Class #3: ABC (STOP)
Identifying Danger Signals, and Stop Signs

What We Will Cover in Class #3:

Estimated Time

1. Review Homework From Class #2
   A. Relaxation Diary
   B. ABC Diary of Thoughts
   30 min.

2. Mini-Lecture: How Negative Thoughts and Feelings Can Lead to Self-Defeating Behaviors
   20 min.

3. Refreshment Break
   10 min.

4. Mini-Lecture and Discussion of ABC (STOP): Danger Signals, Stop Signs and Their Impact
   45 min.

5. Relaxation Rating and Practice
   5 min.

6. Homework for the Next Class
   5 min.

7. Summary of Class #3
   5 min.

Total Time = 120 min.
1. REVIEW HOMEWORK

A. Relaxation Diary. Let's go around the room and briefly share your completed homework assignment.

STOP!

Leaders: Encourage continued practice of the relaxation exercise and daily ratings of tension. Praise all attempts.

B. ABC: Diary of Thoughts. Let us go around the room again to share our completed assignments. We will ask for several volunteers to read theirs out loud and we will use them as examples for the rest of the group.

STOP!

Leaders: Record A-B-C columns on the board or on a flip chart and ask a volunteer permission to write out at least 1 of their complete examples as it is given. Then, gently “correct” any errors about how to separate thoughts and feelings. Ask the volunteer and/or the rest of the group to identify the unhelpful thinking patterns in the example. If there's time, do a second example.
Please Use This Page for Taking Notes
2. MINI-LECTURE: HOW NEGATIVE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS CAN LEAD TO SELF-DEFEATING BEHAVIORS

Strong emotions, such as anger and frustration, can be like a steam locomotive. Once you begin to feel them, they slowly grow and gradually develop a lot of momentum just like a train. When a stress-producing event occurs (A), our thoughts and beliefs (B) about why it is occurring can lead to anger or frustration (C). Strong emotions have their origins in strongly held thoughts and beliefs about a particular situation. Sometimes these thoughts occur so “automatically” that they are difficult to identify or modify. Like speeding trains, strong emotional responses are hard to stop!

A  _________  B  _________  C
Action  ———  Behavior  ———  Consequences
(Feelings/Emotions)

In learning my new skills I will:

Stop before the emotions become too strong. Each person has their own warning signs that let them know when they are becoming angry and frustrated. Like a runaway train, it is important to reduce the momentum behind the strong emotions so they do not result in loss of control.
Example:

**A = Action**

Your demented mother keeps asking “When are we going out?” “I want to go out!” “When are you taking me?”

**B = Beliefs**

You realize that you are thinking: “Here we go again.” She’s getting worse.” “I don’t know how many times I can keep answering her in a polite way.” “I am going to lose my temper soon.”

**C = Consequences (Feelings/Emotions)**

My feelings are: “I’m impatient, I am getting annoyed.”

**Stop Signs (There are two parts to this)**

1. **Danger Signals:**
   I feel a rush of blood to my head. My ears are getting warm. My heart begins to beat quickly.

2. **Stop Sign:**
   An image of a blazing red fire appears in my head.

**STOP!**

Leaders: Discuss this example to ensure that all participants understand.

**3. REFRESHMENT BREAK - 10 MIN.**
4. MINI-LECTURE: IDENTIFYING DANGER SIGNALS AND STOP SIGNS

A. Danger Signals

Danger Signals can be strong feelings or physical sensations that let you know that the situation needs some attention before you take action. They are physical or bodily tensions that warm and alert you to stop and think and then take control of the situation as best you can. Listed below are examples of physical body symptoms:

1. Breathing heavily
2. Heart feels like its racing
3. Body tension near the neck, shoulders or arms
4. Headaches or migraines
5. Stomach ache
6. Sweating
7. Tension in your throat
8. Sighing

We call these signs “Danger Signals” because they are a tip-off that strong emotions are likely to be present. Danger signals warn you to stop and think before you respond or else you are likely to react poorly and do things in the situation that are not effective.
B. Visual Stop Signs

When you are experiencing strong feelings it is often hard to know what you are thinking. The first thing you may notice is the feelings, stress, anger, or frustration that the situation causes you. The thoughts you have in response to the situation are so automatic that you might not even be aware that they went through your mind before becoming upset or angry.

One way to understand your thought patterns and begin to deal with the feelings that develop in these situations is to first, become aware of your strong feelings and see them as potential danger signals and second, use what we call a Stop Sign. What we mean by a Stop Sign is to take a tiny breather when you are feeling overwhelmed by either strong emotion or these physical sensations so that you can get in control again and be more aware of what you were thinking that led to your bad feelings.

Stop signals are mental images that we create in our minds that make us stop and think. They are bright, colorful, emotional, and meaningful images that warm us to stop and think before we react to a particular situation.

Examples of Visual Stop Signs are:

1) Fire - pull back!!

2) Horse - Whoa!
3. Railroad Crossing

4. Edge of the Grand Canyon or waterfall

5) Danger sign or Poison label

KEEP OUT!

6) Traffic Stoplight or Stop Sign

or
Questions:

1. What are some of the “Danger Signals” that alert you when you are experiencing strong emotions?
(Please write your notes here)

STOP!

Leaders: Encourage participation from all caregivers by having them discuss and write the answers to question 1 and 2. Quickly go around the group and help those who seem to be having trouble with the concepts.
2. What are some “Stop Signs” that might work for you? (Please write down your notes here)
# Class #3: Automatic Behavior

## ABC(STOP): DIARY OF THOUGHTS
(in class use)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A = ACTION</th>
<th>B = BELIEF</th>
<th>C = CONSEQUENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A situation that causes me frustration</td>
<td>My thoughts/beliefs about the situation that are making me upset.</td>
<td>My feelings about the situation that are making me upset.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### IDENTIFY THE UNHELPFUL THINKING PATTERNS
ABC (STOP): DIARY OF THOUGHTS
(in class use)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DANGER SIGNALS</th>
<th>STOP SIGNS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What I notice about myself that tells me I am upset. (physical)</td>
<td>My stop signs that I can use in this situation to interrupt my train of unhelpful thoughts or to stop myself. (visual)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. RELAXATION EXERCISE

Make yourself as comfortable as possible. First, I’d like you to remove any objects from your lap and place your feet on the floor. Place your hands on your thighs. Don’t cross your legs or your arms. Close your eyes so you can’t see the light or other people and so you won’t be distracted by what’s going on around you.

Now breathe deeply, and imagine that you are in an empty vase that you have to fill up to the rim with air. Inhale deeply again, and exhale ... while you’re exhaling say the word “Amen” or “calm” silently to yourself ... continue breathing as deeply as possible ... always filling up the bottom of your lungs and then exhaling ...

Right now, notice where your body is most tense. Make yourself as comfortable as possible. Relax the tension in your neck, shoulders, arms, back, legs and feet ... Keep breathing deeply and exhale, saying to yourself the work that you’ve chosen.

Now imagine that you’re searching for the most safe and peaceful place that you know ... Are you searching for it indoors or outdoors? When you find it, look at it closely. What is it like? Use all of your senses to enjoy it as much as possible.

What’s around you? What colors do you see? What smells do you notice? What sounds do you hear? Do you hear the chirping of birds? Or are you on the beach and hear the calls of the seagulls and the crashing of the waves? Or maybe you’re listening to the pleasant sound of a river’s current.

Can you make out the breeze moving through the branches of the trees? ... Perhaps you’re listening to the silence of a mountain peak. Pay attention to the colors. Are they bright? ... The sounds, are they loud or soft? ... What sensations do you feel? Is it warm out or do you feel cold? ... Do you like being here alone? Look closely at your place, enjoy it, you are in peace.

Enjoy for a few moments the experience of being in your peaceful place.

Soon I am going to ask you to come back from your peaceful place, knowing that you can always go back to this place just by closing your eyes ... and by breathing deeply three times ...

Slowly leave your place and focus all of you attention on your breathing.

Little by little you will leave your place, and tell yourself that you can always return to this place just by closing your eyes and breathing deeply three times. I’m, going to count from 5 to 1, and when I reach 1, I’ll ask you to come back to the classroom ....

5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... and 1. Open your eyes and come back to the classroom.
RELAXATION DIARY: TENSION EVALUATION

Use This Scale to Rate Your Level of Tension

1 = Not at all tense
2 = Slightly tense
3 = Moderately tense
4 = Really tense
5 = Terribly tense

In=Class Practice Rating:

1. First, write the number that represents your current tension level.

   Before the relaxation exercise, I feel __________ (rate your tension from 1 to 5)

2. Now, we will conduct a brief relaxation technique that will last about 5 minutes.

3. Finally, evaluate your tension level after you have practiced the relaxation technique.

   After the relaxation exercise, I feel __________ (rate your tension from 1 to 5)
6. HOMEWORK TO DO BEFORE CLASS #4

1. **Relaxation Diary:** Use the daily relaxation practice and evaluation.

2. **ABC (STOP): Diary of Thoughts:** Complete at least one blank 2 page form for next time. We would like you to do a couple (2) if you have time, because the more you practice these techniques the more helpful they will be to you. **An additional copy of the ABC (STOP): Diary of Thoughts is included in Appendix C for more practice.**
## RELAXATION DIARY: TENSION EVALUATION

Use This Scale to Rate Your Level of Tension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TENSION</th>
<th>COMMENTS (why I felt this way, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Before relaxing: ______</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After relaxing: ______</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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1 = Not at all tense  
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### ABC: Diary of Thoughts

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**Identify the Unhelpful Thinking Patterns**
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7. SUMMARY OF CLASS #3

In this class, we identified signals that warn us when we start to react to a situation in an unhelpful manner. Danger signals are physical reactions to stress such as body tension, increased heartbeat, or a rise in body temperature.

Once we recognize these “Danger (warning) Signals” we can begin to imagine one or more “Stop Signs” that tell us to stop what we are thinking and doing, and begin developing more adaptive thoughts and ways of coping.