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# SESSION 8

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## Objectives:

- To identify benefits of thought-switching.
- To differentiate between needs and wants.
- To begin to identify emotional and intellectual traps and develop strategies for more positive patterns.
- To recognize and have some strategies for coping with depression.
- To recognize the possibility of making peace with the past and to develop some strategies for doing so.

## Session Outline:

- Self Esteem: How Our History Shapes Our Self Esteem
- Needs vs. Wants
- Feelings That Trap Us: Fear, Loss, Depression
- Ambivalence: "Buts"
- Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda
- Letting Go of the Past

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## **Updating**

Who would like to share their experience of using the thought-switching?

Did any of you feel any differently about yourselves or what was happening in your lives?

Did any of you find it easier to tell other people how you felt about something that was happening?

Today we're going to talk more about self-esteem, how we feel about ourselves, and the difference between what we need and what we want.

## **Needs vs. Wants**

All people have some basic things that they need. What do you think those basic needs are?

What are some basic psychological needs?

love

security

self-esteem

recognition

new experiences

creative expression

**We all need these things. Some of them we can provide for ourselves. Some our parents can provide, and some we need to look to other adults to help provide.**

**Now, tell me some things you want.**

List them.

**What is the difference between something you need and something you want?**

Notate needs and wants on their list.

**An important part of becoming a responsible person is figuring out the difference between needs and wants. We've talked about basic needs. If those basic needs go unmet, our survival and security are threatened.**

**Wants, on the other hand, are things that we would like to have but can survive without. Knowing the difference between what we need and what we want is the first step in learning to be effective in really getting what you want out of life.**

**Can anyone tell me where you need to look to discover what you want or need?**

Discuss. Encourage them to see that they are the only source.

**In order to be clear about the difference between needs and wants, we have to understand how our feelings might interfere.**

**Are you the same as your feelings?**

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**What you feel or think is not the same as what you do or who you are.**

**Remember all the feelings we talked about a few weeks ago?**

happy	relieved	disappointed
scared	silly	thrilled
pleased	frustrated	enthusiastic
angry	peaceful	hurt
sad	nervous	impatient
excited	loved	confident

**Are any of these really good or bad?**

No, they are just feelings that all of us have from time to time. Some are more pleasant and feel better than others, but none of them are good or bad.

**Believing that our feelings are good or bad or that we are good or bad because we have those feelings is a trap because it makes us afraid to be who we are.**

**Flip chart 23**

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**Identity traps:**

**What I feel = Who I am**

**What I do = Who I am**

**IT IS NOT TRUE!!!**

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**Identity traps:**

**If I make a mistake, I am a mistake.**

**If I have bad thoughts, I am a bad person.**

**If I fail at something, I am a failure.**

**If I do something mean, I am a mean person.**

**IT IS NOT TRUE!!!**

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Getting caught in these traps is like telling an alligator you're going to feed him and forgetting the food. These traps can gobble you up just like a hungry alligator because they make you feel badly about yourself and then you don't get to express who you really are.

Here are some more versions of the trap:

We've talked about ways to change what you say to yourself in order to avoid these traps.

(Thought-switching, positive self-talk, etc.) When you

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have a way to answer yourself back when you have these thoughts, you don't have to be trapped by them.

What are some other thoughts that you have that trap you and how could you answer yourself back so you won't be trapped?

For example:

"I made a mistake. Let me think about what I can learn from my mistake and I'll try again."

"I have bad thoughts when I get angry or upset, but I don't act on those bad thoughts."

"I did something mean and I need to apologize."

## **Feelings That Trap Us**

### **Fear**

Fear is a natural feeling, but it can immobilize you. It can keep you from taking risks. It can keep you from leaving your house. It can also be your friend, just as all your other feelings can be your friends when you understand them and learn to work with them instead of letting them control you.

Whenever you are feeling fear, you can ask yourself: "What am I afraid of losing?"

1. love, acceptance or approval
2. power and control
3. looking good

**The more accurately you can recognize the source of your fear, the more choices you have. Also you will be more successful at handling your feelings and you will increasingly trust yourself to understand and manage your feelings.**

Give them an opportunity to share things they fear and explore which of the 3 kinds of loss the fears narrow down to.

## **Loss**

**What does it mean to lose something? Not just to misplace something, but to feel loss?**

**Loss takes many forms, and is associated with change in our lives.**

**Can you think of times when you have had a feeling of loss?**

Allow discussion. If they need help with examples, follow up with:

We can feel loss when our schedule changes, when a friend isn't around as often, when we have more or less money, when we move, when we feel someone doesn't like us as much as they did before.

Loss is something that you feel inside and doesn't always make sense with the world outside.

Loss is often associated with something that doesn't make sense. For example, if you lose something that

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you bought when you were with someone special in a special place, you might feel loss for the memories you had about the time that you were with that special person.

**Can we sometimes feel loss even about happy things?**

**For example, if you have a new brother or sister, you may be very happy that they are here, that you can play with them, that you'll be growing up with another person in your family. At the same time, you may feel very sad, feel loss that your parents don't have as much time for you now, that all the people in your family will be thinking and asking about your new brother or sister instead of just you. Mixed feelings are also part of life and are easier to understand if you acknowledge that they are there.**

**Who can think of a feeling of loss you have had with your family?**

Divorce, move, death, separation.

**How did it feel?**

**What did you do?**

**Did the feelings change over time? How did you handle the feelings?**

**Did anyone help you? Did your parents act differently? Do you think they felt the loss too?**

**Have you ever had something happy cause feelings of loss for you?**



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New siblings, reporting abuse, moving, good news for a friend that led to separation.

**Did you communicate that or did you try to pretend you weren't having those feelings?**

**Did you feel badly about yourself for having those feelings?**

**Remember — you are not your feelings.**

## **Depression**

**Lets talk about another difficult feeling. What does it mean to be depressed?**

**Depression is especially difficult because it affects everything you think and say.**

**It affects how you see and hear everything everyone else says to you. They may be trying to be helpful and depression can make you think and feel they are trying to hurt you.**

**This is an especially hard emotion or feeling to deal with because it usually isn't recognizable as depression. It can feel like sadness or a bad mood, but it usually lasts much longer than most feelings.**

**Depression wears lots of faces. It might just be feeling tired all the time and never having any energy.**

**It can be deep sadness that is with you all the time.**

**It can feel like guilt that never goes away or comes back very often.**

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**It can show up in your life as feeling incapable of making any decisions, not being able to think clearly and maybe even not caring that you can't decide or think.**

**It can be feeling dull about everything, not really having a good time, even when you're doing something that should be fun.**

**You may feel like you don't love or care about people anymore and recognizing that feeling, you may feel even more sad.**

**You may feel irritable and jumpy and unable to stop feeling that way.**

**Sometimes, depression even results in thinking about death a lot.**

**All of these things are very real in the mind of a depressed person. They make sense and are very powerful.**

**At the same time, the depressed person may realize that s/he didn't used to think and feel that way.**

**This is the time to ask for help.**

Depression is self-sustaining and sometimes only someone from the outside of you can help you to regain your balance and get back to what is more normal for you.

## **Ambivalence: "Buts"**

What if you're not sure how you feel about something?  
What if you have mixed feelings about something?

The word for mixed up feelings is ambivalence. Everybody has ambivalent feelings, when you feel like you're being two or more ways at once.

One way to take care of mixed up feelings is to change the way you think and talk about them.

For example, "I want to go skating, but I'm scared of falling down and looking stupid." The word "but" keeps people stuck for a long time.

By changing the work "but" to "and," you give yourself more choice and take more control of what you would like to do.

"I want to go skating and I'm afraid I'll fall down and look stupid." Now you can choose to go and take the chance of falling down or not go.

Have each of the participants think of one of their own and write it down in their notebooks.

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## **Coulda, Shoulda, Woulda**

Living in the past and staying upset or angry about something is another trap that takes your power away. This is called "Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda."

"Coulda, Shoulda, Woulda" are negative and destructive patterns in life that most people fall into sometimes. Whenever things don't go the way you wanted them to, you start to say things like,

- "I coulda (said) . . ."
- "I shoulda (been) . . ."
- "I woulda (done) . . ."

That makes you feel like you handled things badly, then you start to feel badly that you failed and you don't really take the time to look at what you should, could, or would do now or the next time.

Who can think of some examples of "Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda" statements you make in your own lives?

How do you feel when you're doing "Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda" to yourself?

Do you think it weakens you? Isn't it just another form of negative self talk?

Do you think statements like that affect your ability to act in the future? Why?

This is very important.

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Whenever you hear yourself or someone else speaking to you using "Coulda, Shoulda, Woulda," you should:

- Stop.
- Remind yourself that what you did in the past is a way to learn for the future.
- Look at what you need to do next and then do it.
- Forgive yourself for whatever you didn't do to your satisfaction.
- Acknowledge yourself for moving on and then move on.

## Letting Go Of The Past

One of the things that often affects our thoughts is things that have happened to us in the past.

We make decisions about our lives based on the past and often dwell on them thinking the same thoughts over and over. These are called tapes, or worry tapes.

In order to keep growing and learning new things, in order to get more of what you want in your life, you need to not get trapped in the past. Bad feelings about something in your past make it hard for you to concentrate on new things, new experiences.

Ask for examples from group.

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**The time you spend letting memories keep you feeling one way or the other is time during which you are not free to be who you want to be today!**

**There are real problems in life that it seems you can't do anything about.**

That is especially true for young people because they live in a world of adults who have a lot of control.

**And things happen in life that you can't change.**

For example, you might not live with one or both of your parents. Some people have physical differences like muscle problems so they can't walk, or diet problems so they can't eat certain foods.

**What you can do is remember that those problems and other difficult things that happen in life are never your fault. They have nothing to do with whether you are good or bad or have certain thoughts.**

**Where you can have real control is working with yourself to decide how you feel about what has happened in your life. One of the jobs of social workers, counselors and therapists is often to help people sort through their thoughts and to find ways to understand and develop better feelings about themselves and the things that have happened.**

**Feelings have to go somewhere. If you're not allowed by the people around you or if you don't allow yourself to have your own feelings, they will come out somewhere else, maybe in a stomachache or headache or feeling**

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tired and cranky. Sometimes they come out all at once in anger or tears and we feel out of control.

All people have strong feelings and sometimes even wish that bad things would happen, but it is important to know that thinking bad things doesn't make them happen.

In preparation for the next session I'd like each of you to select another negative self-talk statement and write a positive override to use in the coming week. Those who wish to keep or slightly alter last weeks may do so. Write them down in their notebooks. Take them home and keep them somewhere they will be a visible reminder during the week.

You might also want to really start thinking about what you want in your life, write your thoughts down into a few simple statements, keep them with you, look at how you diminish your ability to have those things, be nice to yourself when you aren't perfect. This isn't simple or easy, but you absolutely *can* do it if you want to.

## **Relaxation**

### **Walking and Centering**

Most of us pay no attention when we are walking. We look just enough not to bump into things most of the time. But walking can be exhilarating and remind you of how special it is to be alive and how special each of us is.

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Everyone stand up and let's clear a bit of space so we all have room to walk around.

Before we begin, take a couple of deep breaths.

Now let's begin walking slowly.

Be aware of everything and everyone in the room without looking at anyone or anything in particular.

Say to yourself, "I see and hear and feel everything."

Be aware of the temperature of the air in the room, the light, any smells, other people, the furniture.

Feel the air move against your skin as you walk.

If your mind thinks of other things like what you'll do after class today, set that thought aside and come back to saying to yourself, "I see and hear and feel everything."

Allow your walking to be smooth, centered, in control so you don't have to make sudden movements to avoid other people or furniture, so you flow through the room.

Feel how centered and relaxed you feel.

Notice your breathing.

If you feel amused or want to smile, do so.

Feeling good naturally brings smiles and laughter and is part of what you normally feel.

Let that be there without interrupting the smooth walking and awareness of the room.

Do this for 3–5 minutes.



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Now slow down, be aware of how relaxed you feel and stop. Return to your seats.

## **Session 8 — Self-Work Activities**

1. Wishing is a real part of life. Write down for yourself three things that you wish for. Look at whether they are things that you really want. Ask yourself if there is anything you could do to move toward getting your wishes. Use your goal setting list to set steps to move toward those goals.

Look at the other types of things you wish for, like wishing you were someone else, wishing you could relive something that happened. Look at how many of your wishes make your life better and how many seem to diminish the quality of your life or just plain make you miserable.

2. Practice preventing low days or getting depressed. Be active — for yourself. Read and put into practice some of the things on the “Preventing Depression” handout.

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## PREVENTING DEPRESSION

Begin to notice the feelings that you have at the very beginning of feeling bad or depressed. Look at how you feel and what you do. Begin to try things that will shake your feeling low and get your day or your life going again. Keep track of what works for you. Some suggestions might be:

1. Do something nice for yourself.
2. Get with a friend or family member who makes you feel good, who makes you laugh.
3. Take a few minutes to acknowledge to yourself how bad you really feel, cry if you want to, feel as bad as you feel and then do something else.
4. Tell yourself, "I feel depressed and I'm going to do something for myself." Then do something for yourself. That something may be directly related to your feeling bad or not.
5. Keep moving. Chunk down. Make yourself be engaged in something for ten minutes. Often that is enough to break the cycle and get you going again.
6. Exercise.
7. Meditate and then do something active.
8. Communicate what you need to communicate to complete an upset and then move on. (Sometimes you don't need to communicate to anyone but yourself.)
9. Stop telling yourself you're awful for feeling the way you do. The truth is you feel the way you do, so feel that way and then do something else.
10. Keep a journal. Write down your thoughts or feelings as quickly as they come into your head. Write them anyway you want to — no one is going to grade you. Keep writing until you don't have anything more to say. Then go on to something more enjoyable. Later you can reread what you've said or just throw the thoughts away in the same way you let go of your depressed feelings.

FINALLY, have fun, do something silly, force yourself if you have to in order to get into it.

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Dear Parents,

Welcome to Session 8 of the CHALLENGE Program.

Today we discussed the difference between “needs” and “wants.”

An important part of becoming a responsible person is figuring out the difference between needs and wants. Wants are things we would like to have, but we could survive without. That doesn't mean they are unimportant. At the same time, we sometimes forget to work toward the things we really need in life because they are sometimes more subtle and hard to identify.

Living in the past is one way we get stuck in life. All too many people fall into patterns of thinking, “I coulda, shoulda, woulda . . .”

Whenever you hear your children or yourselves speaking this way, remember that the past is the learning ground for the future. This program is about learning from the past and moving on to the future without blame, recrimination or guilt.

Being aware of feelings and how they effect self-esteem helps children to communicate effectively and responsibly with themselves and with others. This takes practice and is a life long endeavor, but learning to have your feelings and thoughts and still move forward in life is at the heart of this program. It is something we learn to do for ourselves even as we work with our children to help them learn how to exercise greater control to get what they want from their own lives. Enjoy it!

Sincerely,

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**Basic psychological needs:**

**love**

**security**

**self-esteem**

**recognition**

**new experiences**

**creative expression**

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## **Feelings:**

happy    relieved    disappointed

scared    silly    thrilled

pleased    frustrated    enthusiastic

angry    peaceful    hurt

sad    nervous    impatient

excited    loved    confident

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## **Identity traps:**

What I feel = Who I am

What I do = Who I am

IT IS NOT TRUE!!!!

## **Identity traps:**

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If I have bad thoughts, I am a bad person.

If I fail at something, I am a failure.

If I do something mean, I am a mean person.

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