

'SEL4ALL' TRAINING BUNDLE (PR2)

Multimodal Approach for Social-emotional learning in HEI

Music -based intervention

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AUTHORS

Dr. Potheini Vaiouli (UCY), Dr. Marios Theodorou (UCY), and Prof. Georgia Panayiotou (UCY).

CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Panayiota Dimitropoulou (UOC), Dr. Alexios Arvanitis (UOC), Dr. Ferenc Honbolygó (ELTE), Dr. Elke Vlemincx (VUA).

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A few words about this training Bundle

The primary purpose of this bundle is to describe and operationalize the SEL4ALL training, a series of workshops focused on Socioemotional Learning. This bundle includes:

- a) A trainers' manual for providing step-by-step guidelines to instructors for conducting trainings in multimodal Socio-Emotional Learning
- b) A participants' workbook designed to accompany students as they participate in S4ALL training.

The training includes selected evidence-informed training activities, and it is divided into chapters that describe distinctive elements for each thematic area.

*Instructional material in this program is designed to be used for educational purposes within the context of academic learning. The resources available in this manual do not replace therapy and are intended to be used by qualified professionals (i.e. mental health practitioners or academic staff with relevant background in Higher Education Institutions).

The content of this document is a compilation of foundational works on contemporary evidence-based approaches, such as Cognitive Behavioral approach, Acceptance and Commitment approach, Dialectical Behavior approach and Music Therapy.

TRAINERS' MANUAL

Meeting 1

GETTING MOTIVATED



Attendance Tracking [5 min]

[The group facilitator tracks participants attendance to today's session].

Introduction [10 min]

[We welcome participants, and we begin with a brief introduction]

Welcome to today's meeting! My name is [name] and I will be the facilitator of this training series. This training aims to help you enhance your ability to effectively manage and respond to emotional experiences. The training includes modules for learning to identify, label and describe emotions, using relaxation techniques to modulate emotion experience, reducing cognitive vulnerability linked to negative emotions, and acting in an opposite manner to motivational tendency associated with negative emotions.

[Then we introduce some basic group guidelines]

Participation in group training can be beneficial for participants, as they are expected to have the opportunity to share experiences and knowledge, exchange opinions and give feedback, as well as to cultivate interpersonal skills. To achieve this, it is necessary to create a safe environment for all members, which will be based on some commonly accepted ground rules such as the following:

- *Be respectful: All of us are learners at various places along the path to knowledge. Some have strong opinions, and some are indecisive about their opinions on subjects. Try to practice good listening skills and be honest with each other so that all communication be respectful and free of ridicule or humiliation.*
- *Treat shared information confidentially: Try to keep discussions that occur in group or personal experiences shared by others confidential.*
- *Attendance and Promptness: Weekly attendance is expected. Notify your instructor in advance (when possible) if you miss a class or need assistance with an assignment. Come on time for every class and try to be prepared (do homework assignments).*
- *Active participation and privacy: Use class time wisely. Participating in group discussions or activities is beneficial not only for you (personal development) but for the group as well (contributing to group work). However, if you are asked questions or asked to participate in an activity which makes you feel uncomfortable, you have the right to refuse participation.*

The purpose of this meeting is to strengthen students' motivation and commitment for active participation in the process of the training and support their self-efficacy for change in terms of personal development. In order to achieve this goal, we will focus on activities that aim to help students boost one's sense of the importance of change, in other words to realize that through education they can obtain new skills, which are beneficial, based on of their own needs.

[We give a brief introduction to how motivation and engagement in the educational process is important in terms of maximizing results]

We consider it quite important as a first step in the process, to spend some time connecting the content of the training with what you consider important in your life, as well as to clarify how this training can contribute to changes that you consider important to improve your daily life.

Through today's meeting each one of us will seek

a) to clarify what we consider important in our lives,

b) to evaluate whether our current way of life and especially the way we handle our emotions, is compatible, or at a distance from our best possible self

c) to set specific goals, the achievement of which will bring us closer to our best possible self".

Activity 1- Best possible self (King, 2001) [25 min]

Description of the activity (retrieved from [Greater Good in Action](#))

Take a moment to imagine your life in the future. What is the best possible life you can imagine? Consider all the relevant areas of your life, such as your career, academic work, relationships, hobbies, and health. What would happen in these areas of your life in your best possible future?

Which of the following values fits your best possible self?

[We provide a values list from [Russ Harris](#)]

Take a blank sheet of paper and choose some colorful crayons in front of you. For the next 5 minutes, listen to the musical expert from Yian Tersen (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Np9qzXYpuI>). While listening, imagine this best possible future to be and draw freely on the page. You may include shapes, lines and anything else you would like to include. The process is not about the artistic result (how nice the picture is). Rather, it is about you and allowing yourself to reflect on the future.

Once the music is over, turn the page. Now, listen to the music again for about 10 minutes. While listening write continuously words, phrases, thoughts, and even stories (or more drawings if you feel so)

about these areas of your life in your best possible future and which qualities guide you to:

- o who you would like to be*
- o how you would like our lives to be*
- o how you would like to behave*

[*Please, note, that the quality of writing is not relevant, just the production of ideas].

[Share with participants their findings]

Note to the interventionist: Monitor the work of the participants and adjust the time of music listening. Towards the end of each musical section, slowly turn the volume down to prepare them for the completion of each timed activity. Let them continue/complete their work for one to two minutes after the music is over.

Activity 2- Minding the gap [20 min]

The next activity is about identifying behaviors that keep us from reaching our best possible self.

Instructions:

- 1. Read thoroughly what you have written about your best possible self. Pick an area that you haven't fully reached.*
- 2. What role do emotions play in this life area?*
- 3. Now, think of a song that describes/relates to this area that you haven't fully reached.*
- 4. Listen to the song privately (you may use your phone and headphones) and pay attention to the lyrics. If you want, you may look for the lyrics on the internet and read them while you are listening to the song*

5. *What does the song mean to you? What connections do you make to the lyrics of the song?*

[Give an example to help participants understand. Then invite participants to generate at least one example].

Example for participants:

Song: Creep by Radiohead

<https://genius.com/Radiohead-creep-lyrics>

- a. Best possible self: want to have a functional relationship, feel happy.
- b. Issue: Systematically feeling troubled.
- c. Area for improvement: To minimize the negative thoughts on sense of self, communicate feelings.

Activity 3- SMART GOALS [20 min]

The aim of the final activity is to help you take the first steps to develop a personal growth plan towards your best possible self.

What would you like to change about the way you experience or handle your emotions?

First take a few minutes to think of the following questions:

‘What would be a good first step?’

‘When and how will that step be taken?’

Next step is to try to formulate our first SMART goal.

In order to formulate goals in an effective way, it is essential to formulate goals in a SMART way.

Explain SMART criteria:

Specific: It should be clear what exactly needs to be done. What needs to be achieved? What is the desired outcome?

Measurable: It should be clear how we can measure whether the goal has been achieved or not. What are performance goals? How will you know that the goal has been accomplished.

Attainable/Realistic: It should be clear whether the resources (e.g. health, time required, financial situation and abilities) are available to achieve the goal. Do you have the necessary resources to achieve goals, despite the obstacles that may occur? Goals should be somewhat demanding to help you grow, but they should not be excessive so as not to lead to failure.

Relevant: It should be clear why the goal matters. Are the goals in line with your values and long-term goals.

Time bound: It should be clear what the time frame is for accomplishing the goal. Set day, date, and time. If not possible, try to set a time frame, and try to estimate how long it will take to achieve the goal.

Goal	SMART goal
<p>.....</p>	<p>Specific: Which is the specific behavior I want to do that will make my life more aligned with my values? Who needs to be included? What type of activity will I be doing?</p> <p>Measurable: How often? When? For how long?</p> <p>Attainable: Do I have the skills required to achieve the goal? If not, can I obtain them? Do I have the money? How difficult is to go there? Do I have</p>

	<p>enough time? Is this goal challenging but also achievable based on my resources?</p> <p>Relevant: Why am I setting this goal now? Is this goal aligned to my values? Am I going to enjoy doing this activity? Am I familiar with this activity?</p> <p>Time-Limited: What's the deadline and is it realistic? When should I start?</p>
<p>Action</p>	<p>Which actions do I have to take to accomplish my goal? Make a list of steps starting with the last step to reach your goal.</p>

Homework

Formulate a SMART goal you want to achieve related to experiencing emotions/emotional management.

My SMART goal:

S Click or tap here to enter text.

M Click or tap here to enter text.

A Click or tap here to enter text.

R Click or tap here to enter text.

T Click or tap here to enter text.

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Meeting 2

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS



Attendance Tracking [5 min]

[The group facilitator tracks participants attendance to today's session].

Introduction [2 min]

Today's meeting aims to dispel myths related to common beliefs around emotions, as well as help participants become better knowers and observers of their emotions by focusing on their main components (thoughts, bodily reactions and behaviors). Also, through this module, participants are expected to become cognizant with the factors involved in emotional experience such as triggers/activating events, responses and consequences.

Homework Review [10 min]

Before we move on to today's topic, I'd like to check in on your experience with some of the recommendations from the last session.

Activity 1: Exploring the Basics of Emotional experience [30 min]

[Students participate in a two-item knowledge quiz about emotions, based on adapted items from Individual Beliefs About Emotion (IBAE; Veilleux, et al 2021)].

1. *Negative emotions are bad*

Negative feelings are helpful and useful			Negative feelings are bad and destructive
--	--	--	---

Discussion points:

- *Positive or negative doesn't mean emotions are good or bad, but it is more related to how we experience it (pleasant or unpleasant): all the emotions have a function, and even when fear is not pleasant, it can save us from danger.*
- *Negative emotions act as protective mechanisms and as sources of information about us. Negative emotions such as fear, anger, disgust, or shame are helpful because they help us to recognize, avoid, and overcome dangerous situations and to know what feels aversive to us.*
- *When we experience positive emotions, such as joy or interest, it is more likely to be creative, to see more opportunities, to be open to relationships with others, to be more flexible and mindful and to know what is attractive to us.*

2. *Emotions are complex and difficult to be understood*

Emotions are like a big "cloud" of intense feelings and I find it difficult to			Despite their complexity, emotional experience can be
--	--	--	---

determine what information are trying to provide.				decomposed in basic components.
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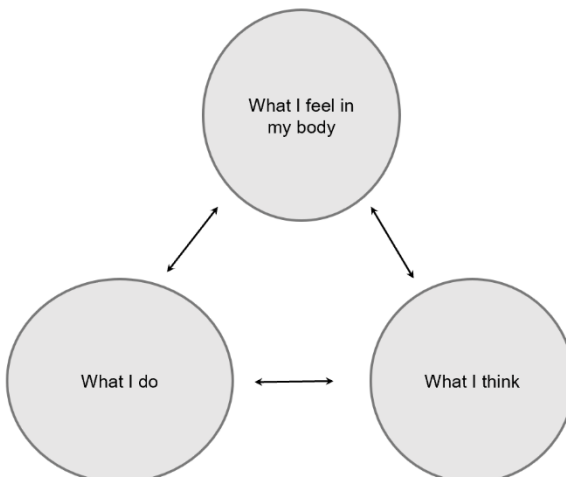
Music can also evoke emotions. Bring to mind a situation or an emotion that makes you feel uncomfortable. Then, try listening intently to this music bringing your attention back to the music itself whenever your mind has wandered or has started to evaluate this experience (for example this is good or bad). See what you learn about what you feel in your body, what you think, and what you do while sitting with difficult feelings by practicing this kind of meditation.

<https://soundcloud.com/chkhito/to-relax>

Discussion points:

- *Lack of emotional awareness can lead to the perception that emotions are uncontrollable, irrational, or occurring for no apparent reason. The first step to improve emotion regulation is to gain awareness of our emotional response.*
- *According to the Three-Component Model of Emotional Experiences, emotional experiences have three interactive components: a subjective experience, a physiological response and a behavioral or expressive response.*

We present the following diagram to help participants to better understand the model



Then we present a number of scenarios (adopted from [Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Los Angeles website](#)) and guide participants to practice on emotional awareness.

Now we want to spend some time to work with songs to identify the components of emotional experience. Think of a song that expresses what you feel about a difficult situation. Find a quiet place and listen to it (you may have the lyrics along as well). Reflect on the story of the song. Why do you relate to it? Is it the music, the rhythm, the lyrics? How does it help to experience challenging emotions? Do you feel different in different parts of your body? Do you think the song lyrics relate to your own emotions? Do you find it helpful for that particular challenging situation? Then, complete the following table:

Examples with songs:

1. *Romeo and Juliet, by Dire Straits*
<https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvOrqLB1iLI>
2. *Black, by Pearl Jam*
<https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=IpwHB2U3J1s&list=RDAMVMZvOrqLB1iLI>

Thoughts	Physical Sensations	Behaviors

Activity 2: Body scan awareness [30 min]

During activity 1 we dealt with learning how to better observe our emotional experiences as well as the elements that make them up.

Today we will go one step further. We will introduce the skill of mindful observation. The concept of mindfulness is defined as a way of paying attention to present-moment experience with a mental stance of receptivity and acceptance (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

In other words, mindfulness is about being aware of our present emotional experiences in an accepting and non-judgmental way. By being accepting and non-judgmental it means allowing ourselves to experience thoughts, sensations and feelings as a natural part of our human nature and not label them as problematic.

Adopting a mindful attitude allows us, first, to become better observers of each emotional experience, and take in as much information as we can about it (remember that emotions are key sources of information about the world around us and our own needs and desires), and second, helps us allow the emotions we feel to fulfill their function in the moment, through acceptance.

Regarding the latter consequence of mindfulness, current research shows that if instead of allowing emotions to play out their protective and informative role, we attempt to criticize, avoid, and push them away the result may ultimately be the opposite of what we aim. The emotion may become intensified and persistent instead of going away, as it pushes to give us the message it originally intended.

Here are a few examples of judgmental observation:

“I shouldn’t be feeling this way”

“No one else is reacting like this.”

“Why am I not happier about this—there must be something wrong with me,”

“I should be angrier about this problem—I’m so weak”.

Mindfulness is about our ability to transform ourselves into an external observer who describes with a distant curiosity the emotional experience without judging whether it is correct or not.

For the rest of today's session, we will be working on specific practical exercises, which are intended to help us better understand the concept of mindful observation.

(Adapted from [Greater Good in Action, Science-Based Practices for a Meaningful Life](#))

This exercise asks you to systematically focus your attention on different parts of your body, from your feet to the muscles in your face. It is designed to help you develop a mindful awareness of your bodily sensations.

Please, sit comfortable in your chair. Have both legs on the floor and find a comfortable place for your arms. If you feel so, you may close your eyes. There will be music in the background while we give you instructions .

Music (two options to choose from):

-Sylvia Nakkach:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unmuDupi4Cs>

-Sacred Earth, Stillness:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8j23d_XD4

Begin by bringing your attention to your environment, slowly looking around and noticing that you are safe in this moment.

Take three deep breaths while listening to the music.

Bring your attention into your body.

You can close your eyes if that's comfortable for you or maintain a soft gaze, with your eyes partially closed but not focusing on anything in particular.

You can notice your body seated wherever you're seated, feeling the support of the chair or the floor beneath you.

Take a few deep, long breaths, within the range of what is comfortable for you.

And as you take a deep breath, bring in more oxygen, enlivening the body.

Follow the melody and the vibrations of the music. Where do you feel it in your body?

You can notice your feet on the floor, notice the sensations of your feet touching the floor. The weight and pressure, vibration, heat.

You can notice your legs against the chair, pressure, pulsing, heaviness, lightness.

Notice your back against the chair, supporting you. If you are not able to notice sensations in all areas of the body, that is OK. We are more connected to certain areas of the body than others, at different times of the day.

Bring your attention into your stomach area. If your stomach is tense or tight? Take a breath.

Notice your hands. Are your hands tense or tight?

Notice your arms. Feel any sensation in your arms.

Notice your neck and throat.

Then notice your whole-body present. Take one more breath.

Be aware of your whole body as best you can. Take a breath. Slowly open up the eyes, without focusing on anything in particular. Allow the

head and neck to gently rotate, taking in the space you are in. When you feel ready, you can return to your normal gaze.

Take home messages

There are no good or bad emotions. Emotions serve an adaptive role, and each one of them has its own utility in our lives.

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.” (Jon Kabat Zinn)

Homework

The present activity aims to help participants build awareness of their emotional experiences, breaking down experiences in order to help them experience emotions as more understandable and useful. manageable.

Ask participants to spot at least 2 emotional experiences within the week and to complete the following table. Invite them to use mindful observation.

<i>Thoughts</i>	<i>Physical Sensations</i>	<i>Behaviors</i>

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Meeting 3

RELAXATION



Attendance Tracking [5 min]

[The group facilitator tracks participants attendance to today's session].

Introduction [5 min]

In the previous meetings we talked about the components of emotional experience, as we emphasized the part of mindful awareness as a means of becoming more cognizant of our emotions, but also as a skill that can contribute to their effective management.

Homework Review [20 min]

Before we move on to today's topic, I'd like to check in on your experience with some of the recommendations from last session.

Activity 1: Blowing up like a balloon [45 min]

The last 3 sessions are about learning skills, which also help us manage our emotions more effectively, as well as reduce any unwanted tension. Each of our subsequent sessions is about learning effective techniques to manage one of the following components of the emotional experience:

- A) *Physical responses,*
- B) *thoughts,*
- C) *and finally, the behaviors related to the emotional experience.*

Today's module is about learning a fundamental technique, to help us effectively tolerate intense physical reactions. Extremely intense emotions may mean that their softer version was not allowed to exist and express itself earlier and so now they are really calling us to action. They convey something that needs to be handled, at the right moment. The goal of relaxation is not to make feeling go away. It is to give us a break from intense situations to allow us to go back and process them more fully, and to increase our tolerance for intense situations by lowering our baseline tension.

Both techniques are based on robust research findings about how our body works in conditions of stress and calmness.

Specifically, our body includes a system called the Autonomic Nervous System. This system consists of the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems. The first is activated in cases of threat and is responsible for preparing our body to respond to that threat (for flight or fight). For example, when the sympathetic system is activated, some usual physical reactions are that our heart rate and blood pressure increase, and there is tension in the limbs and muscles. This system acts as a protective mechanism, since it aims to protect us from dangers. However, many times, in our everyday life, this system is falsely activated, while there is no realistic risk (perhaps due to older memories associated with the specific situation or wrong assumptions we were taught by others).

On the other hand, the role of the parasympathetic is to restore the body to a state of rest.

The techniques we will show concern 2 basic mechanisms of the body, which are involved in the functioning of the Autonomic Nervous System: breathing and muscle function.

A number of scientific studies have shown that when our body is under tension, then the probability of experiencing more intense negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, etc. Increases, even if these are not warranted by the situation. Thus, these techniques help us show greater tolerance during stressful situations, but reducing our

baseline tension, and, by extension, strengthen us to handle them with a calmer reaction, reducing unnecessary escalation of emotions.

All of us are quite familiar with stressful moments in our daily life. Our body as a reaction to stress increases our heart rate, our muscle tension, and the speed at which we breathe, many times without our realizing. Many times, this leads to hyper-arousal (meaning an excessive arousal), that is unhealthy and dysfunctional. Lessening the associated tension and stress helps us to concentrate, focus, be able to deal with problems and improves our wellbeing (Beukes, Andersson, Manchaiah, & Kaldo, 2020; Schiraldi, 2017).

Quiz: How many of you had this incident: “You zone out in front of the TV at the end of a stressful day. Although this can have a relaxing effect, it does not start the body’s natural relaxation response” (Beukes, Andersson, Manchaiah, & Kaldo, 2020, p.77)

Instructions to participants:

1. *We’ll start with a short but effective calming technique involving breathing and music. Music in this case is an auditory aid to help you stay focused and relax the mind.*
2. *Schiraldi (2017): When we’re under stress (e.g. we find yourself running around, and our mind is racing) our breathing often becomes rapid and shallow. Even subtle shifts in breathing can result in less oxygen reaching the brain, heart, and extremities—along with a shift in blood acidity. As breathing calms, the ability to think, speak, remember, and perform improves.*

Music:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQYweHL9chg>

C. Carlos Nakai from the Canyon Trilogy.

3. *Burdick (2017): We will use an adaptation of the following technique to learn how to get Diaphragmatic breathing, a technique that helps strengthen your diaphragm, an important muscle that enables you to breathe in calm way:*

- a. *Place one hand on your chest.*
- b. *Place the other hand on your belly, just below your rib cage.*
- c. *Tune in and notice which hand is moving as you breathe normally.*
- d. *If the hand on your chest moves more, that means you are chest breathing, which is shallow and stressful.*
- e. *If the hand on your belly moves more, then you are belly breathing, which is deeper and more calming.*
- f. *Take a chest breath and blow on your hand. While you exhale make a smooth, quite sss sound*
- g. *Now take a deep belly breath and blow on your hand and make the sss sound while you exhale.*
- h. *Listen to the music and follow the melody with your breaths. When you take a belly breath, you may notice the air is warmer on your hand than from a chest breath.*
- i. *Practice taking a belly breath until the air is warmer.*
- j. *Place your hand on your belly.*
- k. *Practice inhaling and imagine that you are inflating a balloon in your belly.*
- l. *Feel your belly move as you inhale and then exhale. Imagine the balloon is slowly deflated and make the sss sound for as long as you wish.*
- m. *Try lying on your back and place your cell phone or another small object on your belly.*
- n. *Make the phone or other object move up and down as you breathe.*

[*[Visual aid 1](#)]

[*[Visual aid 2](#)]

[Make a brief discussion in the plenary to help participants reflect on their experience]

- *Any realization on how have you been breathing?*
- *What is the most important thing you have learned from this activity?*
- *What tips are you going to apply? How can you remind yourself to use abdominal breathing?*

[***Make a link with Mindful Awareness and how we can focus our attention on our breathing—to its natural rhythm and flow and the way it feels on each inhale and exhale]

Take home message

Relaxation can enhance our crisis coping techniques. Practicing relaxation techniques while we are under stress, we can return to a state of “wise mind” where we can make healthier decisions. (Dr. Katherine Compitus, from positive psychology.com).

Homework

Today’s session was about learning a fundamental technique to help our body relax. Now it is important to continue practicing this technique, so it will become a habit. You may try that at different times of the day and at different places, at times that you are not stressed and you have the space to practice and experience body relaxation. Set a weekly plan and times to exercise. Set reminders to help you keep on track. Spot everyday stress events to serve as relaxation opportunities (Hazlett-Stevens &. Bernstein, 2012).

[*Note that practice doesn't have to and in fact should not happen during stress, but at different times of the day and different places so that it becomes more automatic].

Barlow, Rapee, & Perini, (2014): *For this week:*

- *we recommend you spend 20' each day to practice your relaxation exercises at least twice a day*
- *Keep a record of your practice sessions so you can chart your progress and difficulties that occurred.*

Date and Time	Tension before (Rate from 1 to 10 with 10 being very relaxed)	Tension after (Rate from 1 to 10 with 10 being very relaxed)	Concentration during practice (Rate from 1 to 10 with 10 being very relaxed)	Comments (e.g. How well this went, questions raised etc.)

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<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/-/media/CCI/Mental-Health-Professionals/Panic/Panic---Worksheets/Panic-Worksheet---03---Relaxation-Monitoring-Worksheet.pdf>

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Music Resources (retrieved from

<https://www.unr.edu/counseling/virtual-relaxation-room/releasing-stress-through-the-power-of-music>):

[A Moment of Peace Meditation](#)

Aneal & Bradfield, "Heaven and Earth Spirits" track from *Life & Love*). Lovely contemporary piano music with accompanying instruments and nature scenes.

[Echoes of Time](#)

C. Carlos Nakai from the Canyon Trilogy. Serene Native American flute music, with a picture of Nakai backlit by the sun at the Grand Canyon.

[The Winding Path](#)

Ken Kern from *The Winding Path*. Highly rated, beautiful piano

music with accompanying instruments with pictures of exquisite flowers and plants.

[Classical Indian Music for Healing and Relaxing](#)

Gayatri Govindarajan, "Pure Deep Meditation" track. Lovely and rhythmic music played on the veena, the most ancient of the Indian plucked-instruments, with nature scenes.

[Angels of Venice](#)

Angels of Venice from Music for Harp, Flute and Cello. Classical with 3 instruments with nature pictures.

[Earth Drum](#)

"Spirit Vision," (David & Steve Gordon. Serene and lovely contemporary Native American informed-drumming music utilizing Taos Log Drum and Incan Pan along with other instruments and ocean/forest nature scenes.

[Sleep Deeply](#)

Dan Gibson. Nature sounds and instrumental, tranquil sleep music.

[Weightless](#)

Marconi Union. The sounds on this video are carefully arranged harmonies, rhythms, and bass lines that help slow a listener's heart rate, reduce blood pressure, and lower levels of the cortisol stress hormones.

Meeting 4

THINKING FLEXIBLY



Attendance Tracking [5 min]

[The group facilitator tracks participants attendance to today's session].

Introduction [5 min]

In the previous module we focused on a basic relaxation technique, which deals with the management of the first component of the emotional experience, the physical reactions. In this module we will deal with the second component, thoughts.

Homework Review [10 min]

Before we move on to today's topic, I'd like to check in on your experience with some of the recommendations from the last session.

Activity 1. Spotting thinking traps [25 min]

Thoughts are the component of emotional experience that allows us to make sense of an incident/event. Several classic theoretical models posit thoughts as a central component in the emotional experience, thus explaining how different individuals may have different emotional responses to the same situation.

It is worth noting that the components of emotion influence each other in a spiral fashion. That is, thoughts affect physical reactions, but also vice versa.

A large proportion of our thoughts are based on thought patterns and are so ingrained that they are automatically activated in our minds, often without us necessarily being aware of them. What is known is that many of our automatic thoughts contain biases, giving us an inflexible attitude towards the world around us. A significant amount of research studies support that such thoughts are usually associated with the experience of intense negative emotions.

The goal of our meeting today is to learn to better identify these types of inflexible thought patterns, as well as to adopt a more flexible attitude.

The human brain processes enormous amounts of information. We learn to sort out this information using automatic ways of interpreting the world. Automatic thinking helps us filter our experiences and respond to situations quickly and efficiently. In some situations, this is adaptive, however at other times these automatic thinking patterns may lead us to evaluate the world in an inflexible manner and producing dysfunctional responses.

[Present the following scenario to participants]

You receive a mail from your professor asking you to meet.

What is the first thought that comes to mind?

How would that impact your emotions and behaviors?

[Ask participants to generate examples of possible interpretations on the scenario. Discuss students' interpretations]

- *How would each interpretation impact their emotions and behaviors?*

[Present a list of the most well-known thinking traps (use one of the following lists)]

[Negative thinking traps](#)

<https://www.anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/ThinkingTraps.pdf>

[Common Mind Traps](#)

[Ask students if they can relate to some of these patterns]

Questions for facilitation:

1. *How often do you use them?*
2. *Which one is your 'favorite one'?*
3. *Can you imagine how these thought patterns can affect our physical reactions and behaviors? e.g. what would be a possible reaction as a result of these thoughts?*

Activity 2: Dealing with thinking traps [35 min]

Dealing with thinking traps requires to adopt a more flexible approach while interpreting daily events.

What comes first to your mind, on how to effectively deal with this type of thoughts?

- *Suppressing them- do not think about them*

[Use the activity instructions from [Student Affairs Coaching & Counselling, University of Twente](#)]

Ask the participants to Try NOT to think about a pink elephant for 3 minutes and see what happens.

[Then ask them]

Were you able to not think about it at all?

- *Scientists have discovered that the more you try to suppress your thoughts, the harder it is to get rid of them. In contrast, when you learn to accept and detach from your thoughts, they will no longer have power over you* (Winston & Seif, 2017).

[We introduce the concept of *Cognitive Flexibility*]

Cognitive Flexibility involves becoming a) mindful and non-judgmental observers of our thoughts and b) acting as ‘curious scientists’ and come up with other interpretations and perspectives about a situation. In both cases these exercises help us to realize that our thoughts are just that – products of our own minds – not necessarily reality.

Here’s a stepwise music technique to become flexible (please take a blank piece of paper in front of you and colorful crayons). For this activity we will use our thoughts to create a shorter (or longer if you wish so) song. The song can have the form of a chant or a rap-piece, you may use a melody/music pattern from a song you already like. Also, you may add body movements (including pauses for deep-breathing, clapping, rhythmical ideas) to help you enjoy the process and express yourselves.

Step 1: **Noticing and Naming**: *noticing the presence of cognitions, and nonjudgmentally naming them* (Harris, 2018, App. 4)

- ❖ Reflect on/identify a “thinking trap” thought that comes to you when you find yourself in a challenging situation
- ❖ Write down the thought as if you are writing the title of a song (nonjudgmentally name it, Harris, 2018, App. 4)
- ❖ Try to write the title of your song in a nonjudgmental way.

Here are few questions we might ask ourselves (Bourne, & Garano, 2016, p.173):

- *“Okay, so what is my mind telling me right now?”*
- *“What thoughts are going through my mind right now?”*
- *“Can I just notice what my mind is saying?”*
- *“What judgments am I making right now?”*

Step 2: **Bracket a thought:** *Take a thought that we notice and preface it with the phrase I'm having the thought that...* (Bourne, & Garano, 2016, p.174).

- ❖ Start the first verse of your song. To do so take the thought you have on the title and preface it with the phrase *I'm having the thought that...*

Step 3: **Validating our thoughts:** *Thinking this way is completely normal and natural. We all have thoughts of this nature* (Harris, 2013, p.134).

- ❖ Work on the next line of your song by adding:
“ And it is ok” “Thinking this way is completely ok” or a phrase with a similar meaning
- ❖ Work more on the first verse of your song to give it a close to completion form. Feel free to add lines (more information), repeat the phrase “ it is ok” and/or creatively identify more ways to include both the thought and the validation as part of the first verse of the song. Also, feel free to think of rhythmical patten to accompany it (ideas offered at the end of this activity).

Step 4: Asking yourself about the **workability of this thought** (Bourne, & Garano, 2016, p.176; Harris, 2013).

- *What evidence do I have for and against this thought that my mind produced? Is there any evidence it is true? Is there evidence that it is not true?*
 - *Could there be any other explanations or perspectives?*
 - *How bad would it really be? If it is reality, am I able to cope with it? Have I coped with it before?*
 - *If I go along with a particular thought, buy into it, and let it control me, where does that leave me?*
 - *What do I get for buying into it?*
 - *Does buying into that thought lead me to a better and more meaningful life?*
-
- *Work on the chorus of your song by reflecting on the questions above.*


- *The chorus can have any form or melody and you can base it on a song you enjoy and/or a song that has a special meaning for you.*

Step 5: Coming up with new interpretations.

- ❖ This is the last part of your song. It is the second verse. You may repeat what you have in the first verse and add new interpretations as you see them fit.

Easy ways to add body percussions is by following the rhythm while you:

- ❖ Clap your hands,
- ❖ Snap your fingers.
- ❖ Stomp your feet

- ❖ Take a deep breath while you stay quite ()
- ❖ Feel free to choose any other movements, dance figures, actions to accompany the song listening experience.

As a next step, you may share the movements with the group and perform together your song.

OK, let's practice using the following example (adopted from [Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Los Angeles](#)):

John has trouble expressing his opinions to friends and at university classes. He thinks that he must agree with everything his friends say, or they'll be angry with him. At university, he doesn't speak up during classes because he worries that he doesn't know the right things to say. He is afraid to ask anyone out on a date because he is sure they would say no.

Advice John on the steps taken to develop cognitive flexibility on this matter

(Below you may see an example for the beginning of the song. Please, keep in mind that there is no right or wrong answer and each song/creation can have a different form).

AGREE WITH EVERYTHING

I am having the thought that I must agree with everything
 I am having the thought they 'll be angry, if I don't
 And it is ok, oh, it is ok to feel this way

And all the things I did not say
 What they could be
 Is it that they are happy with me
 Start now and I will be wrong

Noticing and Naming	Bracket thoughts	Validating thoughts	Asking about the workability of thoughts	Coming up with new interpretations

Homework

For this week: Spot at least two situations in which you had a noticeable emotion (pick common everyday issues). Use the songwriting technique above to practice cognitive flexibility.

References

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Harris, R. (2013). *Getting unstuck in ACT: A clinician's guide to overcoming common obstacles in acceptance and commitment therapy*. New Harbinger Publications.

Additional Material

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Songwriting Resources

<https://blog.landr.com/10-songwriting-techniques/>

<https://musicgoat.com/5-songwriting-tips-techniques>

<http://www.therabeat.com/news-and-events/2020/4/24/the-emotional-benefits-of-songwriting-among-the-adolescent-populationnbsp>

]

Meeting 5

COUNTERING INAPPRPRIATE BEHAVIORS



Attendance Tracking [5 min]

[The group facilitator tracks participants attendance to today's session].

Introduction [5 min]

In this module we learn how to identify relevant emotional behaviors and then work with them to develop and engage in alternative, values-based actions.

Homework Review [10 min]

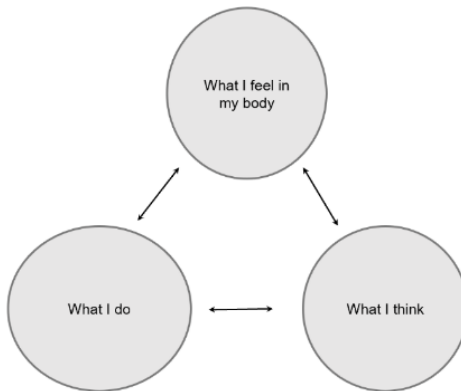
Before we move on today's topic, I'd like to check in on your experience with some of the recommendations from last session.

Activity 1. An alternative to emotional behaviors (Dunkley, 2020) [40 min]

The final module is about the last component, behaviors. Behaviors are characterized as the component through which emotion is expressed. As we mentioned in the previous modules, the components interact between them. This also applies to behaviors. Behaviors can be the result of physical reactions and thoughts, but at the same time, the behaviors we engage influence thoughts and physical reactions, thus strengthening or weakening the intensity of the emotional experience.

One area of interest is that of ‘emotional behaviors’. Each emotion comes with a related action urge. For example, when we are fearful, we may feel the urge to avoid or escape the source of that anxiety. Meanwhile, when we are sad, we may become passive, withdraw, or isolate ourselves, and when we are angry, we may become defensive or go on the attack. At times, these responses are appropriate (for example it is appropriate to run, if a car is coming towards you), at other times, especially during modern days where the dangers we face are typically not of a physical nature, these physical behaviors are not productive.

[We show the diagram of the 3 components model again, to help participants make the connection with previous sessions]



Sometimes, our response towards an emotion may be disproportionate to the situation we are facing. What makes a response appropriate or not is how closely aligned it is with our values. Opposite to Emotion Action is a technique for modulating emotionally driven behaviors that are unsuitable with our values.

One way to identify emotional behaviors is to record its short-term and long-term consequences.

Let's try to practice it using the same song or one of your choice:

[*Reminder to the participants: it is not the emotion that is inappropriate and needs to change. It is sometimes the response. And what makes a response appropriate or not is how closely aligned it is with our values]

Wrapping UP [10 min]

The purpose of this training was to help us become better aware of emotional experiences, as well as to acquire basic skills for managing them more effectively.

Briefly, the subject of the training concerned the following:

Emotional Experience	Unhelpful responses	Helpful strategies
Physical responses	Avoiding physical sensations e.g. using substances	Mindful awareness Relaxation techniques
Cognitions	Mind habits/ Cognitive errors/seeing thoughts as reality	Mindful awareness Cognitive flexibility
Behaviors	Incompatible/ Inappropriate behaviors	Mindful Awareness Opposite behaviors

Some key messages that would be important to remember:

- 1. Emotions are key sources of messages about the world around us.*
- 2. The conscious, non-judgmental, and accepting attitude towards emotional experience is the basis for healthy management of emotions.*
- 3. Relaxation techniques, adopting a flexible way of interpreting situations, and choosing behaviors that have both short-term and long-term benefits significantly enhance emotional health.*
- 4. One last thing to remember: all these techniques we learned are about behaviors and habits. They need systematic practice to become established. So, give yourself time, patience and compassion throughout your effort to change.*

References

Dunkley, C. (2020). *Regulating emotion the DBT way: A therapist's guide to opposite action*. Routledge.

PARTICIPANTS WORKBOOK

Meeting 1

ACTIVITY 1

Which of the following values fits your best possible self?

[We provide a values list from [Russ Harris](#)]

Take a blank sheet of paper and choose some colorful crayons in front of you. For the next 5 minutes, listen to the musical expert from Yian Tersen (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Np9gzXYpuI>). While listening, imagine this best possible future to be and draw freely on the page. You may include shapes, lines and anything else you would like to include. The process is not about the artistic result (how nice the picture is). Rather, it is about you and allowing yourself to reflect on the future.

Once the music is over, turn the page. Now, listen to the music again for about 10 minutes. While listening write continuously words, phrases, thoughts, and even stories (or more drawings if you feel so) about these areas of your life in your best possible future and which qualities guide you to:

- o who you would like to be*
- o how you would like our lives to be*
- o how you would like to behave*

[*Please, note, that the quality of writing is not relevant, just the production of ideas].

ACTIVITY 2

Instructions:

6. *Read thoroughly what you have written about your best possible self. Pick an area that you haven't fully reached.*
7. *What role do emotions play in this life area?*
8. *Now, think of a song that describes/relates to this area that you haven't fully reached.*
9. *Listen to the song privately (you may use your phone and headphones) and pay attention to the lyrics. If you want, you may look for the lyrics on the internet and read them while you are listening to the song*
10. *What does the song mean to you? What connections do you make to the lyrics of the song?*

ACTIVITY 3

SMART GOALS

Goal	SMART goal
<p>.....</p>	<p>Specific: Which is the specific behavior I want to do that will make my life more aligned with my values? Who needs to be included? What type of activity will I be doing?</p> <p>Measurable: How often? When? For how long?</p> <p>Attainable: Do I have the skills required to achieve the goal? If not, can I obtain them? Do I have the money? How difficult is to go there? Do I have enough time? Is this goal challenging but also achievable based on my resources?</p> <p>Relevant: Why am I setting this goal now? Is this goal aligned to my values? Am I going to enjoy doing this activity? Am I familiar with this activity?</p> <p>Time-Limited: What's the deadline and is it realistic? When should I start?</p>
Action	Which actions do I have to take to accomplish my goal? Make a list of steps starting with the last step to reach your goal.

Homework

Formulate a SMART goal you want to achieve related to experiencing emotions/emotional management.

My SMART goal:

S Click or tap here to enter text.

M Click or tap here to enter text.

A Click or tap here to enter text.

R Click or tap here to enter text.

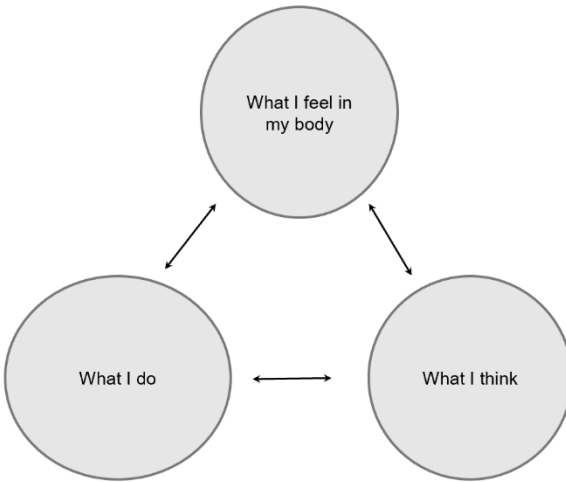
T Click or tap here to enter text.

Meeting 2

ACTIVITY 1

Music can also evoke emotions. Bring to mind a situation or an emotion that makes you feel uncomfortable. Then, try listening intently to this music bringing your attention back to the music itself whenever your mind has wandered or has started to evaluate this experience (for example this is good or bad). See what you learn about what you feel in your body, what you think, and what you do while sitting with difficult feelings by practicing this kind of meditation.

<https://soundcloud.com/chkhito/to-relax>



Now we want to spend some time to work with songs to identify the components of emotional experience. Think of a song that expresses what you feel about a difficult situation. Find a quiet place and listen

to it (you may have the lyrics along as well). Reflect on the story of the song. Why do you relate to it? Is it the music, the rhythm, the lyrics? How does it help to experience challenging emotions? Do you feel different in different parts of your body? Do you think the song lyrics relate to your own emotions? Do you find it helpful for that particular challenging situation? Then, complete the following table:

Examples with songs:

3. *Romeo and Juliet*, by Dire Straits

<https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvOrqLB1iLI>

4. *Black*, by Pearl Jam

<https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=IpwHB2U3J1s&list=RDRAMVMZvOrqLB1iLI>

Thoughts	Physical Sensations	Behaviors

ACTIVITY 2

Please, sit comfortable in your chair. Have both legs on the floor and find a comfortable place for your arms. If you feel so, you may close your eyes. There will be music in the background while we give you instructions .

Music (two options to choose from):

-Sylvia Nakkach:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unmuDupi4Cs>

-Sacred Earth, Stillness:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8j23d_XD4

Begin by bringing your attention to your environment, slowly looking around and noticing that you are safe in this moment.

Take three deep breaths while listening to the music.

Homework

The present activity aims to help participants build awareness of their emotional experiences, breaking down experiences in order to help them experience emotions as more understandable and useful, manageable.

Ask participants to spot at least 2 emotional experiences within the week and to complete the following table. Invite them to use mindful observation.

<i>Thoughts</i>	<i>Physical Sensations</i>	<i>Behaviors</i>

Meeting 3

ACTIVITY1

Music:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQYweHL9chg>

C. Carlos Nakai from the Canyon Trilogy

[*[Visual aid 1](#)]

[*[Visual aid 2](#)]

Homework

Today's session was about learning a fundamental technique to help our body relax. Now it is important to continue practicing this technique, so it will become a habit. You may try that at different times of the day and at different places, at times that you are not stressed and you have the space to practice and experience body relaxation. Set a weekly plan and times to exercise. Set reminders to help you keep on track. Spot everyday stress events to serve as relaxation opportunities (Hazlett-Stevens & Bernstein, 2012).

Date and Time	Tension before (Rate from 1 to 10 with 10 being very relaxed)	Tension after (Rate from 1 to 10 with 10 being very relaxed)	Concentration during practice (Rate from 1 to 10 with 10 being very relaxed)	Comments (e.g. How well this went, questions raised etc.)

Meeting 4

ACTIVITY 1

[Present a list of the most well-known thinking traps (use one of the following lists)]

[Negative thinking traps](#)

<https://www.anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/ThinkingTraps.pdf>

[Common Mind Traps](#)

ACTIVITY 2

Noticing and Naming	Bracket thoughts	Validating thoughts	Asking about the workability of thoughts	Coming up with new interpretations

Homework

For this week: Spot at least two situations in which you had a noticeable emotion (pick common everyday issues). Use the songwriting technique above to practice cognitive flexibility.

Our goal today is to learn how to be mindful observers of the appropriateness of emotion driven behaviors and evaluate their possible consequences.

<i>Which are the signs of me having an emotion?</i>	<i>What behavior comes up directly to my mind?</i>	<i>Consequences?</i>	<i>Alternative Actions?</i>
<p><i>Name it:</i></p> <p><i>Physical Sensations:</i></p> <p><i>Thoughts:</i></p>		<p><i>Short-term:</i></p> <p><i>Long-term:</i></p>	

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