

The Chinese University of Hong Kong The Nethersole School of Nursing

Cadenza Training Programme

Module II

CTP002: Promoting psychosocial and spiritual well-being of older people

Chapter 1: Promotion of Psychosocial Wellness in Later Adulthood

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Lecture objectives

Upon completion of the chapter, you will be able to:

1. define psychosocial functioning and psychosocial health
2. identify the factors affecting psychosocial health from the internal, external and additional perspectives
3. use the assessment tools
4. understand psychosocial needs in later adulthood
5. discuss promotion strategies for psychosocial wellness in older adults

Lecture outlines

- Definition of Psychosocial Health
- Factors that influence Psychosocial Health
- Psychosocial Needs in Later Adulthood
- Promotion of Psychosocial Wellness in the Older Adult
- Strategies for Enhancing Well-being: Positive Psychology in Practice

Psychosocial functioning

Psychosocial functioning

It refers to the way a person feels, thinks, behaves and relates to self and others.

It reflects the ability to cope with pressure, and the capacity to build up a value and belief system.

Psychosocial functioning is part of a complicated set of subsystems making up the human organism.

These subsystems are closely related.

Assessment of the client must consider the interaction of body, mind and spirit.

Psychosocial functioning

When one part is dysfunctional, all other parts will be affected.

Illness, developmental life course or life events changes may lead to changes in psychosocial functioning.

The client may become stressed, may lose self-esteem, or may experience positive changes such as greater closeness with family.

Any changes in psychosocial functioning may induce to changes of physical health or response to treatment.

Psychosocial Health

Psychosocial Health

It is defined as being emotionally, socially, mentally and spiritually well.

Psychosocial health consists of emotional, social, mental and spiritual aspects.

Psychosocial Health

The mental dimension refers to an individual's ability to reason, to find meaning in and make judgments from information, to demonstrate rational thinking and to perceive realistically.

The emotional dimension is subjective and includes one's feelings.

Social functioning refers to the individual's ability to form relationships with others.

Spiritual dimension are beliefs and values that give meaning to life.

Factors that influence Psychosocial Health

Factors that influence Psychosocial Health

Internal Factors

- Genetics
- Physical Health
- Physical Fitness

External Factors

- Family
- Culture
- Geography
- Economic Status

Additional Factors

- Self-concept
- Role Development
- Interdependent Relationships
- Stress and Coping
- Spiritual and Belief Patterns

Internal factors

Genetics:

It influences physical and psychosocial health throughout life.

Internal factors

Genetic characteristics caused by reactions from others that affect the development of personality.

Appearance, physical attractiveness and body structure are in born.

Majority act positively to others who are physically attractive.

Positive responses are a key factor in developing self-esteem and self-concept as well as the behaviour and interaction with others.

Negative responses lead to low self-concept and stress caused by unacceptable behaviour or mental illness.

Internal factors

Physical Health

It is related to satisfaction with quality of life, basic needs and psychosocial well-being.

It also affects an individual's response to stress triggers and their ability to changes. Physical health is important to function normally in personal and social interactions.

Internal factors

Physical Fitness

It is to the human body what fine-tuning is to an engine.

It helps individuals look, feel, and do their best.

It is closely related to functioning of the heart, lungs and the muscles of the body.

It also influences mental and emotional stability.

External Factors

Family

Families affect psychosocial health. Families provide physical safety and meet economic needs. This helps family members develop physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

The family serves to enhance members' social skills and develop spiritual beliefs as well as a value system.

External Factors

Culture

It includes beliefs, morals, customs and knowledge and provides a lifestyle pattern.

Cultural norms affect physical, social and mental well-being.

How people experience and respond to stress, coping, and life situations greatly depends on culture.

External Factors

Geography

It refers to the geographical distance between family members.

It affects family life between family members.

Psychosocial health is affected by the geographical locations, weather and environment.

Community resources including churches, facilities, transportation, services influence psychosocial well-being.

External Factors

Economic Status

It influences values and attitudes.

Family roles, marriage, education, gender, family roles, sex, parenting, housing, leisure activities, clothing, occupation and religious practice are influenced by economic status.

Higher education leads to better occupational opportunities and living standards, more participation in leisure activities.

These strengths lead to feelings of high self-worth and self-esteem and individuals are better able to manage and adapt to changes in the life course.

Additional Factors in Psychosocial Health

Self-concept

It refers to the beliefs and feelings one holds about oneself.

A positive self-concept is essential to one's mental and physical health.

Individuals with positive self-concept are more able to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships and resist psychological and physical illness.

Additional Factors in Psychosocial Health

Role development

Roles are learned through socialisation. It occurs within families at the earliest stages of development.

If role development is healthy and occurs in a supportive environment, self-concept and psychosocial well-being are better as the individual gains confidence to interact with others.

Additional Factors in Psychosocial Health

Interdependent relationships

Interdependent relationships are characterised by mutual reliance and support.

According to Roy and Andrews (1999), "these relationships are based on the human needs of love, respect and value for another."

Additional Factors in Psychosocial Health

Stress and Coping

They are the physical and emotional responses of an individual to psychosocial or physical threats called stressors.

Physical response stress in the long-term may have symptoms such as habitually cold hands or suppression of immune function.

The emotional responses to stress include insomnia, distractions, or anxiety.

Additional Factors in Psychosocial Health

Spiritual and Belief Patterns

Spiritual and belief patterns reflect a relationship with a higher power or with something, such as an ideal or humanity itself, that the person views as larger than self and which gives meaning to life.

Psychosocial Needs and Adjustment in Later Adulthood

Psychosocial Needs in Later Adulthood

Three major areas in which older persons experience developmental tasks in older adulthood are:

1. adjusting to new life due to retirement (e.g., job or childrearing)
2. the loss of spouse, family members and friends
3. the loss of youthful vitality, vigour and physical reserves

(1) Adjustments experienced by older adults

Retirement leads to changes in daily life patterns and social roles.

After retirement, changes in social role, networks, lifestyles, and social expectations may affect the psychosocial well-being of older people.

Older adults can actively plan new involvements and environments that can satisfy their needs, such as new part-time jobs, volunteering, community leadership.

(2) Adjustments experienced by older adults

Dealing with the loss of spouse, family members and friends is another major life event in older adulthood.

The diminishing social network and loss of partner in daily life also affect psychosocial adjustment.

Maintaining an active lifestyle, participation in leisure activities and using recreation centres are ways to extend social networks.

(Hawkins, et al., 1996)

(3) Adjustments experienced by older adults

Decline in physical health is the third major area of psychosocial adjustment.

Physical health is influenced by chronological age, physical fitness, health/disease status and genetic endowment.

As physical health declines, limitations in activity will be experienced.

Participation in fitness activities, leisure activities, travel, outings, and hobbies can have positive psychosocial benefits.

(Hawkins, et al., 1996)

Promotion Strategies for Psychosocial Wellness in the Older Adult

Promotion of Psychosocial Wellness in the Older Adult

Social
Support

Music
Therapy

Volunteer
Programs

Senior
Centres

Humor

Spirituality

Pet
Therapy

Social Support

Three types of social support:

1. emotional support

2. instrumental support

3. informational support

Eng & Young, 1992

Social Support

1. Emotional Support

- It includes reassurance, sense of love and belonging.

- If someone is being listened to and valued, they have a higher sense of self-worth.

Emotional support has a close relationship with health status.

Israel & Schurman, 1990

Social Support

2. Instrumental Support

It includes the provision of tangible aid and services which provide daily support, e.g., financial help, household maintenance.

It is related to a decrease in psychosomatic and emotional distress; if older people have good instrumental support they enjoy greater life satisfaction.

Revicki & Mitchell, 1990

Social Support

3. Informational support

It provides advice, responses and recommendations to help a person address problems.

Haber, 2003

Volunteer Programmes

Volunteering keeps older people engaged in life and maintains higher cognitive and physical functioning.

It can also enhance their sense of purpose through giving back to society, personal growth, development of new hobbies, continuing productivity, and the need for structure in daily life.

Volunteer programmes have been found to improve the physical health of long-term volunteers.

Bradley, (1999-2000)

Senior Centres

Senior centres concentrate on senior service.

The activities, trips, recreational programmes and services enrich the lives of older people.

Humour

Humour is a powerful communication tool.

It alleviates stress and positively affects the state of wellness.

Laughter releases endorphins. It also increases adrenaline in the brain and enhances memory and learning.

Watching funny movies or videos is one way to experience humour.

(O'Neil, 2002)

Pet Therapy

Pet therapy is commonly used because of its healing effect both physically and mentally.

A pet gives emotional support.

It is also used to encourage physical actions and training of muscles. This is achieved by playing with the pets.

This therapy also relieves stress, brings relaxation, and stimulates interest in the environment.

Older people with pets recovers more quickly and to live longer.

(O'Neil, 2002)

Music Therapy

Music serves to calm and reduce irritation, especially for those with Alzheimer's disease.

It also helps older people sleep by increasing the secretion of melatonin, which provides sleeping and healing effects.

Singing may bring joy, increase sociability, foster contact, enhance cognitive skills, improve listening skills and promote attention and expression of feelings.

Religious or Spiritual Support

“Religious people not only live longer, but they also have stronger immune systems, are physically healthier, and are less depressed than those who are not.” (Koenig et al., 1999, 1997; Larson, 1995)

Positive relationship between religion and health facilitates healthy lifestyles, positive social relations, positive values and beliefs and prayer and reduces stress hormones.

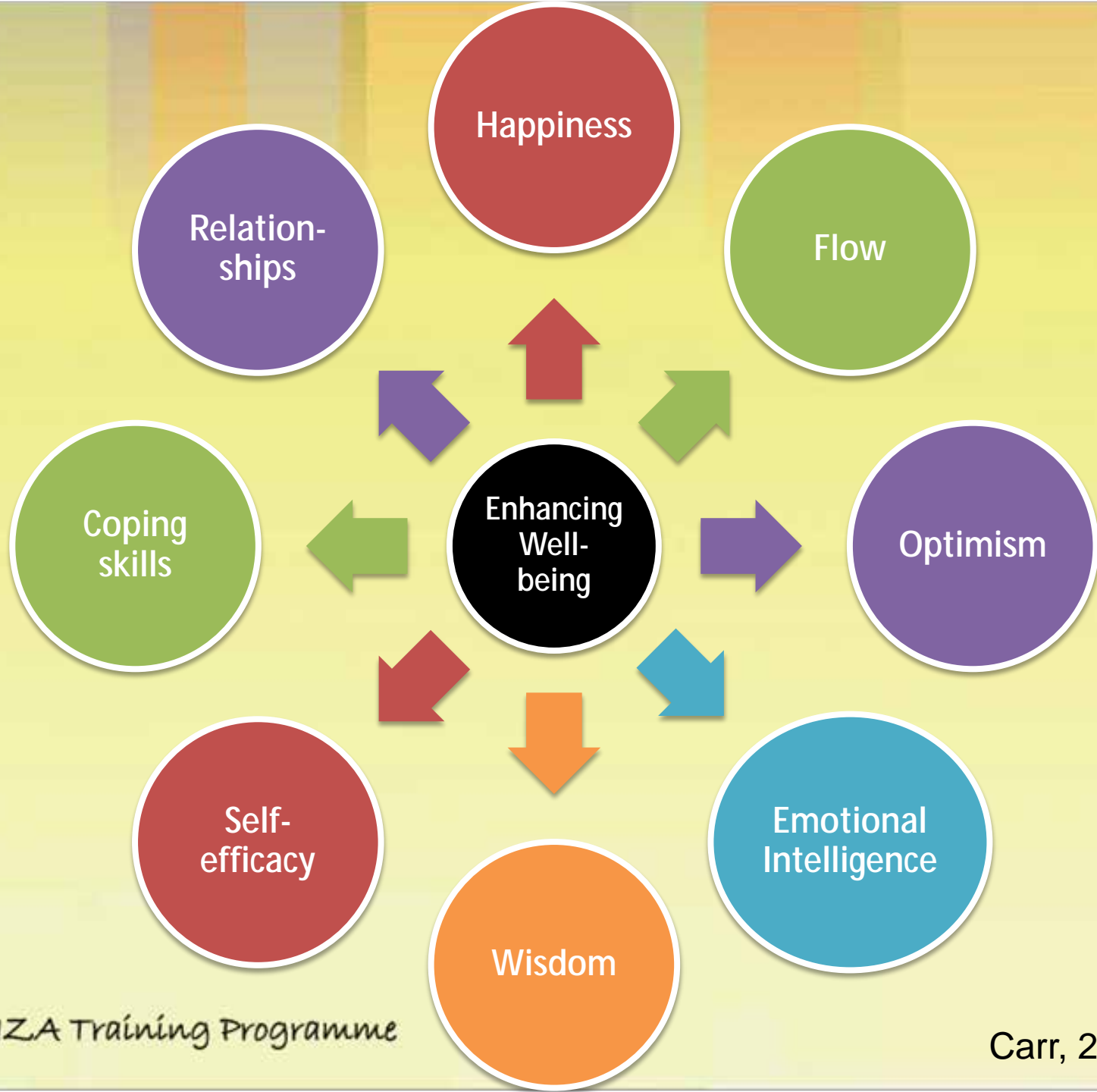
Religious or Spiritual Support

A study showed a relationship between spiritual well-being and purpose of life, positive physical and emotional health as well as self-worth.

It also found that older adults recover rapidly from a physical or emotional crisis when they have belief in a higher power. They also perceive death as a continuing part of the life course.

(O'Neil, 2002)

Strategies for Enhancing Well-being: Positive Psychology in Practice



Strategies for Enhancing **HAPPINESS**

Relationships

- Marry someone similar, maintain good communication, forgiving
- Keep contact with family and a few close friends
- Collaborate with acquaintances

Environment

- Ensure physical and financial safety
- Accommodate in a comfortable environment

Strategies for Enhancing **HAPPINESS**

Productivity

- Use skills that are **intrinsically pleasing** for tasks
- Achieve success
- Work on **interesting** and **challenging** tasks
- Work with a **set of goals**

Physical state

- Keep a healthy **diet habit**
- Commit in regular **physical exercise**

Strategies for Enhancing **HAPPINESS**

Recreation

- Have **quality food**
- Rest, relax, and spend **holidays** in moderation
- Take part in leisure activities with **groups of friends** such as dancing, singing, physical exercise, hiking

Habituation

- Accept that you will inevitably **habituate** to **material goods and situations** that initially bring increases in happiness

Strategies for Enhancing **HAPPINESS**

Comparison

- For low self-esteem individual due to negative comparison with media images, judge yourself against your peers and those worse off than yourself
- Make **realistic personal goals** and standards consistent with your competencies and resources

Expectation from losses and gains

- Expect **small increases in happiness from large gains** and successes
- Expect **large reductions in happiness from small losses** and failures

Strategies for Enhancing **FLOW**

Three Conditions of Flow

1. Involved in an activity with a *clear set of goals*.
2. Have a **good balance** between the *perceived challenges* of the task at hand and his or her own *perceived skills*.
3. The task at hand must have clear and *immediate feedback*.

Strategies for Enhancing **FLOW**

Creating *FLOW* experience

- Choose **controllable but challenging** activities that require certain **skill, complete concentration** and which are **intrinsically motivating**
- Select tasks where there are **clear goals and immediate feedback**
- **Pay attention on the task**
- Do NOT concentrate on your yourself, your feelings, or external rewards
- Expect to be not conscious of yourself and to experience time-distortion

Strategies for Enhancing **OPTIMISM**

Distract yourself from bad events by saying STOP, or by snapping yourself with an elastic band, or by focusing on another activity or object

Distance yourself from pessimistic explanation by noting that there are other explanations

Dispute the pessimistic beliefs by examining the evidence for the pessimistic explanation

Ascribe adversity to extrinsic, external, specific and transient situational factors

Strategies for Enhancing EQ

Self-monitoring

- Keep a '**Mood Diary**'
- Describe the **Activity** that led to temperament change, the **Beliefs** that led to the change in mood and the **Consequent** mood change on a 10-point scale

Activity	Beliefs	Mood (10-point scale)
Falling down the stairs	'it will happen repeatedly' 'the world is not dangerous'	Anxiety (8/10) Fear (9/10)
Falling down the stairs	'I will ameliorate my physical fitness so that it won't happen again'	Anxiety (4/10) Fear (5/10) Courage (6/10) Eagerness (5/10)

Strategies for Enhancing EQ

Self-regulation



For Depression

- Evade distressing situations
- Concentrate on non-distressing aspects of difficult situations
- Affirmably challenge distressing people
- Confront pessimistic and perfectionist thinking
- Be energetic and get support



For Anxiety

- Confront threat-oriented thinking
- Train courage by entering threatening situations
- Apply coping skills to reduce anxiety



For Anger

- Evade provocative situations
- Concentrate on non-distressing aspects of difficult situations
- Affirmably ask provocative people to be less provocative
- Stand back and practice empathy

Strategies for Enhancing EQ

Communication

- Listen without form an opinion
- Put your own views and emotions on hold
- Outline what you have heard the other person say
- Examine that your summary is accurate

**When
listening**



- Make decision on the points you want to make
- Arrange them logically and say them clearly
- Examine that you have been understood
- List your points without attacking, blaming or sulking.

**When
speaking**



Strategies for Enhancing EQ



Problem Solving

1. Break big indefinite problems into many **smaller specific** problems
2. Concentrate on the **problem**, not the person
3. Create **many possible solutions**, and examine the **pros and cons** of each
4. **Choose and execute** the best solution
5. Recall progress, repeat as necessary, celebrate success

Strategies for Enhancing **WISDOM**

Making wise judgments:

When faced with a complex problem, remember

that each of us has unfinished information about the past, present, future and limited capacity so **our judgments are always defective**, and should always be open to revision

that different people may hold different beliefs about what is right relying on their **perspectives, geographic and social context**, and that people's ideas develop **over time**

that Self, family, peer group, school, workplace, community, society and culture are **closely related across lifespan**

to balance own interests and those of others included the problem and the wider community to accomplish a **common good for all**

to integrate **collapses, disappointments, conflicts, growing incompetencies and frailty** into a coherent life story

Strategies for Enhancing **SELF-EFFICACY**

In a specific area fix overall goals, along with a **series of small but achievable goals** to make sure mastery experiences occur frequently

Observe other people who have succeeded through enduring effort in working towards goals

Arrange for **significant others** who know the domain in which you wish to excel to convince you that you can succeed in mastering manageable goals

Pursue goals when you are **physically and mentally fit** and in a positive mood

Strategies for Enhancing **COPING SKILLS**

Type	Aim	Functional	Dysfunctional
Problem-focused	Problem solving	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopting responsibility for solving the problem 2. Pursuing accurate information 3. Questing dependable advice and help 4. Evolving a realistic action plan 5. Following through on the plan 6. Deferring competing activities 7. Being optimistic of one's capacity to tackle the problem 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carrying little responsibility for solving the problem 2. Pursuing inaccurate information 3. Searching for questionable advice 4. Evolving unrealistic plans 5. Not succeed to plans 6. Delay 7. Being pessimistic of one's capacity to tackle the problem

Strategies for Enhancing **COPING SKILLS**

Type	Aim	Functional	Dysfunctional
Emotion-focused	Mood regulation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Making and staying socially supportive and empathic friendships 2. Pursuing meaningful spiritual support 3. Affective processing 4. Reframing and cognitive restructuring 5. Considering stress in humourous way 6. Relaxation routines 7. Physical exercise 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Making and staying destructive relationships 2. Pursuing meaningless support 3. Unproductive wishful reasoning 4. Long-term negation 5. Consider the stress too seriously 6. Drug and alcohol abuse 7. Aggression

Strategies for Enhancing **RELATIONSHIPS**

Enhancing marital relationships

- **Accept and respect** your partner as he or she is, rather than trying to alter them
- Attribute positive behavior to internal stable **traits**
- Set aside **time** everyday to listen and talk about your daily experiences
- Try to involve in **5 times as many positive interactions** than negative ones
- When conflicts occur, concentrate on jointly resolving the issue using problem-solving skills rather than finding faults with your partner
- When conflicts occur, try to tackle them **quickly** rather than delaying conflict resolution

Strategies for Enhancing **RELATIONSHIPS**

Enhancing marital relationships

- Jointly accept that some disagreements occur because
 - **men** use conversation mostly to tackle task-related problems, while **women** use conversation mostly to maintain relationships
 - **men** request greater psychological distance and **women** maintain on greater psychological intimacy
 - **men** commonly wish to maintain the power and benefits of traditional gender roles while **women** wish to have more equal relationships

Emotional Management

EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT

Emotional Management

Strategies
for
managing
depression

Strategies
for
managing
anxiety

Strategies
for
managing
anger

Strategies for Managing **DEPRESSION**

1. Deal with your feelings

Attempt to accept your feelings and explore the sources of stress and your unhappiness.

2. Accept that you can cope with bad feelings

To 'cope' means to manage; you are going to accept it. Bad feelings do not last forever!

Strategies for Managing **DEPRESSION**

3. Identify and analyse your self-talk:

Do you make these common mistakes in your thinking?

Over
Generalising

You tell yourself that **if something was true in one case, it will apply to any other cases that are resembling**. In reality, life is rarely that simple.

Black and White
Thinking

Perceive things as being **only one extreme or the other**. In the real world there are, in fact, grey areas.

Irrational Belief
with No Evidence

For example, saying nobody likes you when you could **not possibly have asked literally everybody**.

Distorting
Perception to the
Extremes

Concentrating on what you have done wrong and **enlarging the failures** or the problems out of their proportion. Looking at the world through rose-coloured glasses can be misleading too. Stop distorting the world in either direction.

Imaging the
Worst

Supposing the **worst possible outcome for** any event; usually exaggerated to the extent that it's really improbable.

Taking things
personally

If you really **manage the whole universe**, please tell us how! If you think everyone notices every little mistake that you have made, please note that most people are too busy annoying about their own problems.

Strategies for Managing **DEPRESSION**

4. Teach yourself to think rationally

Irrational Beliefs	Rational Ideas
1. I must be loved or liked and approved by every person who approach into my life.	I want to be loved or liked and approved. I will be disappointed or feel alone when that doesn't happen, but I can deal with those feelings, and I can take constructive steps to improve interpersonal relationships.
2. I must always be thoroughly competent, make no mistakes, and be a high achiever, if I am to be considered worthwhile.	I want to do things good. Like everyone else, I will occasionally fail or make mistakes. I will feel bad, but I can deal with this feeling. I can take constructive steps to do better next time.
3. Bad or evil people should be punished.	It is sad that some people do bad things from time to time, but upsetting myself over them is not going to change this fact.
4. It is almost the end of the world when things do not happen the way I want them to.	It is disappointing when things are not going my way, but I can cope with this disappointment. I will try my best to make things happen more as I would like them to; yet, I will not disappoint myself when they don't.
5. My bad feelings are caused by something outside my control , so I cannot do anything about it.	My problems may be affected by factors outside my control, but my perceptions and reactions to the problems are under my control. <p style="text-align: right;">Depressed Little Prince(2011).</p>

Strategies for Managing **DEPRESSION**

4. Teach yourself to think rationally

Irrational Beliefs	Rational Ideas
6. Things that may be risky, unpleasant, or frightening <i>would</i> annoy me a lot.	Worrying about something that might go wrong does not stop it from happening; it barely upsets me.
7. It is easier to <i>put off</i> something difficult or unpleasant than it is to face up to it.	Facing difficult situations will make me feel bad at the time , but I can deal with it. Putting off problems does not help to solve the problems; on the other hand, it lengthens my worries about them.
8. I <i>need</i> to rely on someone who is stronger than I am.	It is good to get support from others when I need it, but I should also rely on and believe in myself .
9. My present problems were originated in <i>the past</i> .	Some of my problems might have been caused by past events, yet my perceptions and reactions to these problems are something within my control .
10. I <i>should</i> feel irritated when people share with me their problems and difficulties.	It is sad to see other people in hard times, but I am not going to help them by upsetting myself. I can cope with the sad feelings and actively help them .

Depressed Little Prince(2011).

Strategies for Managing **ANXIETY**

25 ways to relieve anxiety

1. **Positive thinking.** Look for the chance instead of the negative.
2. **Task oriented.** Feel good about your endeavour and accomplishments.
3. **Accept yourself.** Don't be self-critical. If there is something you want to alter, then alter it.
4. **Be flexible.** Not everything is black and white.
5. **Develop realistic goals.** Evaluate what it will take to achieve a goal.
6. Develop a **positive perspective of life.**
7. Foster your **spirituality.**
8. **Divert** yourself from stressors. Sometimes you have to put everything aside to relax and have fun.
9. Train deep breathing, **relaxation**, meditation, or visualisation.
10. Discover **humour** in things.
11. Expend time with **people you enjoy.**
12. Keep a **journal** for venting, and at the end of every entry close with something positive.

Strategies for Managing ANXIETY

25 ways to relieve anxiety

13. Take time habitually to do **activities** that you enjoy.
14. Use your **support network** e.g., friends, family, community support group.
15. Practice being **assertive**. You will feel better for taking care of yourself.
16. Keep good **communication**.
17. Take **5-10 min breaks** after a day to relax and remove yourself from stressors and demands.
18. Regular **exercise**. Walking is good for decreasing body tension and relieving stress.
19. Get enough **rest and sleep**. If you don't get enough sleep you can't cope well.
20. Practice good **nutrition**.
21. **Massage**. A good way to alleviate muscle tension.
22. Select to be in **environments** that feel good to you.
23. Work on your **financial** security.
24. Practice good **time management**.
25. Do things that actualize respect, care, and **nurturing of the self**.

Strategies for Managing **ANGER**

Ten things you should know about your anger ...

- What has happened around you does not make you angry. Your **"hot thoughts"** make your anger.
- Most of the time your anger does not help you. It only **immobilizes you** and keeps you unfriendly.
- The thoughts that generate anger more often than not **involves distortions**. Correcting these distortions will decrease your anger.
- Ultimately, your anger is caused by your belief that someone is **acting unfairly** with you or that some events are unfair to you. The intensity of anger will increase if the act is seen as **intentional**.
- If you learn to see the world through other people's eyes, you will often be surprised to realize their actions are not unjust from their point of view. The unfairness in these cases turns out to be **an illusion** that exists only in your mind.

Strategies for Managing **ANGER**

Ten things you should know about your anger ...

- Other people usually do not feel they deserve your punishment. Therefore, your retaliation is **unlikely to help** you accomplish any positive goals in your interactions with them.
- A great deal of your anger includes your defense against loss of self-esteem. You get mad when people criticize you, disagree with you, or fail to behave as you want them to. Such anger is always inappropriate because your **negative distorted thoughts** are taking your own self-esteem away.
- Frustration results from unmet expectations. Since the event that disappointed you was a part of 'reality' your frustration always results from your unrealistic expectations. The simplest answer would be to change your **expectations**. The crucial issue would be: is this anger to your advantage?
- You rarely need to show anger in order to be human. It is not true that you will be an unfeeling robot without getting angry. In fact, when you **free yourself** from that sour irritability, you will feel greater zest, joy, peace, and productivity. You will experience liberation and enlightenment.

Strategies for Managing **ANGER**

Penalties for NOT expressing anger

- **Depression**: experienced as feeling incapable
- **Anxiety**: often experienced with fright
- **Guilt**: socialized to believe that it is improper to feel angry
- **Self-destructive activities**
 - Drinking/ drugs
 - Eating to disguised feelings
 - Psychosomatic illnesses (headache, gastrointestinal problems, hypertension)
- **Aggression/ violence**
- **Disguised anger**
 - Hostile humor (sarcasm)
 - Nagging
 - Silence and withdrawal
 - Withholding sex
 - Displacement

Strategies for Managing **ANGER**



Change the way you think



Cooling Those **"Hot Thoughts"**

write down all the "hot thoughts," and list the corresponding "cool thoughts."

Replace them with the "cool thoughts" which will ease your emotional arousals.

"Should" Reduction

Make a list of all the reasons why you believe the other person "shouldn't" have acted as he did. Then, **confront these reasons** until you can see why they are unrealistic.

Strategies for Managing **ANGER**

Relaxation: Simple relaxation tools such as deep breathing and relaxing imagery can help calm down angry feelings. If you are involved in a relationship where both partners are hot-tempered, it might be a good idea for both of you to learn these techniques.

Some simple steps you can try:

Breathe deeply, from your diaphragm. Breathing from your chest won't relax you. Picture your breath coming up from your 'gut.'

Slowly repeat a **calming word** or phrase such as 'relax' or 'take it easy.' Repeat it to yourself while breathing deeply.

Use **imagery**; visualize a relaxing experience from your memory or your imagination.

Non-strenuous, slow exercises such as **yoga** can relax your muscles and make you feel much calmer.

Practice these techniques daily. Learn to use them automatically when you're in a tense situation.

American Psychological Association (2012).

Strategies for Managing **ANGER**

Better Communication

- **Don't say the first thing** that comes into your head, but slow down and think cautiously about what you want to say
- Listen carefully to what the other person is saying and **take your time before answering**
- It is natural to get defensive when you are criticized, but **don't fight back**
- Listen to what lies **beneath the words**. Maybe the message is that this person feels disregarded and unloved

Strategies for Managing **ANGER**

Using Humour

'Silly humour' can help defuse rage in a number of ways. For one thing, it can help you get a more balanced perspective. When you get angry and call someone a name or refer to them in some imaginative phrase, stop and picture what that word would literally look like. If you're at work and you want to call a co-worker a 'dirt-bag' or a 'single-cell life form,' for example, picture a large bag full of dirt, or an amoeba, sitting at your colleague's desk, talking on the phone, and going to meetings. Do this whenever you want to call another person by a rude name. If you can, draw a picture of what the actual thing might look like; this will take a lot of the edge off your fury.

Humour can often be relied on to help un-knot a tense situation.



Strategies for Managing **ANGER**

- The underlying message of highly angry people is 'Things oughta go my way!' Angry people tend to feel that they are morally correct, that anything blocking or changing their plans is an unbearable indignity that they should NOT have to tolerate. Maybe other people do, but not them.
- When you catch yourself feeling that way, picture yourself as a god or goddess, a supreme ruler who owns the streets and stores and office space, striding alone and having your way in all situations while others defer to you. The more detail you can get into your imaginary scenes, the more chance you have to realize that maybe you are being a little unreasonable; you'll also realize how unimportant the things you're angry about really are.
- There are two cautions in using humor. First, don't try to just 'laugh off' your problems; rather, use humor to help yourself face them more constructively. Second, don't give in to harsh, sarcastic humor; that's just another form of unhealthy aggression.
- What these techniques have in common is a refusal to take yourself too seriously. Anger is a serious emotion, but it's often accompanied by ideas that, if examined, can make you laugh.
- Changing Your Environment

Strategies for Managing **ANGER**

- Sometimes it's our immediate surroundings that give us cause for irritation and fury. Problems and responsibilities can weigh on you and make you feel angry at the trap you seem to have fallen into, and all the people and things that form that trap.
- Give yourself a break. Make sure you have some 'personal time' scheduled for times of the day that you know are particularly stressful. For example, a working mother might make a standing rule that when she comes home from work, the first 15 minutes will be quiet time. With this brief respite, she will feel better prepared to handle demands from her kids without blowing up at them.
- Some other tips for easing up:
- **Timing.** If you and your spouse tend to fight when you discuss things at night--perhaps you're tired, or distracted, or maybe it's just habit--try changing the times when you talk about important matters so these talks don't turn into arguments.
- **Avoidance.** If you get furious every time you walk by your child's chaotic room, shut the door. Don't make yourself look at what infuriates you. Don't say to yourself, 'Well, my child should clean up the room so I won't have to be angry!' That's not the point. The point is to keep yourself calm.
- **Finding alternatives.** If your daily commute through traffic leaves you in a state of rage and frustration, give yourself a project. Perhaps you could find a different route, one that's less congested or more scenic. Or find an alternative way to travel, such as taking a bus or commuter train.

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End of Chapter 1

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