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UNIFIED PROTOCOL FOR TRANSDIAGNOSTIC TREATMENT OF  
EMOTIONAL DISORDERS:  
ADAPTATION FOR RUTGERS CAPS

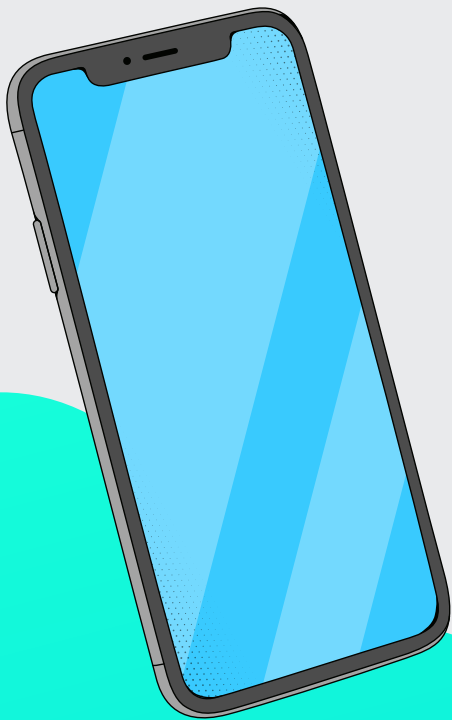
**E-MANAGE**  
**STUDENT WORKBOOK**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1.....	Page 2
Anchoring in the Present	
Chapter 2.....	Page 6
Thinking Flexibly	
Chapter 3.....	Page 9
Changing Emotional Behaviors	



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Emotions are feelings like fear, anger, sadness, guilt, and joy. There are many ways to cope with our emotions. Some ways are healthy (like seeking support from a friend) and some ways are not as healthy (like drinking to numb or “escape” a feeling). The main goal of this workbook is to help you learn new, healthy skills for responding to strong emotions.

One way that many people cope with distressing emotions is to try to push them away. This could mean not thinking about a painful memory. It could also mean avoiding certain people, situations, escaping uncomfortable feelings by drinking or using drugs, or even engaging in self-harm. On one hand, these ways of coping make sense. If something doesn't feel good (like anxiety or sadness), why not try to avoid it? Unfortunately, pushing away feelings doesn't always work. In fact, we have found that the more people try to get rid of uncomfortable emotions, the stronger and more frequent these emotions become. You can think of it like being stuck in quicksand—the more you struggle against your emotions, the more you sink. Instead, we will be focusing on helpful ways of responding to strong emotions that, in the long run, can break the cycle of intense and overwhelming emotion.

## What is an Emotion?

What exactly *is* an emotion? Sometimes, your emotions may feel like a big “cloud” of intense feelings. One way to help deal with strong emotions is to break them down into smaller parts. Every emotion can be broken down into three main parts – what we think, what we feel in our bodies, and what we do. Breaking down our emotions into these parts can help you feel that even strong emotions are more manageable.

## The three parts of emotions are:

1. Thoughts (What You Think): Emotions (like sadness, anger, anxiety, guilt, or joy) can lead to certain thoughts. For example, someone who is feeling sad may have thoughts like “I always mess everything up.” They might also think, “I’ll never find love,” or “I wish my life would end.” Someone who is feeling nervous may have thoughts about bad things happening in the future (“I’m going to get fired”). Anger may lead to heated thoughts (“That person cut me off on purpose”).
2. Physical Feelings (How You Feel in Your Body): Your body can let you know when you are having a strong emotion. For example, when someone is afraid, they may notice their heart racing or trouble breathing. Feeling nervous can mean sweaty palms or a knot in the stomach. When someone is feeling sad, they may feel “heavy” in their body, like it’s hard to move. Anger may be linked to feeling hot or clenching your fists.
3. Behaviors (What You Do): Behaviors are things a person does (or wants to do) when feeling a strong emotion. People often act in response to a feeling without thinking about it. This is because it can seem like our bodies just “know” the best way to deal with a situation. Sometimes these behaviors can be helpful, like fear leading you to jump out of the way of a speeding car. But sometimes, the things we do when feeling strong emotions can cause problems for us or make us feel worse in the longer-term. For example, someone who is depressed may stay in bed all day. Or, someone who is nervous at a party may leave early and miss out on making new friends. When feelings become very strong, people sometimes have the urge to do dangerous things like getting high, drinking, or hurting themselves.

To review, emotions can be broken down into three parts: what you’re thinking, what you’re feeling in your body, and what you’re doing (or feel like doing). Now, we’ll turn to a skill that can help you break down your emotions in a helpful way.



## Anchoring in the Present

A lot of the time, strong emotions lead us to think about the past or the future. When people feel sad, they often think about things that have happened in the past. Sometimes these thoughts are about situations that have gone wrong (“The last time I asked someone out, I embarrassed myself”). Sometimes they are about happy times that have disappeared (“I’ll never be as happy as I was then”). On the other hand, anxiety can lead to distressing thoughts about the future, like bad things that could happen (“I’m not going to get that job”).

Emotions like fear, anxiety, sadness, anger, or guilt are usually not enjoyable to experience. However, experiencing these emotions is normal and sometimes, can even be helpful. For example, it’s good to feel nervous before an interview. That feeling can remind you that this is important and you should do your best. But if you start thinking about negative things from the past (“I didn’t get the last two positions I interviewed for”), are you going to feel more or less anxious? These thoughts about the past are probably going to make it worse. What about if you start thinking about all the bad things that could happen in the future, like how you might mess up in the interview and not get the position? Again, it will probably make you feel even worse.

Thinking about what went wrong in the past or what could go wrong in the future can get in the way of responding well in the present moment. Anchoring in the Present is a skill that helps us pay attention to what is happening in the here and now, instead of the past or future. Focusing on what’s right in front of us may make the situation feel a bit more manageable to deal with. The steps for Anchoring in the Present are:

**Step 1:** When you begin to feel distressed, focus on your breath for a few moments. This will pull you into the present because your breath is always happening in the here and now. You could also try pushing your feet firmly against the floor.

Step 2: Identify (notice) your thoughts, physical feelings, and behaviors. We call this a “three-point check.”

Step 3: Ask yourself if your thoughts, physical feelings, and behaviors are consistent (or in line) with what is happening in the present moment, or more focused on a past event or future possibility.


Step 4: If your thoughts, physical feelings, and behaviors are NOT in line with the present moment (meaning you’re focused on a past event or future possibility), try to bring your responses in line with what’s going in the here and now.

Some ways that can help you bring your attention back to the here and now are to pay attention to what’s around you (like what you can see, feel, or smell), take slow and deep breaths with your eyes closed, do light physical exercise (like yoga or a walk), or talk with someone you enjoy being around. When you notice yourself beginning to feel distressed (or an uncomfortable emotion build), try these four steps of Anchoring in the Present.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Importance of Thoughts**

The way we think really affects how we feel. Consider an example of walking down the street and seeing a friend who you haven’t talked to in a while. Let’s say you smile and wave at them, but they just walk by you. If you think “they must not want to be my friend anymore,” how would this make you feel? Probably sad or angry, and maybe a bit lonely. You might worry about it for the rest of the day, thinking about what a “loser” you are. Or you might call another friend to complain. But, if you think “they must not have seen me,” how would this make you feel? You probably would feel okay, or at least more neutral. You might make sure they see you next time or call them later that day to see if they want to get together soon.





In other words, how we interpret situations is important because it affects how we feel and act. Also, how we feel can affect how we interpret situations. For example, if you're already having a really bad day and feeling sad, you might be more likely to interpret your friend walking by you in a negative way. But if you had just received some really great news and are feeling happy, you might be more likely to wonder whether your friend simply hadn't seen you.

## **Unhelpful Automatic Thoughts**

In any situation, there are many things you can focus on. Because there is so much you could pay attention to, your brain decides what is the most important. This helps you save time because you couldn't possibly notice everything. Over time, we develop automatic habits (or patterns) in the way we think about the world. We also tend to really trust our first impressions, which means that once we have one, it can often be hard to see another side.

People who often experience strong emotions like sadness or anxiety are more likely to experience Unhelpful Automatic Thoughts. Unhelpful Automatic Thoughts usually involve predicting that bad things will happen or that you will be unable to cope, without considering other possibilities. Unhelpful Automatic Thoughts can also mean focusing too much on things you've done wrong. These thinking patterns are problematic because they can cause you to have even more uncomfortable emotions and unhelpful behaviors or urges. Unhelpful Automatic Thoughts can also get in the way of noticing things that may make you feel better. This can make it difficult to have more balanced thoughts that may help you make positive changes in your life.



## Thinking Flexibly

Unhelpful Automatic Thoughts can happen very quickly. So, we want you to practice questioning or evaluating these immediate interpretations. The goal is not to push you're your Unhelpful Automatic Thoughts, but see if there are any other ways you could think about the situation. This will help you come up with more flexible and balanced thoughts. When you notice yourself falling into patterns of Unhelpful Automatic Thoughts, try using the questions below to think more flexibly:

- 1. Do I know for certain that \_\_\_\_\_ will happen or is true?*
- 2. What evidence do I have for and against this thought?*
- 3. Could there be any other explanations?*
- 4. How much does it feel like \_\_\_ is true? What is a more realistic chance that \_\_\_\_\_ is true?*
- 5. Is my unhelpful automatic thought driven by the intense emotions I'm experiencing?*
- 6. If \_\_\_ was true, could I cope with it? How would I handle it?*
- 7. Even if \_\_\_ was true, could I live with it?*

Here's an example of how to use these questions to think more flexibly. Let's say a woman is feeling nervous after receiving an email from a professor or boss saying they would like to meet with her. She might think, "I must have really messed up that recent assignment." She might also think, "I'm going to feel so down on myself after I meet with them." She could ask herself "Do I know for certain that I really messed that up?" She could also ask, "Could there be any other explanations [for the meeting]?" She could remind herself that she has met with professors or bosses before about assignments that need improving, and it's ended up okay. She could also remember that the meeting may not have anything to do with her recent assignment (or maybe, it's something positive about her recent work!).



She could also ask herself “How bad would feeling down on myself after the meeting really be?” She could think about how she’s felt that way before and that this feeling doesn’t last forever.

Thinking Flexibly (coming up with alternative ways of thinking about situations or interpretations) can help you manage emotions you might find distressing. In general, try to remind yourself that you’re not a fortune teller. You don’t know for sure that you that what you are afraid of happening will come true. Remind yourself that you have gotten through hard situations before and will be able to cope with whatever happens.


## Chapter 3

### Changing Emotional Behaviors

When you have a strong emotion, you probably want to do certain things. Emotions (like fear, sadness, anger, guilt, or joy) can drive us to act in certain ways. Sometimes we act before we even have a chance to think about it. These “Emotional Behaviors” can be helpful. For example, if you saw a bear in the woods you would probably feel fear. This feeling would prompt you to run away. Running away keeps you safe from the bear. After you got away, you would probably feel better.

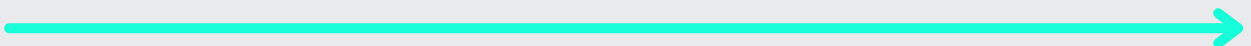
On the other hand, sometimes Emotional Behaviors are not so helpful. They can also make us feel even worse later on. For example, sleeping all day when you’re feeling down may make you feel better (or at least some relief) while you’re asleep. This is because you can’t think about why you are sad while sleeping. Unfortunately, sleeping too much is linked to worsened depression over time. Most people actually feel worse after sleeping the day away.

Here are common Emotional Behaviors linked to each emotion:



<b>Emotion</b>	<b>Emotional Behaviors</b>
<b>Anger</b>	<b>Yell, break things, gossip, punch or hit something or someone</b>
<b>Sadness</b>	<b>Sleep, watch TV, cancel plans with friends, hurt yourself on purpose, drink or use drugs, think a lot about things from the past</b>
<b>Fear</b>	<b>Avoid certain places or people, drink or use drugs</b>
<b>Anxiety</b>	<b>Avoid certain places or people, hurt yourself on purpose, drink or use drugs, seek reassurance, worry, distract yourself</b>
<b>Guilt</b>	<b>Apologize excessively, go over and over something from the past in your mind, punish yourself</b>

Most of these Emotional Behaviors make us feel at least a little better (or at least give us relief from intense, overwhelming emotions) right when we do them. That's why we keep doing them! However, it's important to remember that even if they seem to help in the short-term, they can make you feel worse in the long-term. For example, leaving a situation because you feel nervous talking to new people will probably make it harder to chat with new people next time. Drinking too much or hurting yourself (like cutting) when you're very anxious or sad might make you feel better for a short while. But you might feel even more down on yourself later on.



## Changing Emotional Behaviors

One of the best ways to break the cycle of distressing emotions is to do something different than what you would normally do. These different behaviors are called Alternative Actions because you are acting in ways that are alternative to how you would normally act. **Changing Emotional Behaviors** to **Alternative Actions** may help solve the problem you are facing. For example, sadness can make people want to stay away from others and not do “fun” things. An Alternative action here would be talking with friends and trying an activity, even if it’s something small. Anger can make people want to yell at or hurt someone (or themselves). An Alternative action for anger could include releasing energy in healthier ways (like exercise) or waiting until you are more calm to address the problem. If when feeling very depressed, you begin to think “what’s the point?” or feel suicidal, an alternative action could be to reach out to a friend, think about your reasons for staying alive, or plan for the future – like applying for a new job or going food shopping for the week. Alternative Actions don’t always have to be something big; they can even be small things like sitting up straight instead of slouching or trying to smile when feeling sad. Here are common Alternative Actions linked to each emotion:



Emotion	Alternative Actions
Anger	Take a break or a walk, take a step backwards, relax your hands/fists, move slowly, pay a compliment, physical exercise
Sadness	Call friends, make plans to go out, schedule activities, listen to upbeat music, be active (walk quickly, stretch, <u>jumping jacks</u> )
Fear	Stay in the situation, approach what you're afraid of, speak calmly
Anxiety	Face the situation, do a pleasant activity, use anchoring in the present, take small steps towards solving your problem
Guilt	Contact others, make eye contact, anchor in the present, apologize only once (if warranted), do an activity you enjoy

Changing Emotional Behaviors can be really hard. But remember, Alternative Actions improve how you feel over the long-term! Although we may feel like some of our Emotional Behaviors have become automatic, we still can make a decision to work hard to try new, alternative actions—even if it's something small.

