“Problems are a natural part of life for everyone. If I recognize problems that come up and work on solving them, it’s a lot less stressful. Learning positive ways to cope with anxiety and hearing voices has kept me from going back to drinking. Drinking never really worked.”

— LETICIA .G, retail clerk in recovery from schizophrenia and alcohol use disorder
The Stress-Vulnerability Model of Mental Illnesses and Substance Use Disorders

- **Stress**
  - Coping Skills for stress and symptoms
  - Social Support

- **Biological Vulnerability**
  - Recovery Skills
    - Pursuit of goals
    - Knowledge of mental illness and substance use
    - Healthy lifestyle
    - A plan for staying well and preventing relapses
  - Mental Illness and relapse of symptoms
  - Substance Use Disorder and relapse of using alcohol or drugs

- **Medication**
  - Skills for not using substances
Questions to get us started:

What helps people solve problems?
What are some of the symptoms that bother you?
What coping strategies do you use for dealing with the symptoms that bother you?
Which problems and symptoms would you like to develop new coping strategies for?

We will cover 6 topics in this Module:

Topic 1: Solving Problems
Topic 2: Identifying Symptoms that Bother You
Topic 3: Coping by Using Positive Self-talk and Exercise
Topic 4: Coping by Talking to a Supportive Person and Using Relaxation Techniques
Topic 5: Coping by Using Distraction and Behavioral Activation
Topic 6: Additional Coping Strategies for Specific Symptoms

Reminder, set an Agenda:

Here is the format of each Enhanced IMR session:
1. Review the last session
2. Check in on
   ☐ home practice
   ☐ goals
   ☐ substance use
   ☐ symptoms
3. Learn information about a new topic
4. Summarize session and decide on home practice
Topic 1
Solving Problems

Everyone experiences problems. No one has a completely smooth path. In fact, we should probably expect problems, rather than be surprised by them. However, if we don’t work on solving problems, they can cause a lot of stress. And stress can lead to mental health symptoms getting worse, and to increased problems with drinking or taking drugs. Therefore, it’s best to directly address problems rather than avoid them. This Module will help you identify problems and symptoms that bother you, and will present a wide variety of strategies to cope with them. We will begin by exploring problem solving techniques.

This session will introduce three subjects related to solving problems:

- An example of step-by-step problem solving
- Identifying problems you can work on

Each of these ideas will be described in more detail throughout this topic. We encourage you to try them with your E-IMR practitioner, or with other group members. Practicing skills during sessions can increase your confidence for using them on your own.


Many people find it useful to follow a step-by-step method of solving problems. You learned about the 6-step method of problem solving in Module 1, Recovery Strategies. You may have been using this method to solve problems as you progressed through E-IMR.

Because step-by-step problem-solving is helpful in so many situations, we are going to review it here.

KEY POINT
Encountering problems is very common in everyone’s life.
As a reminder, here are the steps of problem solving:

**STEP 1**
Define the problem you would like to solve. Be as specific as possible.

**STEP 2**
Brainstorm ideas for solving the problem. List at least three possible solutions. Get other people’s ideas whenever possible. At this stage, don’t evaluate the solutions, or decide on the one you definitely want to use.

**STEP 3**
Every solution has advantages ("pro’s") and disadvantages ("con’s."). Evaluate each solution and identify the pro’s and con’s associated with it. Start with the “pro’s.”

**STEP 4**
Choose the best solution for solving the problem. Be as practical as possible.

**STEP 5**
Plan the steps for carrying out the solution. Think about “what, where, when, and who.”

**STEP 6**
Set a date for evaluating how well your plan is working. Focus on the positive first: What has been accomplished? What went well? Then look at whether the problem has been solved. If it has not been solved, decide whether to revise your plan or try a new one.

**KEY POINT**
The step-by-step problem solving method can help people solve problems and find solutions for challenges as they work towards their goals.

An example of step-by-step problem solving

Martina was looking for a job and gave out her cell phone number to prospective employers. She often missed their calls, however, because her cell phone ran out of power. She used the step-by-step method of solving problems to figure out how she could keep her cell phone charged. Here is the way she used problem-solving to come up with a potential solution.

**STEP 1: Define the problem.**

*I keep running out of power on my cell phone when I am away from home.*

**STEP 2: Brainstorm ideas for solving the problem.**

*a. Put a note on my door or mirror to remind myself to charge the phone before I go out.*

*b. Take a charger with me.*

*c. Make charging my cell phone part of my daily routine.*
STEP 3: Evaluate the pro’s and con’s of each solution.

a. Pro’s about putting a note on the door or mirror: it would help me remember to charge the phone before I go out.
   Con’s: I am usually in a hurry by the time I get to the door.

b. Pro’s about taking a charger with me: I could plug in the charger when I am away from home.
   Con’s: Sometimes there is not an electrical outlet available (like on the bus).

c. Pro’s about charging my phone as part of my daily routine: I would have power on my phone every day; it’s easier to remember things that are routine (like brushing my teeth before going to bed, or having coffee in the morning).
   Con’s: It may take a little extra time every day.

STEP 4: Choose the best solution.
Charging my phone every day as part of my routine.

STEP 5: Plan the steps for carrying out the solution. Think about “what, where, when, and who.”

1. What you’re going to do: Charge my phone when I am going to bed at night.
2. Where you’re going to do it: I will keep my charger on the bedside table next to my lamp.
3. When you’re going to do it: Just before I turn off the lamp, I will plug my cell phone into the charger. I will get started tonight.
4. Who can help you with this: I don’t think I need anyone’s help on this.

STEP 6: Set a date for evaluating how well your plan is working:
One week from today I will ask myself how many times this week I was able to charge my phone at night. I will give myself credit for these times. Then I will ask myself if my plan is working. If I didn’t miss any calls, it’s a sign my plan is working. If I miss a call, it’s a sign my plan isn’t working perfectly, and I will consider revising my plan.
TOPIC 1 Solving Problems

Let’s Talk About It

What do you think are the advantages of going through the problem in a step-by-step way like Martina did?

How well do you think Martina’s plan will work to solve the problem of her cell phone running out of power?

Identifying problems you can work on

You will now have the opportunity to use the step-by-step problem solving method. There are many types of problems that you might benefit from addressing. Review this list of common problems; and discuss whether you might like to work on any of them.

- Finding a fun activity I can do without drinking or using drugs
- Learning to cook a main dish for dinner
- Saving money for the holidays
- Cleaning up my room
- Not losing my keys
- Finding a Dual Recovery Anonymous meeting that I like attending

Make It Your Own

Identifying a Problem for the Step-by-Step Method of Problem Solving

Write down a few problems that you are currently having:

1. ______________________________________________________________
2. ______________________________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________________________
4. ______________________________________________________________

Pick one that you would like to try solving using the step-by-step method of problem solving. Put a star next to the problem you choose from your list.
**Home Practice**

**Solving Problems**

Use the step-by-step method of problem solving to address the problem you identified in the Make it Your Own section of this topic. You can use the blank Step-by-Step Problem Solving Worksheet on the next page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make a plan for home practice this week:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What I will do</td>
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<tr>
<td>When</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With whom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Goal Tracking**

Looking at your goal tracking sheet, which step will you work on this week?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The step I will work on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With whom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"You have to practice something to make it your own!"
**Step-by-Step Problem Solving Worksheet**

**STEP 1.** Define the problem as specifically and simply as possible.

__________________________________________________________________________________

**STEP 2.** List at least three possible solutions to the problem. Don’t evaluate them yet.

a.  

________________________________________________________________________________

b.  

________________________________________________________________________________

c.  

________________________________________________________________________________

**STEP 3.** For each possible solution, list one advantage (pro) and one disadvantage (con).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible solution</th>
<th>Advantage/pro</th>
<th>Advantage/con</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 4.** Choose the best solution or combination of solutions. What has the most chance of succeeding?

_______________________________________________________________________

**STEP 5.** Plan the steps for carrying out the solution. Think about who, what, when, and where.

a.  

________________________________________________________________________________

b.  

________________________________________________________________________________

c.  

________________________________________________________________________________

d.  

________________________________________________________________________________

e.  

________________________________________________________________________________

**STEP 6.** Set a date to follow up. ________________________________________________

When you follow-up give yourself credit for what you have done. Decide whether the problem has been solved. If not, decide whether to revise the plan or try another one. Record your answer here.

___________________________________________________________________________________
Encountering problems is very common in everyone’s life.

The step-by-step problem solving method can help people solve problems and find solutions for challenges as they work towards their goals.
Topic 2
Identifying Symptoms that Bother You

For many people, recovery from mental illness and substance use problems includes learning how to cope with problematic symptoms. The good news is that there are lots of things you can do to cope with these types of symptoms. In this module, you will learn several strategies that can help you cope with your symptoms more effectively, and enable you to work toward your personal goals and enjoy a quality life.

This session will introduce two important subjects to help you get started with developing strategies to cope with symptoms:

💡 Identifying problematic symptoms

💡 Assessing problematic symptoms

Each of these ideas will be described in more detail throughout this topic. We encourage you to try them with your E-IMR practitioner, or with other group members. Practicing skills during sessions can increase your confidence for using them on your own.

Identifying problematic symptoms

Before going further, it’s important learn the difference between symptoms that are warning signs of a relapse of mental illness, and symptoms that may simply be ongoing and manageable. Warning signs of relapse are new symptoms that occur a few days or weeks before a relapse of mental illness symptoms, or a worsening in persistent symptoms that occurs right before a relapse. Identifying and recognizing your own warning signs of relapse is part of developing a personal plan to stay well and prevent relapses and hospitalizations. This plan usually involves contacting your treatment team and working with them to prevent a possible relapse. More information about developing a plan for preventing relapses is provided in Module 10, Developing a Plan for Staying Well.

People may also experience symptoms that are distressing or interfere with their lives, but that are not warning signs of relapse. For example, some people experience persistent symptoms, or symptoms that fluctuate (go up and down) in severity, despite taking medications or using other treatment methods. People may also experience symptoms that are distressing, or interfere with their lives during and after
a relapse of symptoms. These symptoms often gradually become less severe over a period ranging from several weeks to several months, and may stop altogether. However, until those symptoms improve, they can be very troubling. Learning effective strategies for coping with these types of symptoms can reduce your distress and the interference caused by these symptoms in your life.

## Make It Your Own

### Assessing Problematic Symptoms

The checklist below lists examples of common distressing or troublesome symptoms. Review the examples and check off the ones you have experienced. Use the scale to rate how distressing they were or are to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Examples of this symptom</th>
<th>I experience this symptom fairly often (yes or no)</th>
<th>If yes, how distressing is this symptom? (1-5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Feeling sad, hopeless, or guilty; difficulty sleeping; appetite problems; lack of pleasure; thoughts about death or hurting yourself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety and tension</td>
<td>Feeling worried, fearful, agitated, panicky, racing heart, rapid breathing; avoiding things that make you feel anxious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallucinations</td>
<td>Hearing a voice when no one is speaking; seeing, smelling, or tasting things that are not there</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TOPIC 2  Identifying Symptoms that Bother You

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Examples of this symptom</th>
<th>I experience this symptom fairly often (yes or no)</th>
<th>If yes, how distressing is this symptom? (1-5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paranoia or other worrisome thoughts</td>
<td>Believing that people are talking about you or are against you; thinking someone on the radio or television is talking about you or directly to you; believing that you see special signs meant just for you in random places</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep problems</td>
<td>Difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep or waking up early; sleeping too much; feeling tired despite sleeping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightmares</td>
<td>Repeated bad dreams that may be related to a traumatic event</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low stamina/low energy</td>
<td>Lack of energy; getting tired easily (lack of stamina); feeling slowed down; difficulty finishing something that you start</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration problems</td>
<td>Losing track of conversations; having difficulty focusing on reading or watching something; “spacing out” or losing concentration easily</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cravings</td>
<td>Strong desire or urge for using drugs or alcohol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flashbacks or intrusive memories of traumatic events</td>
<td>Unexpected and distressing memories of a traumatic event, suddenly feeling like the traumatic event is happening to you again</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overarousal, restless, or agitated feelings</td>
<td>Feeling jumpy and being easily startled by minor things; feeling super-alert and never letting your guard down; feeling angry often or being easily provoked</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Let’s Talk About It**  Which symptoms did you check off? Which symptoms cause you the most distress, or interfere the most with your life? What is an example of a recent situation when one of these symptoms interfered with doing something you wanted or needed to do?
Make It Your Own

Identifying Symptoms to Address with Coping Strategies

Based on the Assessing Problematic Symptoms checklist, and your answers to the questions in the Let’s Talk About It section above, which symptoms would you like to improve your coping strategies for?

1. ____________________
2. ____________________
3. ____________________
4. ____________________

Keep these symptoms in mind as you learn coping strategies in topics 2–6 of this Module.

KEY POINT
Identifying symptoms that bother you can help you develop coping strategies that reduce stress and improve your quality of life.
Home Practice

Identifying Symptoms that Bother You

Choose one of the following options to practice or make one up.

**OPTION 1:** Use the Tracking Problematic Symptoms chart on the next page to keep track of symptoms you experience this week, and how much they distress you.

**OPTION 2:** Show your Assessing Problematic Symptoms checklist to a supportive person. Share how these symptoms have interfered with things you want to accomplish.

Make a plan for home practice this week:

- **What I will do**
- **When**
- **Where**
- **With whom**

Goal Tracking

Looking at your goal tracking sheet, which step will you work on this week?

To complete this step, I will use the following plan:

- **When**
- **Where**
- **With whom**
## Tracking Problematic Symptoms

Place an X for each day that you experience a symptom. Next to the X, use a number from 1 to 5 to rate how much distress this symptom caused you. Use the following rating scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No distress</td>
<td>A little distress</td>
<td>Moderate distress</td>
<td>Quite a bit of distress</td>
<td>Extreme distress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problematic Symptom</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thurs</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>Sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Anxiety and tension</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hallucinations</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paranoia or other worrisome thoughts</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Sleep problems</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Concentration problems</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cravings</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flashbacks or intrusive memories of traumatic event</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over arousal or restless or agitated feelings</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Points • Topic 2

Identifying Symptoms that Bother You

Identifying symptoms that bother you can help you develop coping strategies that reduce stress and improve your quality of life.
Topic 3
Coping by Using Positive Self-Talk and Exercise

The next four topics of this module will help you learn and practice several good strategies for coping with ongoing symptoms and problems. These techniques include using positive self-talk, exercise, relaxation, talking to a supportive person, using distraction, and “faking it until you make it”—using new behaviors intentionally, while you are making the long-term changes you want to see.

This session will introduce two important coping strategies to help you cope with ongoing problems and symptoms:

💡 Using positive self-talk

💡 Exercise

Each of these coping strategies will be described in more detail throughout this topic. We encourage you to try them with your E-IMR practitioner, or with other group members. Practicing skills during sessions can increase your confidence for using them on your own.

Using positive self-talk

When people feel distressed or down on themselves, they often have a lot of negative self-talk, such as “I’m no good,” or “I have no future.” Positive self-talk can combat negative thoughts by reminding you of your strengths, resiliency, and potential. You can say things to yourself like “This may be a hard time, but I can get through this,” or “I can handle this,” or “There are lots of people who care about me and stand behind me.” It’s important to remind yourself of your accomplishments. Do not focus on things that have gone wrong, or mistakes you might have made.

Positive self-talk is a good way of cheering yourself on, and getting yourself through a difficult emotion or situation. It can be used for a variety of symptoms. It is especially helpful for coping with the symptoms of depression, anxiety and tensions, hallucinations, cravings, and memories of traumatic events. See the table below for some examples of how positive self-talk can be helpful for these symptoms.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Example of how positive self-talk can be used for this symptom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Depression</strong></td>
<td>People find it helpful to say things to themselves like:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “This is a discouraging time, but there are lots of reasons to be optimistic,”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “I am a good person and people tell me they appreciate the things I do for them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People who are depressed also find it helpful to remind themselves of some of their accomplishments by saying things to themselves like:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “I have gotten through a lot of difficult things in the past.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anxiety and tension</strong></td>
<td>It can be helpful to remind yourself that feelings of anxiety come and go by saying things to yourself such as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “This situation will pass.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “If I hang in there, I know my anxiety will go down.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “I’ve worried about things like this before and they were not as bad as I thought.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hallucinations</strong></td>
<td>Saying positive things to yourself can help combat what the hallucinations are saying. For example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “I’m not going to let those voices get to me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “I’m don’t have to believe those voices.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “I’m a good person; lots of people tell me so.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive self-talk can also be used to challenge beliefs that auditory hallucinations control you. For example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “Hang in there; I’m in charge of my own life, not those voices.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “Those voices think they are so important, but they can’t control me—I’m in control here.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “Those voice don’t even have a body; how do they think they can control me when they don’t even physically exist?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cravings</strong></td>
<td>People can often manage cravings if they think positively about their ability to cope with them. Some examples of positive self-talk are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “I can handle these cravings; I have done it many times before.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “This is just a craving; it will pass and I don’t have to act on it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Memories of traumatic events</strong></td>
<td>When memories of traumatic events intrude into your thoughts, it can help to say positive things to yourself, such as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “It’s just a memory, not something happening right now.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “I can handle this memory and let it come and go.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “I’m not going to let this memory take the upper hand and upset me—I’ve got better things to do.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Make It Your Own
Identify Symptoms to Address with Positive Self-Talk

Think about the symptoms you identified as distressing. In the table below, place an X by the symptoms you already use positive self-talk to cope with, and the ones you think might benefit from using positive self-talk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom I experience</th>
<th>I already use positive self-talk as a way of coping with this symptom</th>
<th>I would like to try using positive self-talk as a way of coping with this symptom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

**KEY POINT**
Positive self-talk is a good way of cheering yourself on, and getting yourself through a difficult emotion or situation. It is especially helpful for coping with the symptoms of depression, anxiety and tensions, hallucinations, cravings, and memories of traumatic events.
Try it Out
Practicing Positive Self-Talk

Practicing can make you feel more confident, and it can help you be more effective in your life.

**STEP 1**
Review the steps of the skill:

- Identify the negative thought you are having.
- Replace your negative thought with a positive one.
- Repeat your positive thought to yourself until your distress is lowered.

**STEP 2**
Watch a demonstration of the skill: Your E-IMR practitioner will demonstrate how to use the steps of the skill.

**STEP 3**
Review the demonstration: Your E-IMR practitioner will ask for feedback about the demonstration. The practitioner will ask questions like: Did I follow the steps? How effective do you think I was?

**STEP 4**
Try it out: Now is your chance to try out the skill. Describe with whom, when, and where you would use the skill. Your E-IMR practitioner will play the part of the other person.

**STEP 5**
Get feedback: After you try it out, your E-IMR practitioner will guide a discussion about: what you did well, how effective your performance was, and (possibly) how you could do it even better.

**STEP 6**
Continue practice and feedback: Your E-IMR practitioner will help set up more situations to try it out if needed. After each practice, your practitioner will guide a review.

**STEP 7**
Try it out on your own: Plan with whom, when, and where you could practice this skill on your own.
Make It Your Own

Plan for Trying Positive Self-Talk as a Coping Strategy

Now is a good time to make a plan to try using positive self-talk to cope with the symptoms you identified above. Keep in mind that using coping strategies is like learning any other skill, such as driving, playing an instrument, or playing a sport. It takes practice to get good at it and to feel the benefits of it.

What symptom will you try using positive self-talk to cope with?

_________________________________________________________________

When will you try using positive self-talk? (Include days, times and situations if possible.)

_________________________________________________________________

Where will you use positive self-talk?

____________________________________

What positive things do you plan to say to say to yourself?

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

Exercise

Exercise is an effective strategy for coping with and reducing the severity of a variety of different symptoms. There are many ways to get exercise, including walking, jogging, biking, skateboarding, tennis, and swimming. Many people also like taking exercise or dance classes, or working out at the gym because those activities also provide social support. The most important thing is to do the exercise for a long enough period of time to get some benefit, and to do it regularly (at least several times per week).

The following table provides examples of how exercise can help people cope with specific symptoms and reduce their severity.
### TOPIC 3  Coping by Using Positive Self-Talk and Exercise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Example of how exercise can be used to cope with this symptom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Regular, vigorous exercise improves people’s mood and energy level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety and tension</td>
<td>Regular exercise reduces anxiety and high levels of tension, helps people take their mind off worrying, and gives them a chance to focus on something more positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallucinations</td>
<td>Exercising shifts your attention to something different than hallucinations (such as focusing on an exercise activity.) Doing this can reduce the severity of the hallucinations and the interference they cause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep problems</td>
<td>Vigorous physical activity during the day can create natural feelings of fatigue at night that help people sleep better and feel more rested in the morning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low energy/stamina</td>
<td>Exercise can help people feel more energized and recharged.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Let’s Talk About It

Which of your distressing symptoms do you already use exercise to cope with? How does this work for you?

Which of your distressing symptoms do you think might benefit from exercise?

How would you like to try using exercise to cope with these symptoms?
Make It Your Own

Plan for Trying Exercise as a Coping Strategy

Now is a good time to make a plan to try using exercise to cope with the symptoms you identified in “Let’s Talk About It.” Keep in mind that using coping strategies is like learning any other skill, such as driving a car, playing an instrument, or playing a sport. It takes practice to get good at it and to feel the benefits of it.

What kind of exercise do you want to try? ________________________________

Is there anyone you can think of who you might like to join you in the exercise?

_______________________________________________________________

When will you exercise? (Include days and times.) ____________________________

Where will you exercise? ____________________________________________

How long will you exercise each time? ___________________________

Would you like someone to help you make your exercise plan and follow through on it? If so, who might that person be? ____________________________

Do you need any equipment? If so, how can you get this equipment?

_______________________________________________________________

KEY POINT

Exercise is a particularly helpful strategy for coping with depression, anxiety and tension, hallucinations, and sleep problems.
Home Practice
Coping by Using Positive Self-Talk and Exercise

Choose one of the following options to practice or make one up.

**OPTION 1:** Follow your plan for using positive self-talk to cope with a symptom this week. Use the Coping Strategy Tracking Sheet on the next page to track results.

**OPTION 2:** Follow your plan for using exercise to cope with a symptom this week. Use the Coping Strategy Tracking Sheet on the next page to track results.

Make a plan for home practice this week:

- What I will do
- When
- Where
- With whom

Goal Tracking

Looking at your goal tracking sheet, which step will you work on this week?

To complete this step, I will use the following plan:

- When
- Where
- With whom

“You have to practice something to make it your own!”
# Coping Strategy Tracking Sheet

Use this tracking sheet to compare your symptom rating before and after using each coping strategy you try.

**STEP 1:** Each day, write down which symptom or symptoms you experience. Then rate how distressed this symptom makes you feel, using the following 1 to 5 scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No distress</td>
<td>A little distress</td>
<td>Moderate distress</td>
<td>Quite a bit of distress</td>
<td>Extreme distress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 2:** Choose a coping strategy to try. Record the strategy, and after using it, rate how distressed you feel using the 1 to 5 scale below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day of week</th>
<th>What symptom did you experience?</th>
<th>How distressed did you feel? (use scale above)</th>
<th>Coping strategy you tried</th>
<th>How distressed did you feel after using the coping strategy? (use scale above)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Depressed, low energy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Thurs</td>
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<td>Sat</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Points • Topic 3
Coping by Using Positive Self-Talk and Exercise

Positive self-talk is a good way of cheering yourself on, and getting yourself through a difficult emotion or situation. It is especially helpful for coping with the symptoms of depression, anxiety and tensions, hallucinations, cravings, and memories of traumatic events.

Exercise is a particularly helpful strategy for coping with depression, anxiety and tension, hallucinations, and sleep problems.
This session will introduce two important strategies to help you cope with ongoing problems and symptoms:

- Talking to a supportive person
- Using relaxation techniques

Each of these coping strategies will be described in more detail throughout this topic. We encourage you to try them with your E-IMR practitioner, or with other group members. Practicing skills during sessions can increase your confidence for using them on your own.

Talking to a supportive person

When people are distressed about something, such as experiencing a symptom, it is often very helpful to talk to a friend, family member, care provider, counselor, or roommate. It is often good to have several people you can talk to in order to avoid over-burdening one person. Talking specifically about your concerns with people can help you identify practical solutions, improve your mood, and make you feel less alone. Also, even if you just talk about ordinary things with others, it can take your mind off the things that are worrying you.

Talking to a supportive person is useful for a wide variety of symptoms. It is particularly helpful for anxiety, depression, hallucinations and paranoia, or other worrisome thoughts. The following table gives some examples of how getting social support by talking to someone can help you cope with these symptoms.
### Topic 4: Coping by Talking to a Supportive Person and Using Relaxation Techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Example of using social support to cope with this symptom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Talking to a friend, family member, care provider, counselor, or roommate can be very helpful. If there is something you feel upset about, you can tell the other person about your feelings, and then ask the person for ideas about what you could do to feel better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety and tension</td>
<td>Anxiety is often related to specific concerns and problems, such as work, school, relationships, and important decisions people have to make. People can also be anxious when they feel uncertain about their future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talking things over can help you address concerns, identify practical solutions to problems, and make plans for achieving personal goals. This can both reduce anxious feelings and address the causes of those feelings. If you know something that will help you feel less anxious, ask the person to help you do it. If you don’t know what to do, ask the person’s advice about what you could do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallucinations</td>
<td>Simply talking to someone you trust about what you are experiencing can help you feel less distressed. While people often know that hallucinations are not real, sometimes they’re not sure. If you think you may be having a hallucination, one strategy is to check out your experience with someone you trust. For example, in the movie <em>A Beautiful Mind</em>, when the mathematician John Nash was greeted by someone who wanted to talk to him about being awarded the Nobel Prize in economics, he wasn’t sure whether this person was real or a hallucination. To check this out, he asked someone standing near him whether he saw the individual who was talking to him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You can also have a conversation with someone about an entirely different topic than the hallucinations. Talking about other topics can help distract you and reduce the severity of the hallucinations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paranoia or other worrisome thoughts</td>
<td>Talking to someone about ordinary things can take people’s minds off their concerns that other people or organizations are against them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes it helps to problem solve with a supportive person when you’re trying to figure out how to respond to your troubling beliefs. You can ask the person if he or she can help you think of other possible explanations for your belief. Recognizing that there may be alternative explanations can help you feel less paranoia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Let’s Talk About It**  
Which of your distressing symptoms do you cope with by talking to a supportive person? How does this work for you?  
Which other distressing symptoms do you think you might benefit from talking to a supportive person to cope?  
How would you like to try talking to a supportive person to cope with these symptoms?
Try it Out

Practice the Coping Skill of Talking to a Supportive Person

STEP 1
Review the steps of the skill:

▷ Tell the person what you are experiencing and how you feel.
▷ Ask the person for their ideas about what you might do to feel better.
▷ If it is relevant, ask the person if they think there may be alternative explanations for your beliefs or worries.
▷ Consider suggesting how the person might help you.
▷ Thank the person for talking with you.

STEP 2
Watch a demonstration of the skill: Your E-IMR practitioner will demonstrate how to use the steps of this skill.

STEP 3
Review the demonstration: Your E-IMR practitioner will ask for feedback about the demonstration. The practitioner will ask questions like: Did I follow the steps? How effective do you think I was?

STEP 4
Try it out: Now is your chance to try out the skill. Describe with whom, when, and where you would use the skill. Your E-IMR practitioner will play the part of the other person.

STEP 5
Get feedback: After you try it out, your E-IMR practitioner will guide a discussion about: what you did well, how effective your performance was, and (possibly) how you could do it even better.

STEP 6
Continue practice and feedback: Your E-IMR practitioner will help set up more situations to try it out if needed. After each practice, your practitioner will guide a review.

STEP 7
Try it out on your own: Plan with whom, when, and where you could practice this skill on your own.
Make It Your Own

Plan for Using Talking to a Supportive Person as a Coping Strategy

Now is a good time to make a plan for talking to a supportive person to cope with the symptoms you identified above. Keep in mind that using coping strategies is like learning any other skill, such as driving, playing an instrument, or playing a sport. It takes practice to get good at it and to feel the benefits of it.

What symptom or feeling do you plan to try this coping strategy for?

___________________________________________________________________

When will you try talking to a supportive person about your symptom or feeling? (Include days and times.)

___________________________________________________________________

Where will you talk to the person?

________________________________________

What do you plan to say?

_______________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

Using relaxation techniques

Relaxation techniques can also be very effective for coping with a wide variety of different symptoms. There are many types of relaxation techniques. Some examples of relaxation techniques include: relaxed breathing (also called breathing retraining), muscle relaxation, imagining a peaceful scene, and meditation or mindfulness. Other relaxing activities include listening to music, taking a walk, spending time in nature, or drawing.
Relaxation techniques are particularly helpful in coping with anxiety and tension, sleep problems, flashbacks, and over arousal (bodily changes such as a racing heart, rapid breathing, and perspiring). The following pages give a brief review of the four relaxation techniques you learned in Module 5, Coping with Stress, along with examples of how these techniques might be used to cope with these symptoms.

Your E-IMR practitioner can guide you through the relaxation techniques as a refresher.

**Review of relaxation techniques**

**Relaxed breathing** involves slowing down your breathing, especially your exhaling.

**STEPS**
- Choose a word that you associate with relaxation.
- Inhale through your nose and exhale slowly through your mouth, taking normal breaths.
- While you exhale, say the relaxing word you chose.
- Pause after exhaling, before taking your next breath.
- Repeat ten or more times.

**Muscle relaxation** involves gently tightening and relaxing your muscles to reduce stiffness and tension.

**STEPS**
- Shoulder shrugs
- Overhead arm stretches
- Stomach muscle relaxation
- Knee raises
- Foot and ankle rolls
- Repeat each movement 3 to 5 times

**Imagining a peaceful scene** involves “taking yourself away” from a stressful situation by picturing yourself in a scene that you find calm and restful.

**STEPS**
- Choose a scene that you find peaceful, calm, and restful, like sitting by the beach, sitting on a park bench, walking on a mountain path, or looking out over a city from the top of a building.
- Imagine as many details as possible using all your senses:
  - What does it look like?
  - What are the sounds?
  - What sensations do you feel?
  - What are the smells?
- Let go of any stressful thoughts or perceptions.
- Focus on the scene for about 5 minutes.
Meditation or Mindfulness involves focusing on how your body feels, how your breathing feels, and accepting the thoughts that come into and out of your mind without letting them “take over.” When you are practicing meditation, you can choose to be mindful of your body and your sensations. You can start by practicing 2 to 3 minutes and gradually increasing the time.

**STEPS**

▷ Find a comfortable, quiet place to sit.

▷ Close your eyes fully or partially. Relax the muscles in your face and jaw.

▷ Notice how your body feels.

▷ Shift your attention to your breath. Experience the sensations of breathing in and breathing out.

▷ When thoughts come into your mind, allow yourself to be curious about them before letting them go and refocusing your attention on your breath.

▷ When you experience emotions or stress, acknowledge them by saying something to yourself like “stress is present.” Then allow the feeling to pass and refocus on your breath.

---

**Let’s Talk About It**

Which relaxation techniques do you find especially appealing?

Are there some relaxing activities that you like? Which ones?
Make It Your Own
Using Relaxation Techniques and Relaxing Activities to Cope with Symptoms

Relaxation techniques and relaxing activities are especially helpful for the symptoms of anxiety, tension, sleep problems, intrusive memories, and over arousal. The following table gives some examples of how relaxation techniques and relaxing activities might be used to cope with these symptoms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Example of how relaxation can be used as a coping strategy with this symptom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety and tension</td>
<td>Relaxation techniques help people stay calm and take their mind off the things that are worrying them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep problems</td>
<td>Excessive worrying can interfere with sleep. People may lie in bed for many hours worrying about the past or the future. Practicing relaxation techniques, or doing something relaxing, can be particularly helpful before going to bed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrusive memories of traumatic events</td>
<td>Experiencing intrusive memories or flashbacks can be very upsetting. Relaxation techniques help people calm down when they have an intrusive memory or flashback, which can help them cope with it or bring them back to the here-and-now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over arousal (bodily changes such as a racing heart, rapid breathing, perspiring a lot)</td>
<td>Relaxation techniques have a direct effect on calming and slowing down the central nervous system, which reduces over arousal and can help people put their perceptions into perspective.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let’s Talk About It
Which of your distressing symptoms do you already use relaxation techniques to cope with? How does this work for you?

Which of your distressing symptoms do you think might benefit from using relaxing techniques or doing relaxing activities to cope?

How would you like to try using relaxation techniques to cope with these symptoms?
Make It Your Own
Plan for Trying Relaxation as a Coping Strategy

Now is a good time to make a plan to try using relaxation techniques and relaxing activities to cope with the symptoms you identified in “Let’s Talk About It.” Keep in mind that using coping strategies is like learning any other skill, such as driving, playing an instrument, or playing a sport. It takes practice to get good at it and to feel the benefits of it.

What kind of relaxation technique or relaxing activity do you want to try?

___________________________________________________________________

When will you try the relaxation technique or relaxing activity? (Include days and times.)

___________________________________________________________________

Where will you practice the relaxation technique or relaxing activity?

___________________________________________________________________

How long will you do the technique or activity? ____________________________

Do you need any help? Do you want someone to do the relaxation technique, or relaxing activity with you? If so, who?

___________________________________________________________________

Do you need any equipment? If so, how can you get this equipment?

___________________________________________________________________

KEY POINT
Relaxation techniques are particularly helpful in coping with anxiety and tension, sleep problems, flashbacks, and over arousal.
HOME PRACTICE

Coping by Talking to a Supportive Person and Using Relaxation Techniques

Choose one of the following options to practice or make one up.

**OPTION 1:** Follow your plan for using talking to a supportive person to cope with a symptom this week. Use the Coping Strategy Tracking Sheet on the next page to track results.

**OPTION 2:** Follow your plan for using relaxation techniques to cope with a symptom this week. Use the Coping Strategy Tracking Sheet on the next page to track results.

**Make a plan for home practice this week:**

- What I will do
- When
- Where
- With whom

“**You have to practice something to make it your own!”**

**Goal Tracking**

Looking at your goal tracking sheet, which step will you work on this week?

- The step I will work on
- When
- Where
- With whom

To complete this step, I will use the following plan:

- When
- Where
- With whom
**Coping Strategy Tracking Sheet**

Use this tracking sheet to compare your symptom rating before and after using each coping strategy you try.

**STEP 1:**
Each day, write down which symptom or symptoms you experience. Then rate how distressed this symptom makes you feel, using the following 1 to 5 scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No distress</td>
<td>A little distress</td>
<td>Moderate distress</td>
<td>Quite a bit of distress</td>
<td>Extreme distress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 2:**
Choose a coping strategy to try. Record the strategy, and after using it, rate how distressed you feel using the 1 to 5 scale below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day of week</th>
<th>What symptom did you experience?</th>
<th>How distressed did you feel? (use scale above)</th>
<th>Coping strategy you tried</th>
<th>How distressed did you feel after using the coping strategy? (use scale above)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Tension</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Muscle relaxation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coping by Talking to a Supportive Person and Using Relaxation Techniques

Talking to a supportive person is particularly helpful for coping with anxiety, depression, hallucinations, and paranoia or other worrisome thoughts.

Relaxation techniques are particularly helpful in coping with anxiety and tension, sleep problems, flashbacks, and over arousal.
Topic 5
Coping by Using Distraction and Behavioral Activation

This session will introduce two important strategies to help you cope with ongoing problems and symptoms:

💡 Using distraction

💡 Using behavioral activation (“fake it until you make it”)

Each of these coping strategies will be described in more detail throughout this topic. We encourage you to try them with your E-IMR practitioner, or with other group members. Practicing skills during sessions can increase your confidence for using them on your own.

Using distraction

Shifting the focus of your attention can reduce symptoms. Having a distraction can help you focus on something outside of yourself. Some examples of pleasant distractions include talking to someone, listening to music, playing a game, doing artwork, taking a walk, cooking, and watching something on TV or the Internet. Paying attention to something different often helps put a distressing thought or perception onto the “back burner.” While the thought or perception is on the back burner, it often becomes less intense and compelling, and you can move on with your life.

Distraction is especially helpful for coping with hallucinations, flashbacks or intrusive memories, cravings, and paranoia or other worrisome thoughts. See the table below for some examples of how distraction can be helpful for these symptoms.

**KEY POINT**

Distraction is especially helpful for coping with hallucinations, flashbacks or intrusive memories, cravings, and paranoia or other worrisome thoughts.
### TOPIC 5  Coping by Using Distraction and Behavioral Activation

#### Example of using distraction as coping strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Example of using distraction as coping strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hallucinations</td>
<td>Doing something active often helps distract yourself from a hallucination. For example, you might find it helpful to listen to music or an audiobook, watch something on YouTube, take a walk somewhere, work on a puzzle, or do the dishes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flashbacks or intrusive memories</td>
<td>When people with PTSD have flashbacks, it is often helpful to shift their attention to something else, especially something concrete that is in the “here and now.” For example, if you are in a class, try paying close attention to the teacher’s words and repeating back to yourself their main points. If you are at a restaurant, you can look around to see what everyone is eating. If you are at a holiday party, you can try looking at all the decorations, or you can try counting the number of people at the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cravings</td>
<td>Cravings can be experienced as physical sensations and preoccupying thoughts about using. Distraction can be an excellent way to cope with cravings. People often find their cravings go away once their interest is drawn to the activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paranoia or other worrisome thoughts</td>
<td>When people are experiencing paranoia, they often dwell on thoughts that other people or organizations are against them. They often find it helpful to distract themselves with something positive, like reading something uplifting or watching something funny on the Internet.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Make It Your Own

#### Identifying Symptoms to Cope with Using Distraction

Think about the symptoms you identified as distressing. In the table below, place an X by the ones you already use distraction to cope with, and the ones you think might benefit from using distraction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom I experience</th>
<th>I already use distraction as a way of coping with this symptom</th>
<th>I would like to try using distraction as a way of coping with this symptom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Using behavioral activation (“fake it until you make it”)

Sometimes when people are having difficulties in their life they spend less time with other people, and stop engaging in activities that they used to enjoy. While these changes are understandable responses to life’s challenges, they can also lead to feelings of loneliness, depression, and lethargy or sluggishness. In the long run, not engaging with other people and enjoyable activities can make people feel worse instead of better. The opposite is also true: doing activities, being with other people, and taking on responsibilities makes people feel better.

“Behavioral activation” is a method that has been found to be effective for changing this cycle. Behavioral activation means scheduling activities for yourself that bring meaning and pleasure to your life. It’s sometimes referred to as “faking it until you make it,” because it means using new behaviors while you are working to make internal changes. For example, you may choose to exercise and be active while you are also trying to reduce your depression symptoms. You are behaving as if you have more energy, before you feel all of the positive benefits. It is similar to distraction, because it helps take your mind off what is distressing you. But it is different because it is something that you plan ahead for.

Cycle of negative feelings and behaviors:

1. Lack of activities, isolation, avoidance, lethargy, depression
2. Negative thoughts, perceptions, and emotions
3. Doing activities, spending time with others, tackling responsibilities
4. Positive thoughts, perceptions, and emotions

The opposite cycle is also true.
Behavioral activation is especially helpful for coping with symptoms of depression, anxiety, and low energy or low stamina. See the table below for some examples of how it can be helpful for these symptoms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Example of how behavioral activation exercise can be used to cope with this symptom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Depression</strong></td>
<td>When people are depressed, they often stay to themselves and do not venture out to do activities. This reinforces their feeling that nothing is good in the world and they are not worthwhile people. Planning something positive to do each day can help counteract those feelings and beliefs. For example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If you know how to play a musical instrument, you could plan to play the instrument on your own every day for at least 10 minutes, and to get together with one or more friends to play together once a week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If you like bicycling, you could plan to take a ride every day, and include friends in riding as much as possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If you like reading, you could join a book club, which would encourage you to read regularly, and give you an opportunity to meet with others to discuss the book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anxiety and tension</strong></td>
<td>Anxiety often makes people feel worried and tense. Being inactive increases their worries and tension. Planning something positive to do each day decreases worry and tension. For example, you could:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Join a yoga class, and practice what you learn on a daily basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Plan to take a nature walk in a variety of locations during the week and ask others to join you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Join an exercise class and practice what you learn at home in between classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low energy/stamina</strong></td>
<td>People with low energy and low stamina often believe nothing will be fun or worth the effort. Planning something positive to do each day helps them challenge these beliefs. For example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If you like to play card games or board games, you could set up regular opportunities to play with people you know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If you like to cook, you could plan to try new recipes and invite someone to join you for a meal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If you used to like to bicycle, plan to get back to it and include others in taking rides with you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Make It Your Own

Identifying Symptoms to Cope with Using Behavioral Activation

Think about the symptoms you identified as distressing. In the table below, place an X by the ones you already use behavioral activation to cope with, and the ones you think might benefit from using behavioral activation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom I experience</th>
<th>I already use behavioral activation as a way of coping with this symptom</th>
<th>I would like to try using behavioral activation as a way of coping with this symptom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How to use behavioral activation

The three main steps of behavioral activation are:

**STEP 1:** Monitor your current activities

**STEP 2:** Figure out which activities give you pleasure

**STEP 3:** Schedule pleasurable activities every week, involving other people if possible

Each step will be explained in the next section of this module.
**Make It Your Own**

Using Behavioral Activation, Step 1: Monitor Your Current Activities

You can use the Daily Activity Log below to record the activities you have done in the past week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tues</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thurs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>10AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>12PM</td>
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<td>2PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>4PM</td>
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<td>10PM</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>After midnight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued on next page)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>Sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8AM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10AM</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12PM</td>
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<td>2PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>4PM</td>
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<td>6PM</td>
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<td>8PM</td>
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<td>10PM</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>After midnight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Let’s Talk About It**

What days and times do you have the most activities? What days and times do you have the fewest activities? What days and times are you most bothered by symptoms?
# Make It Your Own

Using Behavioral Activation, Step 2: Figure Out which Activities Give you Pleasure

Everyone differs in what they enjoy and what gives them pleasure. Which activities do you think will be interesting, fun, or meaningful to do? If you can come up with your own list of activities that you would like to do, that’s great. Please write them down on the list on the right. If you need some ideas, you can refer to the Common Enjoyable Activities List on the next page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities that I enjoy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. ____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. ____________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Common enjoyable activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Write in a journal</th>
<th>Go out for coffee with a friend</th>
<th>Watch a movie with someone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Draw or paint on your own or join an art class</td>
<td>Go stargazing or join an astronomy club</td>
<td>Go swimming with a friend who also likes swimming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hike on a nature trail, asking other people to join you</td>
<td>Go for a bike ride with a friend or family member</td>
<td>Do a jigsaw puzzle with friends or family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch the sunrise or sunset</td>
<td>Play a sport with others</td>
<td>Play music with one or more friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend time with a pet, consider walking your dog with a neighbor who also has a dog</td>
<td>Join a book club that has a theme you like, such as mysteries or travel adventures</td>
<td>Visit a meditation center on your own or with a friend or family member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to a play with someone</td>
<td>Visit neighbors</td>
<td>Listen to the radio or a podcast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play a board game or card game with someone; join a board game group</td>
<td>Cook a meal and share it with someone</td>
<td>Ask someone to join you in trying out new recipes or new restaurants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to a concert with a friend</td>
<td>Write a letter or e-mail</td>
<td>Join a yoga class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit a museum with someone who likes art</td>
<td>Take photos and consider joining a photography club</td>
<td>Try cooking a new dessert and inviting others over to enjoy it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore somewhere new with a friend or family member</td>
<td>Write a poem and sign up for a poetry workshop or group</td>
<td>Exercise on your own or take an exercise class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go rock climbing or go to the beach</td>
<td>Meditate</td>
<td>Work in the garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ideas:</td>
<td>Start a knitting project or join a knitting circle</td>
<td>Search online for new music to listen to or look up past favorites</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Let’s Talk About It

Which activities would you enjoy the most? Which activities do you think would be the easiest to do? Which activities would be the most challenging to do?
# Make It Your Own

## Using Behavioral Activation, Step 3: Schedule Pleasurable Activities Every Week, Involving Other People When Possible

Starting with 3 of the activities you think would be easiest to do, make a plan for how and when you will do these activities in the coming week. People often find it more interesting and motivating to do things with others. It gives them an incentive to follow through because the other person is counting on them. Also, it makes the activity more fun or interesting, because they have someone to talk to while they are doing it.

For example, Angel was very interested in art and wanted to go to the art museum. But he never went because he didn’t think he had the energy, or he didn’t think he could make it all the way through the museum. He decided to ask his friend Daniel to join him. Daniel also enjoyed looking at art. They chose a small museum with a special exhibit by a painter they both liked. On the day they planned the visit, Angel was tempted not to go, but he didn’t want to disappoint Daniel, so he went anyway. Not only did he succeed in going to the museum, but he also enjoyed his conversation with Daniel, which continued at a coffee shop afterward.

## Make It Your Own

### Activity Planning Sheet

To get started using behavioral activation, you can use the Activity Planning Sheet below. Start by using three of the easiest pleasurable activities you identified. If you feel comfortable, try scheduling one pleasurable activity each day. If that seems overwhelming, try scheduling a pleasurable activity on three days in the following week. You can do the same activity throughout the week, or use a variety of the three activities you chose. Jot down what time and where you plan to do the activity, and whether you will ask someone to join you.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>When? Where? Equipment needed? Ask someone to join you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
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<td>Saturday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**KEY POINT**

Behavioral activation is especially helpful for coping with symptoms of depression, anxiety, and low energy or low stamina.
Choose one of the following options to practice or make one up.

**OPTION 1:** Make a plan to use distraction to cope with a symptom next week. Use the Coping Strategy Tracking Sheet to record results.

**OPTION 2:** Use your behavioral activation plan to cope with a symptom this week. Use the Coping Strategy Tracking Sheet to record results.

---

**Home Practice**

Coping by Using Distraction and Behavioral Activation

Make a plan for home practice this week:

- **What I will do**
- **When**
- **Where**
- **With whom**

---

**Goal Tracking**

Looking at your goal tracking sheet, which step will you work on this week?

To complete this step, I will use the following plan:

- **When**
- **Where**
- **With whom**
# Coping Strategy Tracking Sheet

Use this tracking sheet to compare your symptom rating before and after using each coping strategy you try.

**STEP 1:**
Each day, write down which symptom or symptoms you experience. Then rate how distressed this symptom makes you feel, using the following 1 to 5 scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No distress</td>
<td>A little distress</td>
<td>Moderate distress</td>
<td>Quite a bit of distress</td>
<td>Extreme distress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 2:**
Choose a coping strategy to try. Record the strategy, and after using it, rate how distressed you feel using the 1 to 5 scale below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day of week</th>
<th>What symptom did you experience?</th>
<th>How distressed did you feel? (use scale above)</th>
<th>Coping strategy you tried</th>
<th>How distressed did you feel after using the coping strategy? (use scale above)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Hearing voices</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Distraction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues</td>
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<td>Sun</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Key Points • Topic 5

Coping by Using Distraction and Behavioral Activation

Distraction is especially helpful for coping with hallucinations, flashbacks or intrusive memories, and paranoia or other worrisome thoughts.

Behavioral activation is especially helpful for coping with symptoms of depression, anxiety, and low energy or low stamina.
In this module, we have explored good strategies for coping with ongoing symptoms and problems. The coping techniques presented have included: using positive self-talk, exercise, relaxation, talking to a supportive person, distraction, and behavioral activation. If those coping strategies are effective for all of your symptoms, that’s good news and you do not need to go further. If those strategies have not been effective for one or more of your symptoms, or if you want to learn an additional strategy, Topic 6 provides strategies that are especially helpful for specific symptoms.

We have divided Topic 6 into Parts A through K, so you can go directly to the symptoms that you want additional strategies for, and skip the ones that don’t apply to you.

A. Depression
B. Anxiety and tension
C. Hallucinations
D. Paranoia or other worrisome thoughts
E. Sleep problems
F. Nightmares
G. Low stamina/low energy
H. Concentration problems
I. Cravings
J. Flashbacks or intrusive memories of traumatic events
K. Anger that results from over arousal or restless, agitated feelings

Coping strategies for each of these symptoms will be described in more detail throughout this topic. We encourage you to try them with your E-IMR practitioner, or with other group members. Practicing skills during sessions can increase your confidence for using them on your own.

**KEY POINT**

It is important to have at least one or two coping strategies that are effective for the symptoms that bother you.

You can use Topic 6 to find strategies that are especially helpful for specific symptoms.
A. Additional strategy for coping with depression

List your personal strengths

When people are depressed, they often have low self-esteem and are very critical of themselves. They focus on their weaknesses and problems, and don't pay attention to their own strengths and positive personal qualities. Making a list of your strengths, and reminding yourself of them on a regular basis can counter the self-blame and self-criticism that occurs with depression. You can put a copy of your strengths in your wallet or purse, record it on your cell phone, or post it on your mirror or refrigerator. You can review it on a daily basis, and also whenever you are feeling low about yourself.

Make It Your Own

Listing Your Personal Strengths:
PART ONE

Sometimes it’s hard to think of your strengths. To get started, review the checklist below and place an X next to each one that applies to you. Be sure to add other strengths that you think of:

**Personal strengths**

- Determination
- Musical talent
- Creativity
- Mechanical
- Talent
- Caring for others
- Sense of humor
- Work skills
- Computer skills
- Academic skills
- Parenting skills
- Empathy for others
- Friendliness
- Good manners
- Artistic talent
- Cooking
- Decorating
- Knowledge about a particular topic
- Other strengths:
B. Additional strategies for coping with anxiety and tension

**Develop a plan with a supportive person to gradually expose yourself to situations that make you feel anxious, but are nevertheless safe**

Sometimes people avoid situations that seem frightening, but are actually safe. Their fears may be related to upsetting events that have occurred in the past, such as feeling anxious in situations that trigger memories of past upsetting or traumatic events. Or, there may be situations that just make the person nervous, such as social situations like attending a new class, or making conversation with co-workers.

Making a plan to gradually expose yourself to these safe, but scary situations can help you overcome anxiety. Using this process will help you learn that these situations don’t present actual danger, even though they feel uncomfortable. Gradual exposure involves taking small steps to get closer and closer to the feared situation, while allowing your anxiety to go down to a manageable level before taking the next step.

---

**Make It Your Own**

**Listing Your Personal Strengths: PART TWO**

Make a list of your top 5 strengths using the form below. Talk with your practitioner about where you would keep your list so you can refer to it whenever you are feeling depressed.

**Personal Strengths List**

1. ________________________________________________________________
2. ________________________________________________________________
3. ________________________________________________________________
4. ________________________________________________________________
5. ________________________________________________________________

Where I will post my list: ________________________________
The example below shows how Carol gradually overcame her fear of taking the bus.

1. Carol waited at the bus stop with her best friend, Anna, and watched people get on and off the bus on several occasions.

2. After Carol became comfortable, she and Anna got on the bus together and got off at the first stop. They did this several times.

3. Each time Carol tried a new situation related to the bus, she practiced breathing exercises to help feel calm.

4. After Carol felt more comfortable, she and Anna took the bus together for several short trips.

5. Later, Carol took several more short bus trips by herself, with Anna or another friend waiting at her destination.

6. Finally, Carol took round-trip bus trips alone without anyone waiting for her at her destination.

You can use the following steps to gradually expose yourself to a situation or activity that makes you anxious:

1. Break the situation down into smaller steps, or identify several related situations that do not cause you as much anxiety.

2. Start by exposing yourself to the first step of the situation, or a related situation that causes you less anxiety.

3. When you expose yourself to the first step of the situation (or the alternative situation), stay in it long enough for your anxiety to go down. Be assured that your anxiety will go down. You can use relaxation techniques to calm yourself in these situations.

4. Repeat this step until you feel comfortable.

5. Add the next step of the situation (or a related situation) and practice it until you feel comfortable.

6. Continue this process until you feel comfortable with all the steps of the situation or activity.

7. Include a supportive person in the plan to make it easier to follow through.

---

**Let’s Talk About It**

What is a situation that makes you anxious, but is actually safe?

Who could help you go through the steps described above?
Practice yoga and meditation

Both yoga and meditation relax the body and mind.

Yoga involves using different exercises (called poses) to tone, strengthen, and align the body. Yoga emphasizes flexibility and stretching as a way of keeping the mind and body in tune with each other. It often includes breathing techniques to quiet the mind.

Meditation involves holding concentrated focus on a sound, object, visualization, the breath, or a specific movement in order to feel an increased awareness of the present moment. Keeping the mind focused on the here and now reduces stress, promotes relaxation, and creates a sense of peace.

Learning yoga or meditation takes time and practice, but can pay off with reducing anxiety, and refreshing the body and mind. Most communities have a variety of classes on yoga and meditation available. In addition, you can use self-instructional programs, such as books, DVDs, CDs, Apps, and websites to learn yoga and meditation.

Let's Talk About It

If you are interested in practicing yoga or meditation, what method would you like to use: a class, book, DVD, App, or website?

What is the first step in the method you would like to use? (For example, finding and registering for a class, or checking out a DVD from the library.)

When could you take the first step?

Is there a friend or family member who might like to get involved in yoga or meditation with you? When could you ask them about their interest?
C. Additional strategies for coping with hallucinations

Normalization

Hearing or seeing things that others don’t hear or see can be very distressing, especially if you think that this is highly unusual. However, hallucinations are actually relatively common. About 4 to 5 out of every 100 people (4-5%) in the general population report hearing voices or experiencing some other type of hallucination at some point in their lives. People may hear voices under a variety of circumstances, including when they are going to sleep or waking up, after a loved one has passed away, when they have a high temperature, or during extremely stressful events. People can also hear voices as the symptom of a number of different mental illnesses, including depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and schizoaffective disorder.

It’s important to remember that hearing voices is not that unusual, and that you are not alone in your experience. To remind yourself of this, develop some statements to say to yourself to stay calm and cope when you hear voices. Here are some examples:

- “I’m not ‘abnormal’ or strange just because I hear voices. Lots of other people do too.”
- “Hearing voices doesn’t mean I’m crazy or dangerous. I’m in control of myself.”
- “I’m going to stay calm and wait for this experience to pass.”

If you are interested in using normalization as a strategy to cope with hallucinations, it’s helpful to think about what statements you would like to say to yourself to stay calm and cope when you hear voices.

Let’s Talk About It

What statement or statements would you like to say to yourself when you hear or see something that others do not hear or see?

What will help you remember to say those statements to yourself? For example, you could enter the statement into your cell phone, or write it on a small slip of paper to put in your wallet.
Reality testing

While people often know that hallucinations are not real, sometimes they’re not sure. If you think you may be having a hallucination but aren’t sure, you can check out your experience with someone you trust. For example, if you think you heard a banging noise, but aren’t sure, you can ask someone nearby, “Hey, did you hear that loud bang?”

Another helpful strategy is to evaluate the “evidence” about whether voices are real. For example, one person looked to see whether people’s lips were moving when he heard voices. If he heard voices but couldn’t see anyone’s lips moving, then he knew the voices were hallucinations. If he saw someone’s lips moving while he heard the voices, then he knew they were real.

Let’s Talk About It

If you are interested in using reality testing as a strategy for coping with hallucinations, is there a staff member, family member, or friend you could check out your experiences with?

If so, who?

D. Additional strategies for coping with paranoia or other worrisome thoughts

Don’t jump to conclusions: Think of alternative explanations for things that bother you and make you feel paranoid

Remind yourself that there are usually many different ways to interpret a situation. In fact, it’s sometimes difficult to understand what’s happening in a situation, and your first thought may not be the most accurate. To analyze paranoia or other worrisome thoughts, it can help to take the role of a detective looking for evidence. You can ask yourself, “What is the evidence supporting my belief?” and “What is the evidence that does NOT support my belief?” Then it is important to ask, “What are some other possible explanations?”

You can build up your skills in identifying several possible explanations for understanding an upsetting experience before deciding which one is most accurate. You might find the following example helpful.

Jacob saw his friend Laura walking down the street early one afternoon. He said “Hi” to her, but she didn’t respond. Jacob’s first thought was, “Laura is mad at me.” When he thought about why she might be angry
with him, he couldn’t think of a reason. He wondered if there might be some other reason she didn’t respond to him.

When Jacob saw Laura later that day as she was leaving work, she was very friendly and spoke to him immediately. When he asked her how she was doing, she said that it had been a rather challenging day and she had even taken a walk earlier just to think about some of the problems she was wrestling with. Jacob asked her if she had taken that walk around 2PM. She said yes. He said, “I saw you then, but I’m not sure you saw me.” She said, “Oh, no, I didn’t see you at all. I was deep in thought.” Jacob was glad that he had not jumped to the conclusion that Laura was angry with him.

Let’s Talk About It

If you want to avoid jumping to conclusions when you are having paranoid thoughts, what would help you to do so?

What would be an example of a situation you could look at for possible alternative explanations?

Talk about your concerns with someone you trust

Sometimes it helps to problem solve with another person when you’re trying to figure out how to respond to your distressing beliefs. Talking to someone you trust, such as a family member, a friend, or your practitioner can be helpful.

You can start by telling the person what you are thinking. Then you can ask them to help you think of other possible explanations, and share their own opinion. If you still have concerns, talk to the person again.

You might find the following example helpful:

Elena thought that the electric company truck parked on her block was proof for her belief that the utility companies were targeting her in order to take away her gas and electricity, which frightened her. When Elena talked to her brother, she found out that the electric company had been replacing power lines in several neighborhoods, including his, for the past two weeks. Her brother was also able to show her a newspaper article supporting this. Although Elena was suspicious, she became less convinced of her belief because there was a possible alternative explanation. She was less frightened after talking to her brother and was able to continue her daily activities.

Let’s Talk About It

If you would like to try talking about your concerns with someone you trust, who do you think would be a good person to do this with? (Such as a family member, friend, or practitioner.)
E. Additional strategies for coping with sleep problems

Develop good sleep hygiene

“Sleep hygiene” refers to the habits that people have around their sleeping. Good sleep hygiene includes habits or routines that help a person get a full night’s sleep on a daily basis. The basic elements of good sleep hygiene include the following:

- Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, regardless of how much sleep you got the night before.
- Choose something relaxing to do at least thirty minutes before bed (such as reading a book, taking a bath or warm shower, or listening to music).
- Avoid caffeine after 5 p.m.
- Avoid smoking for several hours before going to bed.
- Don’t watch anything on TV that might be exciting or upsetting before going to bed.
- Avoid talking about upsetting topics with other people before going to bed.
- Avoid napping during the day, even if you didn’t sleep well the previous night.
- Avoid spending more than thirty minutes at a time lying in bed trying to get to sleep; instead, get up and go into another room and do something relaxing.

Exercise during the day so that you will feel tired at night.

- Take medications in the amounts and at the times prescribed.

Let’s Talk About It

If you would like to improve your sleep hygiene, which strategies are you NOT doing as suggested? Which ones are you willing to try changing?

Coping with excessive worrying

Excessive worrying can interfere with sleep. People may lie in bed for many hours worrying about the past or the future. Worry can be a particular problem for people when they are going through changes in their lives and feel that there are many uncertainties involved. Talking to other people about your worries can be helpful. They can offer support and also suggest solutions to problems. When talking with another person about a problem, it may be helpful to use the Step-by-Step Problem-Solving Worksheet from Topic 1 of this module.
One very helpful strategy for dealing with excessive worry is to schedule a daily “worry time.” Use the steps below:

- Set aside time each day just to worry, about fifteen to thirty minutes.
- Set aside the same time every day, but not just before you go to sleep.
- During this time, focus on your worries; it may be helpful to write them down.
- After writing your worries down, brainstorm possible solutions and write those down.
- Consider getting input about your worries and possible solutions from other supportive people.
- Try choosing one possible solution from your list and taking one or two steps toward this solution; write down what happens.
- When you are lying in bed and start to worry, remind yourself that you have a special time every day for worrying.
- Over time, you can gradually feel more control over your worries and spend less time on them throughout the day and at bedtime.

F. Additional strategies for coping with nightmares

Plan to do something relaxing or soothing when you wake up from a nightmare

When people have nightmares, especially ones that involve trauma-related experiences, they often feel unsettled and as if they cannot control their feelings. It helps to have a plan for something to do if they wake up from an unsettling nightmare. Some people like to use soothing objects, like a blanket, or look at photos of happy times. People with pets often like to spend some time petting their cat or dog after a nightmare. Some people like to have a comforting book nearby, like a book of poetry or affirmations.

Let’s Talk About It

If you are interested in doing something relaxing or soothing if you wake up from a nightmare, what would it be?

Do you need to locate any comforting objects or photos or books?

Let’s Talk About It

If you would like to try coping with excessive worrying, what time would you like to set aside daily for worrying?
Create a nightmare log and review it regularly

When people have nightmares about trauma-related experiences, it sometimes reflects “unfinished business” related to a traumatic event. By writing down your nightmares you can sometimes identify themes related to this unfinished business and process them. This can help you deal with the “unfinished business” and move forward.

When people write down their nightmares, it also helps them feel that they are back in control. They can even write a different end to their nightmare. By reviewing the log regularly, people often notice some themes or patterns to their nightmares that they can talk with someone about. It may also give them ideas about topics to address in their counseling. In some ways, keeping a nightmare log changes people’s relationship to their dreams. They feel like the nightmare can’t sneak up on them in the same way, because they are prepared to take out their log and write it down. They are back in control.

Let’s Talk About It

If you would like to try writing down your nightmares in a log, would you prefer to use a pen and notebook, or a cell phone or laptop?

Where would you keep your log?

How often would you like to review it?

What steps would you like to take to work on themes or patterns you may find in your log?

G. Additional strategies for coping with low energy and low stamina

Break down activities into small steps

When people experience periods of feeling low energy and stamina, it can be difficult to start tasks and see them through to completion. It can help to break tasks down into smaller chunks that can be accomplished one at a time.
Here are some tips for breaking down activities into small steps:

- Select an activity that is important to you, but not too demanding.
- Break down the activity into very small steps.
- Begin by doing the first one or two steps of the activity.
- Reward yourself for doing the first few steps. Some people like to build in rewards like watching something short on TV or the Internet. Other people like low calorie food rewards, and still others like to do something social, like composing an e-mail or text to a friend.
- When you feel comfortable with the first few steps of the activity, add one or two more.
- Reward yourself for doing the additional steps, add another one or two, and so on.

The following example may be helpful to consider:

Miguel wanted to start reading magazine articles again. He started by reading a paragraph, then asking himself the main point of that paragraph. After several days of reading a single paragraph, he gradually got more comfortable. He then tried reading two paragraphs, and asking himself the main point of both paragraphs. When he got comfortable with two paragraphs, he tried reading a whole page, and asking himself the main points of the page. After getting comfortable with one page, he then tried reading 2 pages, etc. Gradually, he was able to read an entire article.

Let’s Talk About It

Is there an activity that you would like to do, but that has been difficult because of low energy or low stamina? What is that activity?

How could you break it down into small steps, as Miguel did in the example above?
Use reminders

It can be difficult to remember tasks and activities when you are feeling low energy or low stamina. The tips below can help you use reminders to cope with this:

- Program your cell phone, or set your alarm clock to ring when it’s time for an activity.
- Write your plans in a paper or electronic calendar.
- Consider posting a written daily or weekly schedule so that you can review it easily.
- Put Post-it notes where you are likely to see them (such as on your mirror, on your computer, or on the door to your room).
- Post an inspiring photograph or drawing of the activity or goal you want to accomplish. You can find an image on the Internet, in the newspaper, or in a magazine. For example, if you want to start playing guitar again, find a photo of one. A photo of a nature trail can help you remember you want to start hiking again. Or, an image of a neat apartment can remind you to keep yours that way.

Let’s Talk About It

What is something you would like to do but “don’t get around to” because you don’t remember it, or because you forget your plan for how to do it?

What kind of reminder would help you remember?

Plan to do activities with other people

Many people find it more interesting and motivating to do things with other people. It gives them an incentive to follow through because the other person is counting on them. Also, it makes the activity more fun or interesting, because they have someone to talk to while they are doing it.

For example, Angel was very interested in art and wanted to go to the art museum. However, every time he planned to go, he ended up not going because he didn’t think he had the energy, or because he didn’t think he could make it all the way through the museum. He decided to ask his friend Daniel to go with him. Daniel also
enjoyed looking at art. They chose a relatively small museum with a special exhibit by a painter they both liked. On the day they planned the visit, Angel was tempted not to go. But he didn’t want to disappoint Daniel, so he went anyway. Not only did he succeed in going to the museum, he also enjoyed his conversation with Daniel, which continued at a coffee shop afterwards.

H. Additional strategies for coping with attention and concentration problems

Cut down on distractions and avoid multitasking

It’s usually easier to concentrate when there are fewer things to distract you. These distractions can interfere with trying to concentrate on something, such as trying to study or work. One common distraction is noise, such as from a television or radio playing, people talking, people entering and leaving the room, or someone vacuuming in the background.

Consider these suggestions to cut down on distractions:

- Avoid multitasking, such as talking on a cell phone, checking your e-mail, watching a video or listening to music while doing something else, because it reduces your attention to the task at hand.

- Turn off electronic equipment such as your cell phone, radio, or television.

- If you are working at a computer, turn off your e-mail program to avoid distracting prompts; close screens that do not relate to the project you are working on.

- Use earplugs if you can’t avoid noise.

Let’s Talk About It

Which activity have you not been “getting around to” doing?

How would doing the activity with someone help?

Who could you ask to do it with you?
If you are studying or working, clear your desk of everything not directly related to what you are doing.

Develop a personal routine, such as choosing specific times to work or study each day when you are most alert, or when your environment is most quiet.

Let’s Talk About It
If you think cutting down on distractions would be helpful, which tips would you use?

How would you go about putting them into practice?

Repeat things back to make sure you understand and remember

To help you follow a conversation, practice repeating back part of what the other person has just said before giving your response. Repeating back (or paraphrasing) what you have heard helps you concentrate on what the other person is saying, and lets them know you are paying attention. Paraphrasing also gives the other person a chance to correct you if you misunderstood something he or she said.

Here are some examples of things that may be especially helpful to repeat back:

- Names
- New information
- Instructions
- Directions to a location

Let’s Talk About It
What are some examples you can think of when repeating back information (or paraphrasing) would be helpful?

How could you practice this skill with someone?
Talk out loud to yourself

Speaking out loud while you work or study can help you understand and remember the information you are learning. For example, when he’s studying, Ethan periodically reads a sentence aloud to keep himself on track, and to emphasize important points.

When people are looking for something, saying a word out loud can help focus their thoughts. For example, when Susan misplaced her keys, she went looking for them in her house, saying, “keys, keys, keys.” This helped keep her mind on the task, and helped her focus on her objective.

Instructional self-talk involves telling yourself each step you need to take in order to complete a task while you are in the process of doing it. This helps people put thought into action when they are doing something like driving a car, for example. When Jordan was first learning to drive, he would say the steps of driving aloud as he did them. For example, he would say “turn the ignition on,” “look around to make sure no one is coming,” “put the car in drive and turn on the turn signal,” “look around again to make sure no one is coming,” “pull out carefully.” As he got more accomplished at driving, he just repeated a single word for each action “Ignition,” “Look,” “Gear,” “Signal,” “Look,” etc.

Let’s Talk About It

Which activities do you think you could concentrate on better if you talked out loud to yourself while doing them?

How could you put this strategy into place?

I. Additional strategies for coping with cravings

Practice “urge surfing”

It is common for people with substance use problems to experience cravings weeks, months, and sometimes years after they have stopped using. Often distraction works well until the urge to use passes. However, some cravings are simply too strong and distraction isn’t enough. In these cases, cravings can be eased by allowing yourself to experience the craving and staying with it until it passes. This is called urge surfing.
Urge surfing can be practiced using these steps:

1. Sit in a comfortable seat and place your feet firmly on the floor. Draw your attention inward to your body. Notice how your breath feels as it enters and leaves your body. Allow the environment around you to fade away as you continue focusing on your body.

2. Gently allow your attention to shift to the areas of your body where you are experiencing craving. Some people feel tension in their abdomen during a craving. Some people feel dryness in their mouth. Still others feel restlessness in their hands. Notice the sensations in those exact locations. Describe the sensations to yourself and notice if they change as your attention is drawn to them. If they become intense, try sending your breath to the parts of your body experiencing the sensations. Stay in the moment. Make sure not to rush this step and practice it for several minutes.

3. Now imagine your body sensations are like a wave. Imagine the wave rising, cresting, and disappearing back into the water. Imagine watching the waves rise and fall again and again as you notice the strength of your sensations rise and fall. You can then imagine yourself riding the waves on a surfboard. Imagine you are an experienced surfer and can ride the waves with ease as you continue to use your breath to maneuver the surfboard. You can practice this step until you notice the sensations in a different way.

4. Many people find that their cravings pass or decrease significantly during the practice. The point of this exercise is to experience your cravings differently, not to make them go away. Sometimes, however, the cravings do go away when you practice surfing the urge.

**J. Additional strategies for coping with flashbacks or intrusive memories**

**Practice acceptance**

It’s important to know that many people with PTSD experience flashbacks. In a flashback, a person may feel or act as though a traumatic event is happening again. Flashbacks are temporary, but can be quite frightening or disconcerting. One of the most distressing parts of experiencing a flashback is that people may lose some awareness of what is going on around them, and feel like they are actually back experiencing the traumatic event.

When experiencing a flashback, it can be helpful to remind yourself that...
flashbacks are common, and that they will pass. It may also be helpful to acknowledge the presence of the intrusive memory, but without giving it undue attention. For example, when Aliyah had flashbacks, she would practice saying to herself, “I’m having a memory of how traumatic it was to be in the hospital, but I’m not there now. That’s common for people who have had traumas. This memory will pass if I just take a few slow breaths and move on with my day.” Aliyah also found it helpful to remind herself that things are different now than they were when she had to go to the hospital.

Let’s Talk About It

If you think it would be helpful to use acceptance to cope with flashbacks, what kinds of things would you say to yourself?

Use grounding exercises

Grounding exercises are things you can do to bring yourself into contact with the here and now. Different strategies work for different people, and there is no “wrong” way to ground yourself. The main idea is to keep your mind and body connected and working together, and to keep yourself oriented to the present rather than the past. A flashback is an example of being in the “there and then,” and grounding exercises can help bring you back to the “here and now.”

Here are some examples of grounding exercises that use the five senses:

- **Sound:** Pay attention to the sounds you hear around you. Try turning on loud music, which would be hard to ignore, and which will bring you back to the present.

- **Touch:** Pay attention to the things that you can touch around you. For example, what do your clothes feel like? What temperature is the air around you? Are there any breezes blowing? If you are sitting in a chair or on a couch, feel the texture of the material that covers it. Is it smooth? Rough? Soft? Stiff? If possible, try holding something cold, like a can of soda, or something warm like a cup of warm tea. Describe to yourself how it feels.
■ **Smell:** What smells do you notice around you? Are there cooking aromas or flower fragrances? If possible, smell something strong but pleasant, like peppermint. When you smell something strong, it makes it hard to focus on the flashback.

■ **Taste:** If you are in the middle of a meal or having a snack, pay attention to the taste of the food. If possible, bite into something strong but pleasant, such as a slice of lemon or ginger. The sourness of a lemon or the spiciness of ginger produces a strong sensation in your mouth that can force you to stay in the present moment.

■ **Sight:** Take an inventory of everything around you. What room are you in? What building are you in? Who is around you? What furniture is in the room? What activity is happening? What colors can you see? Taking an inventory of your immediate environment can help directly connect you with the present moment.

Other examples of grounding exercises include:

■ Counting activities, such as counting how many books are on a shelf, counting by 2's (that is, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, etc) as far as you can, counting backwards from 100 by 5's (that is, 100, 95, 90, 85, 80, etc).

■ Activities involving moving, such as standing up and stretching, or gently stamping your feet up and down, or taking a walk around the block.

■ Activities that involve repetitive soothing motions or words, such as knitting or singing a familiar song to yourself, like “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.”

**Let’s Talk About It**

If you think it would be helpful to use grounding to cope with flashbacks, what type of grounding exercise would you like to use?
K. Additional strategies for coping with anger that results from over arousal or restless, agitated feelings

**Recognize the early signs that you are starting to feel angry**

Early signs of anger can include physical, emotional, behavioral, or cognitive (thinking) changes.

Early physical signs of anger include:
- Gritting your teeth
- Feeling your heart racing
- Sweating
- Blushing
- Getting red-faced

Early emotional signs of anger include:
- Feeling trapped, anxious, resentful, or scared
- Feeling like hitting someone or something
- Feeling like drinking or taking drugs

Early behavioral signs of anger include:
- Frowning
- Clenching your jaw or clenching your hand into a fist
- Raising your voice
- Making sarcastic remarks
- Withdrawing
- Being silent
- Vigorously tapping your foot

Early thinking related (cognitive) signs of anger include:
- Being morally outraged
- Telling yourself repeatedly that something is unfair
- Being very critical of others
- Thinking a lot about upsetting things that have happened to you in the past

The earlier you recognize that you’re starting to get angry or annoyed, the better. Knowing the first signs of anger can help you to stay in control of the situation and give you more time to think about what to do.

**Let’s Talk About It**

What are your early warning signs of anger?
Do you think it would help to be aware of them in order to stay in control of things?
If so, how could you start to do that?
Use strategies for staying calm when you realize you are getting angry

Being able to “keep your cool” when you feel annoyed or angry can enable you to solve problems effectively before they get worse. Some examples of calming strategies include:

- Counting to ten before responding
- Distracting yourself
- Temporarily leaving the situation
- Politely changing the subject

Relaxation techniques—such as relaxed breathing, muscle relaxation, and imagining a peaceful scene—can also help you stay calm.

Let’s Talk About It

Which strategies do you think would help you stay calm when you are angry?

How could you practice using them?

How could you remember to use them?
Recovery Corner

“IN THE PAST, I HAD TRIED USING different coping strategies to manage the voices in my head. But they didn’t seem to help, and I would become very depressed. Although I hadn’t smoked pot since high school, I had a few friends who still liked to smoke a lot. They usually seemed to be in a good mood, so I decided to try smoking pot again to see if it helped me feel better.

Smoking marijuana helped me relax, and the voices became so soft they didn’t bother me. Unfortunately, the marijuana also made me really paranoid. My counselor knew something was going on, and I eventually told him that I was smoking pot to try and cope with my symptoms. He asked if he could help me learn some different strategies for coping with my voices. I told him everything I had tried before hadn’t worked. He said that he might have other strategies that I hadn’t tried before, and they might work if I practiced them. I decided to give it a shot.

I had tried to cope with the voices by distracting myself before, but with my counselor’s advice, I learned that listening to music through my headphones really worked. The more I used this strategy, the better it was at drowning out the voices. Since I couldn’t listen to my headphones all the time, my counselor also taught me how to keep my cool when the voices were talking. I learned I could “just notice” the voices without believing what they said, or paying too much attention to them. Sometimes I try looking at the situation with a little humor, and jokingly “thank my brain” for the voices keeping me company.

Even though I didn’t need to smoke pot anymore for my voices, I sometimes felt like getting high, even though I didn’t want to. I was surprised that similar strategies worked for these cravings too—distracting myself with music, and realizing that the craving would just go away. I realized I hadn’t practiced coping strategies enough in the past to know whether any of them really worked. This time, I had worked hard at learning some effective strategies, and found a few that really worked.”

— Lisa
Home Practice

Additional Coping Strategies for Specific Symptoms

Choose one of the following options to practice or make one up.

**OPTION 1:** Make a plan to use at least one additional coping strategy this week. Track your results on the Coping Strategy Tracking Sheet on the next page.

**OPTION 2:** Share this handout with someone and get their suggestions for trying a new coping strategy to address a symptom.

---

Make a plan for home practice this week:

- What I will do
- When
- Where
- With whom

---

Goal Tracking

Looking at your goal tracking sheet, which step will you work on this week?

To complete this step, I will use the following plan:

- When
- Where
- With whom
## Coping Strategy Tracking Sheet

Use this tracking sheet to compare your symptom rating before and after using each coping strategy you try.

**STEP 1:** Each day, write down which symptom or symptoms you experience. Then rate how distressed this symptom makes you feel, using the following 1 to 5 scale:

1. **No distress**  
2. **A little distress**  
3. **Moderate distress**  
4. **Quite a bit of distress**  
5. **Extreme distress**

**STEP 2:** Choose a coping strategy to try. Record the strategy, and after using it, rate how distressed you feel using the 1 to 5 scale below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day of week</th>
<th>What symptom did you experience?</th>
<th>How distressed did you feel? (use scale above)</th>
<th>Coping strategy you tried</th>
<th>How distressed did you feel after using the coping strategy? (use scale above)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Depressed, low energy</td>
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<td>Exercise</td>
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**Key Points • Topic 6**

**Additional Coping Strategies for Specific Symptoms**

It is important to have at least one or two coping strategies that are effective for the symptoms that bother you.

You can use Topic 6 to find strategies that are especially helpful for specific symptoms.