

Setting goals for therapy

1. Start by identifying broad motives, hopes, and dreams.

- * What are some things in your life that you're tired of?
- * What are some things in your life that you love and want more of?
- * What are some things you haven't done yet that you still want to do?
- * Was there a specific problem that brought you to therapy? How and when did it start?

2. Choose a theme to focus on.

3. Narrow your theme into one or more specific goals.

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- * "I want to heal from depression and get my hope and energy back."
- * "I want to stop having the same fight with my partner over and over again."
- * "I want to stop overeating when I'm stressed out and find healthier ways to cope."
- * "I want to be creative like I used to be when I was younger. I want to paint, sing, or write again."
- * Keep in mind that these are just examples and that the range of valid therapeutic goals is wide and varied.

4. Make your goals concrete, measurable, and SMART.

The idea of SMART goals comes from corporate management but is a good frame of reference for any process of goal formation. SMART goals are:

- * Specific
- * Measurable
- * Achievable
- * Relevant
- * Time-bound

Track of thinking process and automatic thoughts

● The way we think (our cognitions) and what we do (our behavior) affects the ways we feel. If we want to change the way we feel then we will need to make changes to the way we think and act.

● Key things that you need to know about your thoughts are:

- * We all have quick and automatic thoughts that just 'pop' into our minds
- * These automatic thoughts are often based on assumptions, not facts
- * Automatic thoughts are very believable, but they can be inaccurate
- Thought records are an important part of cognitive behavioral treatment for many problems. They are useful because:
 - * They make our negative automatic thoughts visible to us
 - * They help us to identify any problems with our thinking
 - * They can help us to make changes to our thinking

● To 'catch' your automatic thoughts you need to start paying attention to what is going through your mind: particularly at times when you notice a change in how you are feeling. The most important question that you can ask yourself is:

“what was going through my mind just then?”

● The process. Identify:

- * The situation the thought happened in
- * The thought (or image)
- * How you felt (emotions and body sensations)

● The best time to complete a thought record is shortly after you notice a change in how you are feeling. A sudden shift in your emotions is a sign that you have had a thought about something. Writing it down quickly ensures that the incident is still fresh in your mind and makes it more likely that you will be able to recall the important details.

Situation

- * Make a note of the date & time
- * Record where you were
- * Note who you were with
- * Summarize what was happening just before you noticed a change in how you were feeling

Emotion

- * Emotions can generally be described using one word (e.g. Angry, Sad, Excited)
- * Rate the strength of the emotion on a scale of 0-100% (if you recorded more than one emotion give a separate rating for each)
- * Record what you felt in your body (e.g. “I felt butterflies in my stomach”)

Thoughts

- * What was going through my mind in that moment?
- * What was I saying to myself?
- * Did I have an image/picture/memory in my mind? (If you did: what did it mean? What does it say about you?)
- * What implications did that situation have for me or my future?

How do I challenge my thoughts

- ♦ examine the evidence for and against the thought
- ◆ Identify the thought you want to work on and write it down. Only work on one thought at a time.
- ◆ Give the thought an initial belief rating. How strongly do you believe in the truthfulness of that thought right now?
- ◆ Next, make a list of all the reasons why that thought might be true.
- ◆ Now make a list of all the reasons why this thought might not be 100% true all of the time.
(If a friend thought this about themselves, what would I say to them? When was the last occasion that I had a thought like this that wasn't true? What facts or evidence make me suspect that this isn't completely true? Have there ever been any times when this wasn't true? If I looked back on this thought in 20 years what would I say to myself?)
- ◆ Now read the original thought, all of the reasons why it might be true, and all of the reasons why it might not be true. Do this out loud if you can.
- ◆ Say to yourself “Given all of the evidence, is there a better way of summing up this situation?”
- * Is there a more helpful way of thinking about myself or this situation?

* Have I been judging myself harshly? Is there a fairer, more balanced way of summing this up?

* Is there a way of thinking about this now that is more likely to help me achieve my goals?

◆ Write down your new thought

Rate how strongly you believe in the new thought and your old thought right now (0-100%).
What do you notice?

Automatic behaviors/behavioral patterns

- ◆ a complex arrangement of two or more responses that occur in a prescribed order.

Behavior patterns are also referred to as chains of behavior, highlighting their nature as a complex linking of simpler segments of behavior

- ◆ they can derive from automatic thoughts, have the nature of learned behaviors and are not aware to the conscious level

How to recognize and change behavioral patterns

* Even when we recognize automatic behaviors, we might still be reluctant to change. We may want to change, yet remain fearful of doing so. Getting past fears of the unknown may be an insurmountable obstacle (we tend to choose what's familiar to us, discussed previously)

* Identifying includes detachment, stepping back and seeing the behavior from the eyes of others.

* Is it a habit or a pattern? (To be discussed in session how to tell the difference)

* It may come as a shock to realize that something you thought was good for you is actually just the opposite.

* Maybe you thought it would be good for you because it was good for someone else, and you adopted the behavior in the hope that you'd have the same sort of success.

* Consider making a list of current behaviors that constitute a pattern. It helps to take notes that to use later as reference.

* Make two separate sheets, one each for good and bad behavior patterns.

* Then, assign them either a positive or negative value.

* What this value means is not whether or not you like the behavior.

- ◆ In therapy, point out observations about particular behaviors that you may not have thought of or draw parallels to other behaviors previously discussed

Running into Resistance

* Some toxic behavioral patterns may not be able to be addressed overnight. While recognizing something that needs to change is critical, it's still a long way from doing the work to ensure the change occurs.

* It's also important to understand internal reluctance to change.

Change

(To be continued later in therapy)

Coping skills are usually discussed as a reactive strategy: When you feel bad, you do something to cope.

Healthy ways to cope

Types of coping:

- * problem-focused coping

acting on the environment (seeking support to solve the problem) or the self (cognitive restructuring). Both are included in therapy

- * emotion-focused coping

regulate one's stressful emotions - emotional ventilation - relief from stressful feelings

- * social support

- * meaning making

trying to see the positive or meaningful aspects of the situation

Good coping skills

- * Practicing relaxation techniques

- * Having time to yourself (Put on lotion that smells good, spend time in nature, take a bath, drink tea, or take care of your body in a way that makes you feel good such as painting your nails, doing your hair, putting on a face mask)

- * Engaging in physical activity or exercise

- * Reading

- * Spending time with friends

- * Finding humor

- * Spending time on your hobbies

Relaxation techniques

- * Care for yourself (as described above)

- * Engage in a hobby: Do something you enjoy such as coloring, drawing, or listening to music

- * Exercise: Do yoga, go for a walk, take a hike, or engage in a recreational sport.

- * Focus on a task: Clean the house (or a closet, drawer, or area), cook a meal, garden, or read a book.

- * Practice mindfulness: List the things you feel grateful for, picture your "happy place," or look at pictures to remind you of the people, places, and things that bring joy.

- * Use relaxation strategies: practice breathing exercises, squeeze a stress ball, enjoy some aromatherapy, try muscle relaxation (to be explained in detail)

The coping strategies that work for someone else might not work for you. Find What Works for You.

You might find that certain coping strategies work best for specific issues or emotions. For example, engaging in a hobby may be an effective way to unwind after a long day at work. But, going for a walk in nature might be the best approach when you're feeling sad.

When it comes to coping skills, there's always room for improvement. So, assess what other tools and resources you can use and consider how you might continue to improve your skills in the future.

The Challenge of Knowing Versus Doing

- * Knowing about something is often the easier task.
- * It requires some mental effort as you gather information.
- * We don't have to do any work to get the basic idea—it's often right in front of us.
- * It's then our choice to get more detailed facts or personally take action.
- * Having knowledge helps us to better understand the underlying reasons for what we do or want to do.

- * In contrast, doing something involves the active steps of creating an idea, making a plan and taking concrete steps to carry it out.
- * It requires both mental and physical effort.
- * For most of us this is hard to do when your brain is not functioning at its best.
- * It seems to be more difficult during periods of stress, anxiety, emotional and physical fatigue.
- * You might feel overwhelmed right now in trying to keep up day-to-day, so thinking of doing something new and different can overpower your coping resources and cause anxiety.
- * The familiar feels safer and easier.
- * In these situations it may initially take less energy to maintain your current lifestyle patterns and not change your daily routine.
- * But this might not be what you yearn for, and is not always in your best interest.

- * Change requires both physical and emotional energy and determination, mostly at the beginning until you have established a new habit and routine.

Get started

- * Have your own very good reason for making a change that you believe is important to you and is do-able.
- * Write down your goal(s) of what it is you want to do.
- * Be concrete and specific, realistic and reasonable.
- * Prioritize among the other things in your life.
- * It's often easier to break it down into small steps and identify events that you will use to mark your progress so you will know you are moving towards your goal.
- * You might also want to keep a log of your activities in a journal or electronic tracker.
- * If you are having a tough time getting off of the couch or out of the house, try to remind yourself of your reasons for doing (whatever it is), why it is important.
- * Then try it for a limited time, say just ten minutes.
- * Once you get started you often build up momentum and it becomes easier to do.

* If you slip up, which will happen to everyone, don't be hard on yourself. Pick up the pieces and start again.

It can be helpful if you engage others in this effort as a way to support and sustain you.

Once you are able to DO what it is you desire, you want to maintain it on a regular basis until the new thing becomes habit.

* In order to keep up or sustain the new plan, you also want to keep it fresh to avoid getting bored.

Therapeutic process/stages

- ◆ Understanding the Process of Change

KEY POINTS

* Change is a process involving five stages: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance.

* The needs of an individual in one stage of change are different from the needs of an individual in another stage.

* Recycling through stages is the rule rather than the exception.

* It's imperative to recognize and celebrate progression through the stages rather than waiting until maintenance is achieved.

📌 the more we understand the process of change, the more we can empathize, support, and demonstrate compassion for ourselves and those around us who seek to alter their behavior.

▪What is the process of change?

The Five Stages of Change

◆ The first stage of the change process is marked by a lack of awareness of a problem (pre-contemplation) — when individuals fail to see their behavior as an issue.

! This does not mean that the person is at fault / wrong. It refers to the fact that perhaps some behaviors/responses need to change in order to achieve well-being

◆ The second stage of change, contemplation, is when an individual becomes aware of the problem, but is ambivalent about making a change. They perceive the pros and cons of changing as approximately equal and thus have not committed to change.

! The contemplation stage is marked by ambivalence and people can get stuck in this stage for a while.

◆ The third stage of change, preparation, is characterized by making a commitment to change (making small changes).

! Individuals in preparation are on the brink of taking action.

- ◆ After the preparation stage comes action, in which individuals modify their behavior and make the change. In this stage, there is a strong commitment to change, and the change is intentional (i.e., self-directed) rather than imposed by others

- ! At this stage the new behavior modifications are solidified.

- ◆ Finally, the fifth stage of change is maintenance, in which individuals sustain their behavioral change indefinitely. During this stage, the focus is on avoiding relapse and fully integrating the behavioral change into their lives.

- ! In maintenance, individuals learn to sustain their behavior change through various seasons of life.

● The Process of Change as a Spiral

Although the five stages of change sound like a natural forward progression, this often is not the case.

- Recycling through stages is likely before individuals reach sustained maintenance, thus the change process is better understood as a spiral rather than a straight line.

- In addition, individuals can spend varying amounts of time in each stage, thus the process of change looks different for different people

- When conceptualizing change as a process, the goal is for an individual to move from whatever stage they currently find themselves in (e.g., contemplation) to the next stage

- ◆ People in one stage of change are addressing different tasks than those in another stage

- ✚ a person in pre-contemplation benefits from gaining insight, information, and feedback to raise awareness about their problem behavior

- ✚ a person in contemplation benefits from exploring the impact of their behavior on others, examining their emotions, and working through ambivalence

- ✚ a person in preparation benefits from creating an action plan and troubleshooting

- ✚ a person in action benefits from restructuring their environment to avoid triggers and implementing replacement behaviors

- ✚ Finally, a person in maintenance benefits from relapse prevention strategies and increasing overall wellness