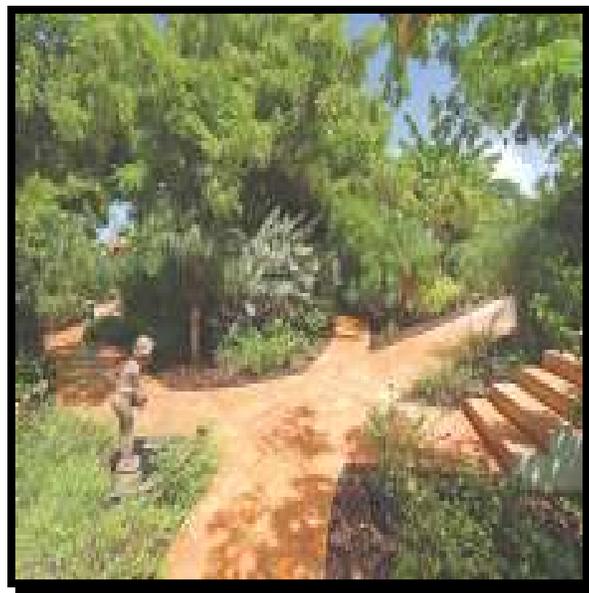


REHABILITATION SERVICES
PATIENT EDUCATION MANUAL

EMOTION REGULATION SKILLS



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN FRANCISCO
Langley Porter Psychiatric Hospital & Clinics

THE GOALS OF EMOTION REGULATION

...how to cope with emotional suffering and how to increase positive emotional experiences in everyday life.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR EMOTIONS

The first step in regulating emotions is learning to identify and label your emotions. Learning the function (purpose) that your emotions serve is helpful so that you can identify what gets in the way of reducing painful emotions.

REDUCING EMOTIONAL VULNERABILITY

The goal is to reduce emotional vulnerability by learning to decrease negative emotions and to increase positive emotions.

DECREASING EMOTIONAL SUFFERING

We can learn to let go of painful emotions by being *mindful* of them, instead of fighting them or walling them off. We can also learn to change negative or painful emotions by *acting* in a manner *opposite* to them.

PREVENTION BASICS

These steps will strengthen your ability to regulate your emotions



1. **Take care of your body. See a doctor when necessary. Take prescribed medications.**
2. **Don't eat too much or too little. Stay away from foods that make you feel overly emotional (such as foods with lots of sugar or caffeine).**
3. **Stay off non-prescribed drugs, including alcohol.**
4. **Try to get the amount of sleep that helps you feel good. Keep to a sleep program if you are having trouble sleeping.**
5. **Do some sort of exercise every day; try to build up to 20 minutes of aerobic exercise.**
6. **Try to do one thing each day to make yourself feel competent and in control (for example, cook a favorite dish, write a letter, fix something broken, clean one room, rake some leaves...).**

WHY LEARN TO OBSERVE AND DESCRIBE EMOTIONS?

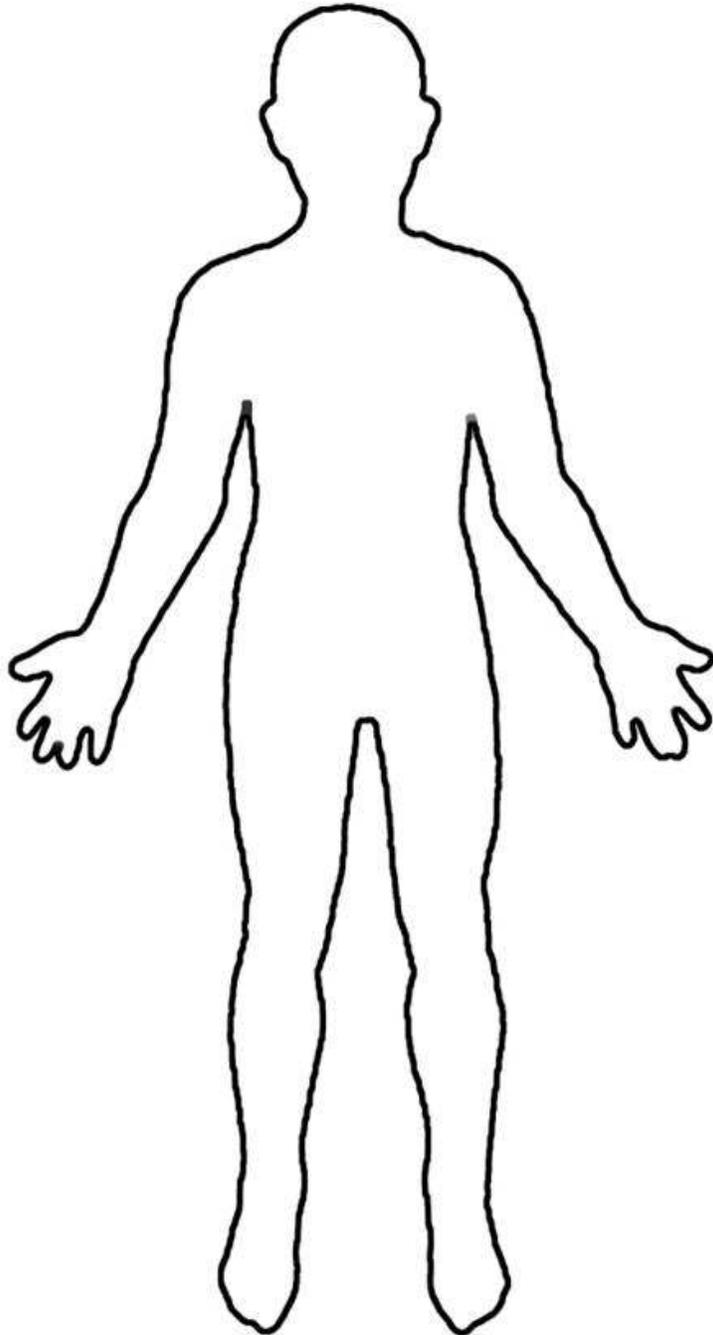
Studies have shown that people who can identify their emotions move through depression faster. By learning to observe and describe your emotions, you learn both to be separate from them and also to *accept* them so they don't distress you so much.

In order to better regulate your emotions, you must be able to separate or step back from them so you can think of using coping strategies. At the same time, remember to accept them as part of yourself and not something outside of you.



Try the worksheet on the next page to help identify where and how you experience emotions in your body.

IDENTIFYING WHERE AND HOW YOU EXPERIENCE EMOTIONS IN YOUR BODY



Draw where in your body you feel different emotions. Use colors or drawing to show *how* you feel these emotions:

LOVE
JOY
SADNESS
SHAME
FEAR
GUILT
ANGER

Which emotion is easiest to identify?

Which is hardest?

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE EMOTIONS THAT YOU EXPERIENCE?



EXHAUSTED



CONFUSED



ECSTATIC



GUILTY



SUSPICIOUS



ANGRY



HYSTERICAL



FRUSTRATED



SAD



CONFIDENT



EMBARRASSED



HAPPY



MISCHIEVOUS



DISGUSTED



FRIGHTENED



ENRAGED



ASHAMED



CAUTIOUS



SMUG



DEPRESSED



OVERWHELMED



HOPEFUL



LONELY



LOVESTRUCK



JEALOUS



BORED



SURPRISED



ANXIOUS



SHOCKED



SHY

TAKING STEPS TO GET BACK IN CONTROL OF YOUR EMOTIONS



- 1. Start by taking a time-out...**decrease the stimulation around you; go to a quieter place away from distressing triggers.
- 2. Stop what you're doing...**when you feel warning signs of strong anger or distressing feelings and you start to thinking angry or disturbing thoughts, tell yourself to *stop*. This may help you calm down and think more clearly.
- 3. TRY TO RELAX**
 - Count to 10 or 100
 - Get a drink of water
 - Take a walk
 - Take several *slow deep breaths*
- 4. Return when you're calm...**Once you've got your overwhelming emotions under control, go back and talk to the person or face the situation that triggered your emotional distress.

THE FUNCTION OF EMOTIONS



What good are emotions? Why do we have emotions? Until we begin to understand the functions of emotions, why we have them, what their effect is on others, we cannot expect to change or *regulate* them.

Emotions communicate to and influence others

We communicate our emotions to others with verbal and non-verbal (facial expressions, body gestures or postures) language. In human society, we use non-verbal communications to better understand each other and to respond to each other's needs. For example, we might want to reach out to help someone who appears frightened, or we might want to take action to rectify a concern when someone shows an angry face.

Emotions organize and motivate action

Emotions prepare for and motivate action. There is an action urge connected to specific emotions, it's an automatic, built-in part of our behavior. For example, if you see a two-year old child in the middle of the street and a car is coming, you will feel an emotion, fear, and this emotion will prompt you to run to save the child. You don't stop to think about it. You just do it. Your emotion has motivated your behavior without you having to take the time to think. The anxiety you feel when you are about to take a test, though it's uncomfortable, helps to motivate you to study so you will do well on the test. Anger may motivate and help you respond to injustices.

Emotions can be self-validating

Emotions can give us information about a situation or event by providing subconscious signals that something important is going on. An *intuitive* feeling of "something doesn't feel right about this" or "I had a feeling something was going to happen and it did" are some of the signals we might get. Is there some time when you felt anxiety or apprehension that turned out to be justified? Or that you had a good feeling about someone that turned out to be right? If so, these emotions were "self-validating".

(adapted from http://www.dbtselfhelp.com/html/emotion_function.html)

THE IMPORTANCE OF "SECONDARY EMOTIONS"

Much emotional distress is a result of "secondary" emotional responses. Secondary emotions (such as intense shame, guilt, anxiety or rage) are often *responses* to primary emotions. The primary emotions are usually adaptive and appropriate to the triggering event or context (see the previous page about the function of emotions). Primary emotions tend to be short-lived once the triggering event has passed.

If we have grown up with beliefs that certain emotions are not acceptable (e.g. "If I get angry, I'll lose control" or "If I show fear, it's a sign of weakness"), we tend to shift into a secondary emotion. We do this, often without thinking about it, as a way to protect ourselves from the "unacceptable" primary emotion. The problem is that the secondary emotions that arise (e.g. guilt, anxiety or rage) tend to become longer lasting and actually create greater suffering for us.

What Can Be Done?

The first step in reducing your secondary emotional responses is to increase your awareness of your emotions. This can be done through the exercises on pages 11 and 12 (Emotion Diary, Mindfulness of My Emotions). In these exercises, identify and evaluate your emotional responses to a situation. Try to capture your *thoughts* about your primary emotions, as well as how you *feel* as a result of those thoughts.



With time, you will be able to recognize if your thought habits are leading you into secondary emotions that create suffering. Once you are mindful of these thoughts, you may be able to challenge them or let them go ("my thoughts are just thoughts, that does not make them facts"). By learning to focus your attention on your original, primary emotion, your emotional life can become an ally to you, rather than a source of suffering.

(Adapted from Greenberg, L. S. and Safran, J. D. (1987). *Emotion in Psychotherapy*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.)

THE SPECIAL CASE OF *ANGRY* FEELINGS



Angry feelings often *follow* and *replace* a different initial emotion that is too “uncomfortable” to let ourselves acknowledge. We quickly skip over this uncomfortable feeling—so fast that we’re usually not even aware of it—and *replace* it with an angry type of feeling. The anger is really a *reaction* to that initial emotion, whether we’re consciously aware of it or not.

EXAMPLES

When you were too busy to talk to me, I felt < (ABANDONED) > “angry”.

When you don't let me help you, I feel < (OUT OF CONTROL) > “frustrated”.

When you criticize me, I feel < (INADEQUATE) > “enraged”.

When you yell at me, I feel < (ABUSED) > “revengeful”.

When you don't make time for me, I feel < (UNIMPORTANT) > “resentful”.

When you don't stick to our agreements, I feel < (POWERLESS) > “infuriated”

ANGRY FEELINGS are valid and important, but are most beneficial when used as indicators that someone or something is triggering an uncomfortable feeling in you. To accurately figure out what you are reacting to, it's necessary to *backtrack* and identify the feeling that came **FIRST** - before the angry reaction replaced it.

EMOTION DIARY

(How to observe and describe your emotions)

Choose two current or recent emotional reactions you had and fill out as much of the worksheet below as you can.

Record your *strongest* emotion of the day, or the *longest-lasting* one, or the one that was most painful or gave you the most trouble. Analyze that emotion. Fill out the "MINDFULNESS OF MY EMOTIONS" worksheet on the next page as well.

Day	Event (What happened?)	Emotion Function (What are you trying to communicate, how does it serve you, what do you need?)
_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
Emotion:	_____	

Day	Event (What happened?)	Emotion Function (What are you trying to communicate, how does it serve you, what do you need?)
_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
Emotion:	_____	

MINDFULNESS OF MY EMOTIONS



EMOTION NAME(S): _____ **INTENSITY (0-100):** _____

Prompting event or trigger for my emotion (who, what, when where - just the facts):

Thoughts/interpretations (beliefs, assumptions, about the trigger...):

Body sensations (where in my body do I feel this emotion? What was my body language—facial expression, postures?):

Action (What did I do? What did I say?):

How did the emotion affect me **afterwards**? (Were there **secondary** emotions? What did I **do** after the event or trigger?):

THREE WAYS TO LET GO OF EMOTIONAL SUFFERING



1. Observe your emotion

Notice its presence (without judging it as good or bad).

Step back!

Get unstuck.

Detach from your emotion.

(This is practicing "mindfulness")

2. Experience your Emotion

Experience it as a *wave*, coming *and* going. Try not to block emotion. Open yourself to the flow of the emotion. Try not to suppress emotion. Don't push the emotion away. Don't try to get rid of emotion. At the same time, don't try to *keep* emotion around. Don't hold on to it. Don't amplify it.

Remember: You are not your emotion. Don't necessarily *act* on emotion. Remember when you felt differently.

3. Practice *Loving* your Emotion

Don't judge your emotion. Practice *willingness*. *Radically accept* your emotion. Respect your emotion. Don't assume it's irrational or based on distortions.

HOW TO INCREASE POSITIVE EMOTIONS



1. Build Positive Experiences Short Term

Do enjoyable things that are possible *now*. Do one thing each day from the "Pleasant Events List" (see the Distress Tolerance Manual). For example: soak in the tub, do a crossword puzzle, play a game of cards, write something in a journal...

2. Build Positive Experiences Long Term

Make changes in your life so positive events will occur more often. Build a "life worth living". Work towards goals. Make a list of positive things you want to have happen. List small steps towards goals. Take the first step. Attend to relationships. Repair old relationships. Reach out for new relationships. Work on current relationships. Avoid avoiding...avoid giving up.

3. Be Mindful of Positive Experiences

Focus your attention on the positive things that happen. Re-focus when your mind wanders to the negative. Accentuate the positive, dismiss the negative.

4. Be *Un-Mindful* of Worries

Distract yourself from thinking about when the positive experience will end. Distract yourself from thinking about whether you *deserve* this positive experience. Distract yourself from thinking about how much more might be expected of you now.

FOURTEEN QUESTIONS

to help you remember what
helps you to feel better



1. My favorite movie of all times is...
2. My favorite song of all times is...
3. Something I did that I am proud of is...
4. My perfect day is...
5. My most cherished possession is...
6. My favorite *cheer me up* music is...
7. I enjoy reading...
8. My fantasy vacation...
9. I don't do it much, but I enjoy...
10. If I could lighten up a little, I'd let myself...
11. If I weren't so stingy with myself, I'd buy myself...
12. Two people I admire are...
13. I am proud of myself for...
14. I am grateful for...

TRY AN EXPERIMENT:



1. Rate your current mood

1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10

Worst.....Best

(Name your mood/emotion:_____)

2. Think of an activity that you find pleasant

(Walking in nature, taking a bath, doing your nails, drinking a cup of good coffee, etc.)

3. *IMAGINE* yourself doing this activity....be in it 100%. Experience the activity with all your senses...let yourself *daydream* about it.

4. Now rate your mood again

1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10

Worst.....Best

What did you observe? Did anything shift for you? Notice that even thinking about doing a pleasant activity makes you feel better. Allow yourself to have "*IMAGINE*" breaks during the day and see what happens.

RESOURCE LIST FOR ADDITIONAL READINGS

This manual is part of a series discussing Mindfulness Skills, Distress Tolerance Skills, Emotion Regulation Skills and Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills. If you would like additional reading materials or resources related to the skills discussed in these manuals, we would like to direct you to the following:

Don't Let Your Emotions Run Your Life: How Dialectical Behavior Therapy Can Put You in Control by Scott E. Spradlin, MA, New Harbinger Publications, 2003.

The Feeling Good Handbook by David D. Burns, M.D., Penguin Books, 1999.

Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., Dell Publishing, 1990.

Guided Meditations, Explorations and Healings by Stephen Levine, Doubleday, 1991.

The Language of Letting Go by Melody Beattie, Hazeldon Foundation Meditation Series, 1990.

Practicing the Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle, publisher New World Library, (www.newworldlibrary.com), 1999.

The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook by Martha Davis, Ph.D., New Harbinger Publications, 2000.

The Spirituality of Imperfection by Ernest Kurtz, Ph.D., Bantam Books, 1994.

Turning Suffering Inside Out: A Zen Approach to Living with Physical and Emotional Pain by Darlene Cohen, Shambhala Publications, 2000.

Women, Anger & Depression: Strategies for Self Empowerment by Lois P. Frankel, Ph.D., Health Communications, Inc., 1992.

TAPES AND CDs

Guided Mindfulness Meditation by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Stress Reduction CDs and Tapes, P.O. Box 547, Lexington, MA 02420 or www.mindfulnessstapes.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Many of the materials discussed in these manuals are based on the works of Marsha M. Linehan, Ph. D. as presented in her books **Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder** and **Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder**. Both are available through the Guilford Press, 1993.