* programme.
- This is a strategy pioneered by Prof. Colin Espie.
 - For more information and useful resources visit www.sleepio.com
- Sleep retraining involves a strict step-by-step guide to restructure your sleeping pattern

Sleep Retraining

- To begin, calculate how much sleep you average over the course of one week (using the sleep diary).
 - Total number of hours sleep in one week divided by 7
 - E.g. $35/7 = 5$ hours average a night
- Decide what you want your 'rise time' to be **every** day
(we need to follow this pattern every day where possible for it to be effective...yes, that includes weekends!)
- Aim to go to sleep at the time where you can get your average number of hours sleep before your rise time
 - e.g. 5 hours before 7:00am is 02:00am

Sleep Retraining

- Even if you do not fall asleep at this time (02:00), you should still rise at your chosen time (07:00) regardless of how much sleep you have had.
- This can be difficult in the short-term, but increase your chance of a better sleep the following night.
- Do not nap during the day!
 - Even 10 minutes naps can greatly reduce your ability to get a good nights sleep.
- Gradually, make your bedtime 30 minutes earlier until you reach the time you would like to go to sleep on an average day e.g. 02:00, 01:30, 01:00, 12:30, 12:00, 11:30.
 - Only move to the earlier time once you have regularly fallen asleep (4-7 nights) at your current time.

Sleep Retraining

- When you go to bed, switch off the lights immediately.
- If you are not asleep within 15 minutes, get out of bed and go somewhere comfortable and do something relaxing i.e. living room/magazine
 - This applies if you wake in the night too
- Go back to bed when you feel 'sleepy tired'
- Repeat these steps as often as required

Sleep Retraining - Tips

- Follow this plan 7 days a week until you have established a good sleeping pattern.
- If you deviate from the plan, try go back to it as soon as possible.
 - The less you deviate, the quicker it will work.
- Aim for a minimum 5 hours sleep
- Give up *trying* to sleep! Try keeping your eyes open and resisting sleep or adopt a carefree attitude to sleep. Getting stressed about being awake prevents us from falling asleep.
- Remind yourself that sleep will come...eventually.

Break



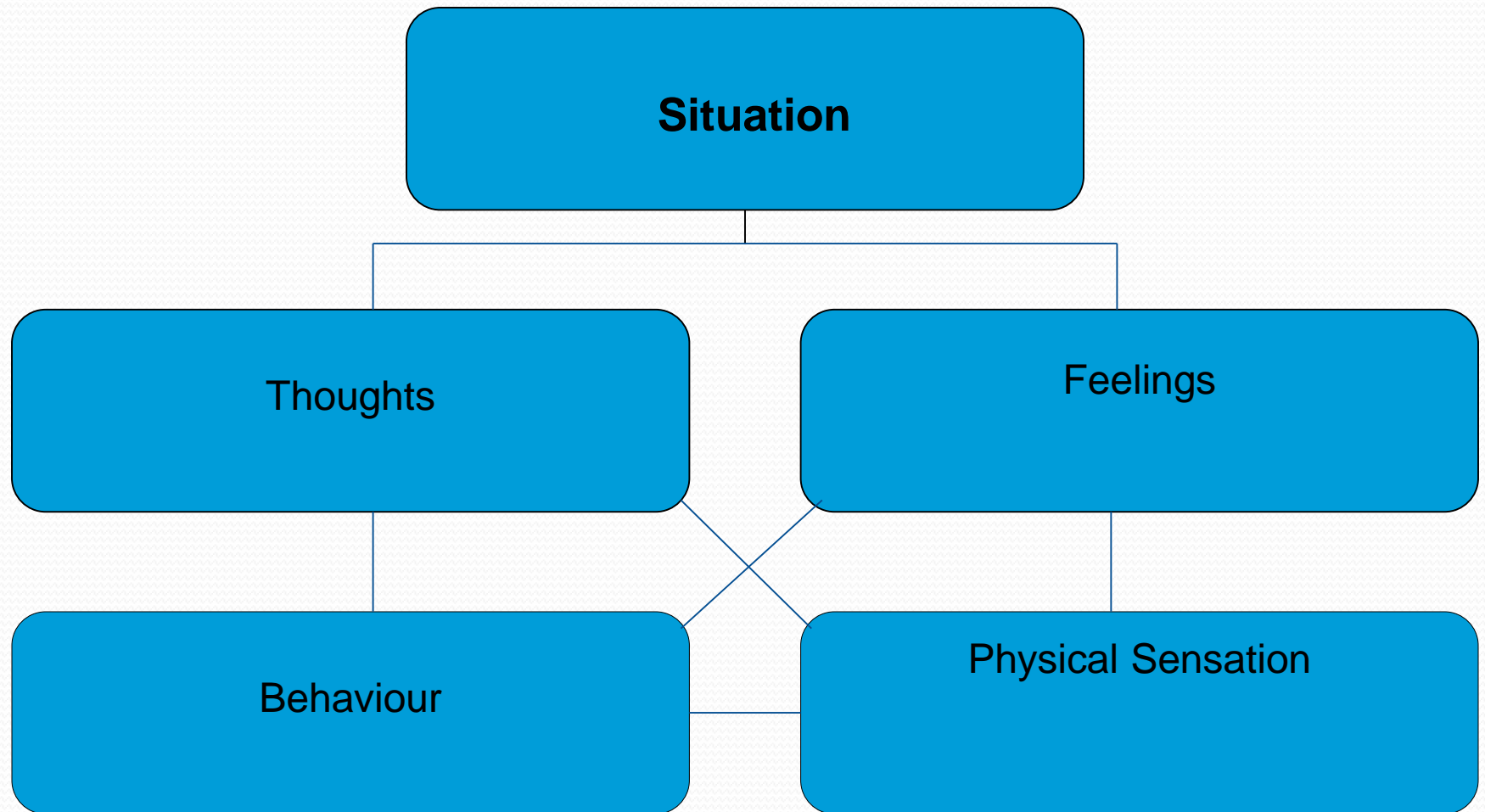


Setback Management

Setback Management

- Setbacks are a normal part of life!
- In this instance, a setback refers to a sustained increase in anxiety or decrease in mood that is not explained by our current circumstances (*i.e. Bereavement, job loss, relationship troubles, etc.*)
- It is normal for our mood and anxiety to fluctuate in response our life stressors, but if the issues are *persistent* or *disproportionate* to our circumstances, then we should consider if our thoughts and behaviours are being helpful or part of the problem.

Five Factor Model



Potential Stressors? *(session 1)*



Potential Stressors

- Internal Factors – physical feelings, thoughts, emotions, behaviour.
 - Medical conditions
 - Lack of self-care/compassion

- External Factors
 - Lack of Social Support
 - Finances
 - Housing
 - Relationships
 - Difficult working environment

Your Skills for Well-Being

- Normalise stress – is your anxiety, emotions and/or mood in response to a *proportionate* situation? Are you using the skills learned in this course?
- Be aware of *your triggers/ unhelpful thinking styles/ behavioural habits* and use the *skills* learned to manage these:
 - **Physical reaction** – 2/4 breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, 5,4,3,2,1 technique.
 - **Thoughts** – evidence for thoughts, balance unhelpful thinking styles, buses technique, dealing with worry.
 - **Behaviours** – avoidance/exposure hierarchy, approach behaviours, behavioural activation, values, assertiveness, goal setting and problem solving.

Your Skills for Well-Being (Tips)

- Anticipate triggering events, plan and rehearse how to deal with them – (*remember your problem solving skills*)
- Set yourself goals and realistic aims for a sense of direction and purpose
- Maintain or build your social connections
- Practice Self-Care & Compassion (*do things that charge you*)
- Be aware of your strengths and use them
- Utilise all tools learned in the group

Bonus Tips to Boost Wellbeing

- Diet and exercise both contribute towards our physical and mental health.
- Diet – little and often is key to avoid blood sugar dropping (*which impacts memory and experience of emotions*). Try avoiding processed foods where possible. Pick the best fuel for your body and it will thank you for it physically and mentally.
- Exercise – Nature's anti-depressant - Research indicates that 30 -40 minutes of *moderate exercise* 3 times a week shows equivalent effect sizes to some anti-depressants (*with none of the side-effects*).
 - Moderate exercise is classified as “increasing your heart rate and breathing to the point where holding a conversation is more difficult but not impossible” as you are breathing more heavily.

Please find more detailed information in your handouts.

Final Thoughts?

- Any questions?
- Feedback form

Congratulations

You have completed the Skills for Well-Being Group.

