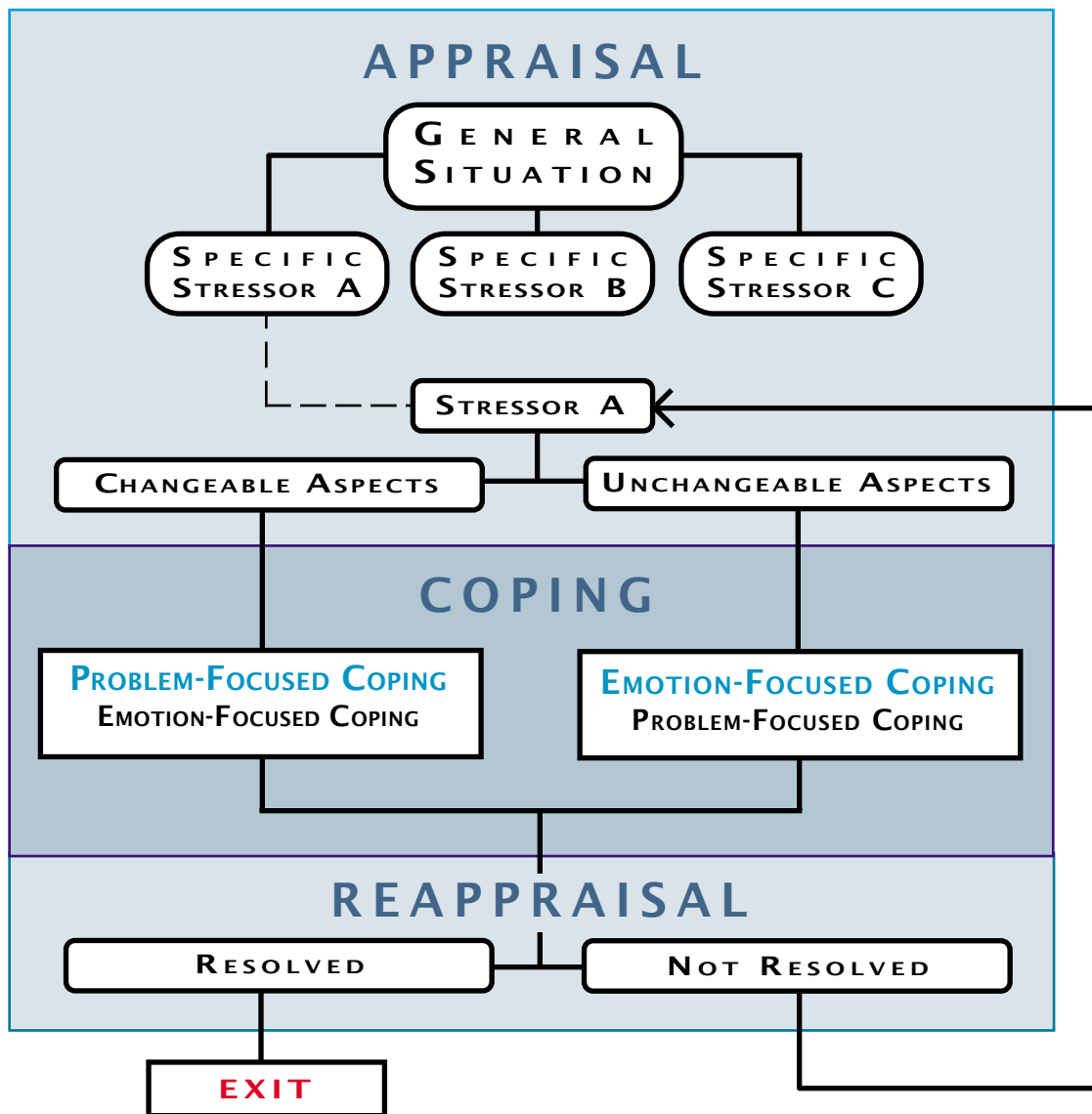


# COPING EFFECTIVENESS TRAINING

• W O R K B O O K •



CENTER FOR AIDS PREVENTION STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN FRANCISCO

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supported by NIMH grant MH57233*

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**C O P I N G  
E F F E C T I V E N E S S  
T R A I N I N G**

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# **C O P I N G E F F E C T I V E N E S S T R A I N I N G W O R K B O O K**

## **H O W T O U S E T H I S W O R K B O O K**

This workbook follows the Coping Effectiveness Training Sessions quite closely, and contains exercises that will help you further understand effective coping. After each session, we will ask you to try the exercises in the workbook which correspond with that particular session. This workbook also contains a summary of material covered in each session. After you've completed the sessions, you may want to keep the workbook as a helpful resource.

## **W H O W E A R E A N D W H A T W E A R E A B O U T**

We are a working team of researchers and clinicians who have been carrying out this program to support HIV-positive men since 1985.

We designed this training program based on all of our past programs. It will teach you a set of strategies to help you cope, not exclusively with HIV, but with other aspects of life as well. The program is easy to learn and effective in helping people manage stressful situations.

We want your feedback! We hope to continually improve our program and you are the expert consultant. Whenever anything is unclear or doesn't work, please tell us. Whenever something is crystal clear and works well, please tell us that also.

**The Program Team**

- Program Directors:  
Margaret Chesney, Ph.D.  
Susan Folkman, Ph.D.  
Tom Coates, Ph.D.
- Medical Team:  
Frederick Hecht, M.D.
- Program Coordinators:  
Joey Taylor  
Neal Carnes
- Clinical Supervisors:  
Tom Holt, M.F.T.  
Laurie Hessen, M.F.T.
- Group Leaders:  
Brian Dietrich, M.F.T.  
Thomas Holt, M.F.T.  
Chaya Rivka Mayerson, Ph.D.  
Bettina O'Brien, M.A.  
Joshua Schwartz, Ph.D.
- Interviewers:  
Sheri Storey  
Larry Lariosa

**CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY**

These days nearly everyone is concerned about confidentiality, so we have made sure that your participation in this program is confidential. Among group members, confidentiality is also important. When you are talking about this group, the names of others in the group or personal information that they may bring up should not be shared or given.

For example, you may meet your best friend in a cafe.

Friend: "How is the group going?"

You: "There is a very nice guy named Fred there, but boy, did he have some strange things to say about his boss at Pacific Bell."

Friend: "Oh I know someone named Fred at Pacific Bell. Does he have very piercing blue eyes?"

(You nod.)

Friend: As a matter of fact I'm having dinner with his boss tomorrow. What did he say about her?"

In order to protect EACH OTHER'S confidentiality, we ask that you refrain from talking about the group in reference to anyone by name. So our hypothetical conversation goes more like this:

Friend: "How is the group going?"

You: "Great, I'm learning how to cope and there is a cute guy there."

Friend: "It's about time you learned how to cope. What's his name?"

You: "Sorry, we have a confidentiality deal and I can't tell you."

Friend: "So you don't trust your best friend, huh?"

You: "It's not about trusting you. It's that I respect the group."

There may be times when it is a little sticky for you to maintain confidentiality, but doing so demonstrates your respect for other group members.

## S E S S I O N I

# INTRODUCTION TO COPING EFFECTIVENESS TRAINING

### WHAT IS STRESS?

We all know what stress feels like from our own personal experience. Generally stress can be thought of as tension or pressures that are a natural part of living. It can result from changes we want as well as from those we don't want.

People often experience symptoms of stress of the kinds listed below. One of these feelings or behaviors may be the first cue to stress.

- Physical:** shortness of breath, pounding heart, stiff or tense muscles, headaches, upset stomach clenching jaw or fists, dizziness, trembling, diarrhea, grinding teeth, sweating, feeling faint, loss of interest in sex, tiredness, restlessness.
- Emotional:** irritability, anger, worry, trouble concentrating, negative attitudes, loneliness, feeling down or depressed, feeling tense, grouchiness, inability to relax.
- Behavioral:** overeating, loss of appetite, trouble sleeping, accident proneness, using more alcohol, avoiding tasks, sleep problems, trouble completing work assignments, fidgeting, tremors, crying, smoking more.
- Cognitive:** anxious or racing or slowed thoughts, fearful anticipation, poor concentration, difficulty with memory.
- Social:** avoiding others, isolating, not wanting to be alone, venting, getting easily irritated with others.

Do you recognize any of your personal symptoms of stress from the list above? Do you have any personal symptoms of stress that we have not included in this list?

## STRESS IS A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

### Stress is defined as:

A personally meaningful situation in which the demands experienced by a person exceed his or her coping resources.

What makes something stressful for one person and not another? The amount of stress each person experiences depends on his or her understanding of the situation. Stress results from your belief that an event is dangerous, difficult or painful, and that you can't (or may not be able to) cope with it. Different things are stressful for different people largely because the meaning of the event differs between people, and because people have different resources available for coping with stress.

For a situation to be stressful it must matter to the person and be a situation that he or she cannot handle with ease. People differ in what matters to them. For example, being criticized on the job may matter a great deal to one person but mean little to another person. People also differ in their resources for coping with stressful situations, which means that what's difficult for one person to manage may be easy for another. Therefore, what's stressful for one person may not be stressful for another.

Thus, each of us decides what's stressful for us personally. So the situation which is stressful for one person may not be stressful for another. It's not wrong or bad to feel stressed when someone else doesn't. People are simply stressed by different kinds of things.

## MANAGING STRESS

### Management not Mastery

Our focus is on stress management rather than stress mastery. Some situations cannot be mastered in the sense that the stress cannot be eliminated from your life. However, not mastering a stressful situation does not mean that a person is not coping effectively. Our focus is on developing a way of making stress more manageable.

## **WHAT HELPS YOU DEAL WITH STRESS?**

What helps you deal with stress in your life? We will come back to this question frequently in the weeks ahead. Just as we all experience stress in a variety of ways, we tend to cope with stress in a variety of ways as well. Some ways of coping are more effective than others in relieving feelings of stress. We'll be working with you to help you identify what the most effective ways of coping with stress are for you.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE EXERCISES**

Each week we will give you some exercises to do before the next meeting. The purpose of the exercises is to help you integrate the material from the meetings into your day-to-day life to make it as usable and helpful to you as possible. It's up to you whether you do them or not. From our experience people get more out of the sessions if they do the exercises. The exercises are for you, and it's up to you whether you share anything from them in the group meetings.

**BARRIERS TO DOING THE EXERCISES**

What are the reasons you came up with for putting off doing these exercises? (If you are a person who doesn't put things off, you have one less exercise to do!)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**PERSONAL SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF STRESS**

Look at the signs and symptoms of stress on the first page of this chapter. Identify your personal favorites (i.e., your own signs and symptoms of stress). Add any you are aware of using that are not listed here.

**S E S S I O N I I  
C E T : F I R S T S T E P S**

**POSITIVE EXPERIENCES**

In these meetings our focus is on stress and dealing with difficult emotions. Positive experiences and good feelings are important and can help people manage stress. Positive experiences, the things that feel good, don't have to be major in the eyes of the world. We are talking about the kinds of events that help you make it through the day, the good or pleasant feeling experiences that will never make the papers. It might be something like savoring a good cup of coffee or feeling moved by a beautiful sunset.

Just as you are the person to assess what is stressful in your life, you are the person who knows what feels good or positive to you. For example, the fact that your best friend hates to be awake early enough to watch the sunrise need not take away from the beauty you saw in the sunrise this morning.

Sometimes, if people around you are feeling down or bummed out, it can be difficult to find places where the good feelings you may have can be talked about and accepted. It's kind of like being the only person who loves the fall or winter holidays in the midst of a mass of people who find them depressing, dis-spiriting, too materialized, and so forth.

For some of us there aren't currently, or there haven't been in the past, places where pleasures and successes can be shared and respected. We think that the sharing and treasuring of pleasant or good events with others is important just as is having an arena for giving voice to the stress and distress of life.

**COMMUNICATION SKILLS:  
LISTENING & ACKNOWLEDGING**

During the second session we did a listening exercise. The purpose of the exercise is to practice accurately understanding what someone else is trying to tell you, without the interference of your own opinions or interpretations. Often, when you respond to people simply based on what they say, without interposing your own judgments or suggestions, they feel better understood and more trustful.

There are 7 guidelines for listening and acknowledging:

1. Allow people to finish their thoughts; don't interrupt.
2. Allow the person to tell their story; don't steal the floor.
3. Listen without giving advice.
4. Listen carefully to the content of what the other person says.
5. After he or she has spoken, repeat briefly what was said, and ask if you heard it correctly.
6. Listen carefully to any corrections.
7. Repeat what you hear in brief with the corrections.

You will find that this will come in handy coping with conflictual situations as well as with bosses, employees, family members, friends, even your partner.

**INTRODUCTION TO COPING**

**Definition:** Last week we began to talk about managing rather than mastering stressful situations. In doing so, we began to define coping. Coping is the thoughts and behaviors that we use to manage the demands of stressful situations.

Part of managing stress is learning to break a

*There is a grace of kind listening as well as a grace of kind speaking.*

*Some listen but their thoughts are elsewhere.*

*Some listen but are occupied with their own thoughts as being more interesting.*

*Some interrupt, and will not hear you to the end.*

*Some hear you to the end, and then begin to talk about a similar experience which has befallen themselves, making your case only an illustration of their own.*

*Kind listening, as kind speaking, involves consideration and concern for the other person.*

*-- Anonymous*

larger situation that may feel overwhelming down into more manageable chunks so that you can deal with only one part at a time.

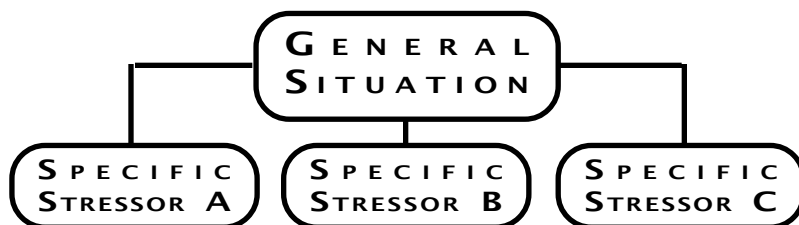
## GENERAL CONDITIONS VS. SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

In this session we defined stress and focused on understanding the difference between general stressful conditions and specific stressful events.

### General Stressful Conditions

These are usually very large and global stressful conditions. Some good examples are "the threat of nuclear war," "my health," or "my relationship with my mother." It is usually very hard to cope with general stressful conditions without first breaking them down into more specific stressful situations. General stressful conditions can be identified by how they are described. Usually, they are described in BIG terms: like **always**, **everywhere**, or **everyone**. For example, if you believed that **everywhere** you went, **everyone** you met **always** hated your guts, you'd be talking about a general stressful condition, and you'd probably feel very stressed out.

The first step in coping is to take these **GENERAL STRESSFUL CONDITIONS** and break them down into **SPECIFIC STRESSFUL EVENTS**.



Throughout the meetings we'll go over these steps again and again so they become second nature to you. You now have the first step: **Get Specific**.

You can identify specific stressful situations by narrowing the scope of a general stressful condition. One way to narrow the scope of a general condition is to ask questions that begin with **Who, What, Where** and **When**.

### **Specific Stressful Situations**

Let's take the example of a general stressful situation: "my relationship with my mother."

**Who:** For whom does your relationship with your mother cause stress?

"Just me, she doesn't seem to be bothered at all."

**What:** What kinds of situations with her cause you stress?

"When she asks me when I am going to get married."

**Where:** Where is this kind of question likely to make you feel most stressed?

"When I am seated at the dinner table at her house with all the relatives present."

**When:** When did this last occur?

"About 2 weeks ago, at her 62nd birthday party."

The specific stressful situation is:

Two weeks ago I felt very stressed when my mother asked me, "When are you going to get married?" in front of all the relatives at her house on her birthday.

As well as being more specific, it is also more personal; therefore there is usually more you can do personally to cope with the situation.

**POSITIVE EXPERIENCES**

Think back over the past week and describe something that you did, or something that happened to you, that made you feel good and that was meaningful to you and helped you get through a day. Make a note of it here.

**COMMUNICATION SKILLS: LISTENING & ACKNOWLEDGING**

One time during the week consciously practice the listening skills given above in this chapter with a friend, relative, significant other, or someone else outside of the group. Were there any steps that were hard to do?

**GENERAL CONDITIONS vs. SPECIFIC SITUATIONS**

Sort the following list into general conditions and specific stressful situations:

- Finding out my T-cell count dropped 100
- The second decade of the AIDS epidemic
- Last night's sleeplessness
- Being infected with HIV
- Feeling down about my life
- The evaluation meeting with my employee tomorrow
- Bouncing this month's mortgage check
- A sore throat when I woke up this morning
- Drinking too much
- Drinking too much last weekend
- My housing situation
- Homophobia
- April 15th ( income tax due)

<b>GENERAL STRESSFUL CONDITIONS</b>	<b>SPECIFIC STRESSFUL SITUATIONS</b>
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.

**GENERAL CONDITIONS vs. SPECIFIC SITUATIONS (CONT.)**

Here are the answers as we classify them. The list on the right side is more specific about when the situation occurs, where it may happen, to whom it occurs, or what in particular happens that causes the stress.

<b>GENERAL STRESSFUL CONDITIONS</b>	<b>SPECIFIC STRESSFUL SITUATIONS</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The second decade of the AIDS epidemic</li> <li>2. Being infected with HIV</li> <li>3. Feeling down about my life</li> <li>4. Drinking too much</li> <li>5. My housing situation</li> <li>6. Homophobia</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Last night's sleeplessness</li> <li>2. Finding out my T-cell count dropped 100</li> <li>3. The evaluation meeting with my employee tomorrow</li> <li>4. Bouncing this month's mortgage check</li> <li>5. Drinking too much last weekend</li> <li>6. A sore throat when I woke up this morning</li> <li>7. April 15th (income tax due)</li> </ol>

## S E S S I O N I I I

# EMOTION-FOCUSED COPING

## CHANGEABLE AND UNCHANGEABLE

After defining a specific stressful situation, it is important to decide:

1. What is changeable about the situation; and,
2. What is unchangeable.

Many times you can exhaust yourself working to change what is unchangeable, meanwhile missing the opportunity to change those things that are changeable in a stressful situation. By first defining **changeable** and **unchangeable** aspects of stressful situations, we can then decide what to do about them.

A good way to decide what is changeable is to ask "CAN DO" questions:

- What **can I do** to change the situation?
- What **can someone else do** to change the situation?
- What **can be done to avoid or eliminate** the situation?

In most situations, as a result of these questions, you will discover aspects about which something can be done, and aspects about which nothing can be done.

For example:

George woke up last Thursday morning and discovered that his cocker spaniel, Pickles, had eaten a favorite pair of slippers belonging to his lover, who was still blissfully asleep in the next room. The mangled slippers now looked like beef jerky wrapped in strips of used boxer shorts. His Lover prizes his belongings and has a violent temper. While George walked to the bathroom mirror, he experienced an intense conflict of loyalty. His heart was pounding.

“What is **unchangeable** about this stressful situation?” George brainstormed. “Well, there is no way I am going to reproduce the slippers before he wakes up. He is going to have a reaction, no doubt, which I also cannot change. It is also obvious that, much as I love the cute little poochie, Pickles sometimes has a mind of his own and cannot be changed.”

In short, George cannot change what has already happened, nor can he totally change other sentient beings.

“What **can I do** then to resolve the situation?” George continued. “I could hide the slippers, but that would be dishonest. I could take Pickles and leave forever, but Pickles likes it here. I could wake up Lover and tell him right now. No I can't, not while he is half asleep. I could pretend to beat the dog and scream, 'Bad Pickles, bad dog!' to prove that I share Lover's anger. No, he'd see through that because he knows that I would never hurt a hair on Pickle's smoochie-poochie little head.”

Then George had an “ah-hah” experience about what **can be changed**:

“I'll wait till Lover wakes up, make him a cup of coffee, just the way he likes it, bring him his paper, then very softly say, 'Pickles would bring you your slippers too, but he mangled them last night, and he and I both feel terrible about it.' That might control his rage. Then I'll offer to get him another pair.”

In the future what could George do **to avoid or eliminate the situation**? Pickles could probably be made to sleep outside, George and Lover could go to a counselor, the slippers could be stored where the dog can't get them. The options are many to a brainstorming mind!

The two different kinds of situations (i.e., changeable and unchangeable) call for different types of coping. There are two major types of effective coping:

1. **Problem-focused coping:** Thoughts and actions that are directed at those aspects of the specific stressful situation that are changeable.
2. **Emotion-focused coping:** Thoughts and actions that are designed to address your emotional reactions to the stressful situation, particularly those aspects that are unchangeable.

## **C O P I N G   S T Y L E**

It is usually possible to classify yourself as primarily an “emotion-focused copier” or a “problem-focused copier” by looking at the ways that you usually or predominantly deal with stressful situa-

tions. One of the objectives of this training is to obtain a balanced coping style by increasing your repertoire of coping options. Thus, it may be helpful to identify your general coping style.

For example, when there is a threat to something important to you, perhaps in a relationship or at your job, what would you say is your preferred coping style? What gets most of your attention? Your feelings? Or trying to change aspects of the situation that may be causing your feelings?

### **THE CONCEPT OF "FIT"**

Now you are aware that there are two major types of coping strategy, problem-focused and emotion-focused. The most effective way of handling stressful situations is to **fit** the coping strategy to the situation.

Usually, any given stressful situation calls for both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies at differing times. As you may remember, changeable aspects call for more problem-focused coping and unchangeable aspects call for more emotion focused-coping.

Here is an example:

Your physician prescribed a cocktail of crixivan, AZT, and 3TC. You have been taking it for 2 months. Your viral load is dropping. You are experiencing violent nausea and every muscle in your body feels on fire. You have to decide what to do. It is Friday afternoon and your physician cannot see you in person until Monday.

- Changeable aspects:
  - Drug dosage
  - Which drug you take
  - How much information you have on other treatment options
- Unchangeable aspects:
  - Being HIV positive
  - Experiencing toxic side effects to crixivan
  - Having to wait until Monday to see your physician

Having identified what is changeable and what is unchangeable

in this specific stressful situation, you can start coping.

Here are some possibilities for this situation:

- Problem-focused coping:
  - Make a list of things you need to discuss with your physician on Monday so you are sure you will not forget any of them.
  - Call Project Inform's hotline to get information on other treatment options.
  - Access treatment information on the Internet.
- Emotion-focused coping:
  - Call a close friend and tell her what has happened.
  - Call someone in your support group who has had to cope with toxic side effects to protease inhibitors.
  - Stay calm by breathing deeply.
  - Rent a movie.

The problem-focused coping strategies "fit" the changeable aspects of the situation and the emotion-focused coping strategies "fit" the unchangeable aspects.

Some aspects of living with HIV and AIDS can not be changed readily, thus requiring emotion-focused coping. Yet, because other aspects of living with HIV and AIDS are changeable, problem-focused coping is also needed. Thus, "fitting" the appropriate coping strategy to the specific stressful aspect can very useful when dealing with HIV-related stress (or any other stress, for that matter).

It's important to have your feelings. Having them means feeling them, knowing they are there, experiencing them, being aware of them. Feelings are part of the richness and texture of life. Feelings are not right or wrong. And feelings aren't actions. Feeling an emotion doesn't mean acting on it in any particular way. You have choices about expressing or acting on the basis of what you feel.

Sometimes emotions can feel overwhelming. At those times it can be very helpful to take a break from the feeling so that you can return to it with a new perspective or renewed strength. Some of the strategies we have been talking about are ones that can help you take a break or provide perspective. Some can help you find comfort or renewed strength.

## EMOTION-FOCUSED COPING

You've seen a quick example of two types of coping strategies. As we mentioned before, both styles of coping are important ways to manage the difficulties of living with HIV and AIDS. This week we are concentrating on emotion-focused coping.

## COPING STRATEGIES—THE THREE O'S

There are three steps to developing a coping strategy:

1. **Generating Options:** This can be done by brainstorming by yourself or with someone else. It is usually helpful to get the full range of options, including some funny or bizarre solutions.
2. **Anticipating Outcomes:** You can look ahead and see the assets and liabilities of each option. Does the option "fit" the problem? Will it have the intended effect or not?
3. **Order** the options: Order the options by rank in terms of your preference.

Remember, emotion-focused coping helps you with aspects of the situation that are unchangeable. These emotion-focused strategies are to be used to help you feel better, especially in unsolvable situations. They don't help you solve the particular problem—that comes next week!

**CHANGEABLE vs. UNCHANGEABLE STRESSFUL SITUATIONS**

For each item below ask the "CAN DO" questions and then list what is changeable and unchangeable about each situation:

<b>SPECIFIC STRESSFUL SITUATION</b>	<b>CHANGEABLE ASPECTS</b>	<b>UNCHANGEABLE ASPECTS</b>
Maintaining a strict drug regimen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The method of maintaining the regimen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need to maintain the regimen</li> <li>• The irritation of maintaining the regimen</li> </ul>
Wondering if you'll have to go back to work		
Meeting with your boss tomorrow		
Finding out you can't take the latest drugs		

**YOUR MO FOR DEALING WITH STRESS**

What is your personal modus operandi (MO) for dealing with stress? That is, how do you usually deal with feeling stressed? Include all the things you do without worrying whether they are considered constructive or not. Remember, these exercises are for you, and no one else knows what you write down unless you choose to share it with them.

**Y O U R E M O T I O N - F O C U S E D C O P I N G S T Y L E**

You probably already have emotion-focused coping skills. Check those things from the list below that you use to help your emotions in stressful situations:

<b>D O Y O U U S E T H I S S T R A T E G Y ?</b>	<b>Y E S</b>	<b>N O</b>
Use of humor .....		
Downplaying the importance .....		
Confiding in someone else .....		
Diverting your attention to something else .....		
Exercise: jogging, aerobics, gym workout .....		
Relaxing: meditation, visualization .....		
Looking on the bright side .....		
Turning the problem over to a "higher power" .....		
Other spiritual pursuits .....		
Self-affirmation .....		
Mall therapy (retail therapy) .....		
Taking drugs/alcohol .....		
Thinking up good insults .....		
Smoking cigarettes .....		

What other emotion-focused coping strategies do you use? List even minor ones, like taking a deep breath, or the not so effective ones, like drinking too much.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

If you look closely at yourself, you will see that there are many emotion-focused strategies in your personal repertoire. You may also want to rank these in terms of their effectiveness in handling a specific situation.

**U S I N G E M O T I O N - F O C U S E D C O P I N G**

Now that you've learned the steps in emotion-focused coping, use your skills to cope with the example we've provided below:

You just found out that your boyfriend and your best friend had sex together last night. Using the Three O's, decide which emotion focused strategies you would use to handle the unchangeable aspects of this situation.

**U N C H A N G E A B L E A S P E C T S**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**O P T I O N S**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**O U T C O M E S**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**O R D E R**

- Best Option \_\_\_\_\_
- Second Best \_\_\_\_\_
- Third Best \_\_\_\_\_

S E S S I O N I V  
E M O T I O N - F O C U S E D L I S T E N I N G  
&  
P R O B L E M - F O C U S E D C O P I N G

**COMMUNICATION SKILLS: FOCUS ON EMOTION**

The first exercise this week uses the skills you learned two weeks ago. It involves listening to and responding to the emotional content of what someone else has to say. It also will help you to understand emotion-focused coping, since it teaches you to listen for the emotions of the other person, and brainstorm with him about how to deal with these emotions.

Here are the skills you learned previously:

1. Allow people to finish their thoughts; don't interrupt.
2. Allow the person to tell their story; don't steal the floor.
3. Listen without giving advice.
4. Listen carefully to the content of what the other person says.
5. After the person has spoken, repeat the facts briefly and ask if you heard them correctly.
6. Listen carefully to any corrections.
7. Repeat what you have heard in brief, incorporating those corrections.

Now try to add these:

8. Listen and pay particular attention to **emotions** or feelings.
9. Repeat back the feeling or **emotional content** of what was just said.
10. Ask if you have correctly identified the emotional aspect of the situation, then repeat the **feeling** content of the corrections.

Here is an example:

Friend: Some jerk beat me out of a parking place on the way over here.

You: What a bummer. Does that sort of thing make you angry?

Friend: Yes, I was angry! Besides, he clearly saw that I was moving toward that space and cut in front of me, then he called me a wimp. What an insult! Then I just boiled.

You: Not only did you feel angry, but he assaulted your dignity.

Friend: You got it!

You: Well, we want to have a nice evening and you still seem angry. What can you do now to feel better? **(Options)**

Friend: All I want to do is cry, or smash something. Or I could just go take a bath, and chill out.

You: If I were you, I would feel like smashing this guy. It's probably better not to let the anger ruin your day, just to spite him. How about that feeling of being bullied?

Friend: I think I'd like to make a donation to GLAAD. I'm tired of feeling pushed around.

You: All these ideas sound good...which one would make you feel the best? **(Outcomes)**

Friend: Right now, a bath sounds good. Tomorrow, I'll make that donation. **(Order)**

You: Do you want someone to scrub your back?

Friend: Best idea I've heard all day.

## EMOTION-FOCUSED LISTENING

One time during the week consciously practice emotion-focused listening skills with a friend, relative, significant other, or someone else. Notice whether any steps are hard to do.

## PROBLEM-FOCUSED COPING

Now we will focus on problem-focused coping to teach you to determine ways to "fit" problem-focused strategies to the changeable aspects of stressful situations.

### Using the Three O's in Problem-focused Coping:

1. **Generating Options:** This can be done by brainstorming by yourself or with someone else. It is usually helpful to get the full range of options, including some funny or bizarre solutions.
2. **Anticipating Outcomes:** You can look ahead and see the "pluses" and "minuses" of each option. Will it have the intended effect or not?
3. **Order** the options: Order the options by rank in terms of preference.

On the next pages are examples of situations that call for problem-focused coping. First generate the options, then anticipate any and all outcomes. Finally, rank the strategies in the order of your preference. We have given you hints on the first situation, then filled out the example completely with our ideas. The second one you do on your own. It's important to remember that you will probably not have the same ones we listed in the exercise. That's okay! Each person appraises a stressful situation differently. What matters here is how you view a situation and what works well for you.

**USING PROBLEM-FOCUSED COPING (PART ONE)**

Now that you've learned the Three O's of problem-focused coping, use your skills to cope in the example we've provided below:

Your physician will not prescribe a medication to you because she thinks you'll react badly to it.

**OPTIONS**

1. Get a second opinion
2. Go to the Buyer's club
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Negotiate with your doctor
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**OUTCOMES**

- of #1. \_\_\_\_\_
- of #2. The quality of the prescription is uncertain
- of #3. \_\_\_\_\_
- of #4. This will require patience
- of #5. \_\_\_\_\_

**ORDER**

- Best Option \_\_\_\_\_
- Second Best \_\_\_\_\_
- Third Best \_\_\_\_\_

**USING PROBLEM-FOCUSED COPING (PART ONE-CONT.)**

Now that you've learned the Three O's of problem-focused coping, use your skills to cope in the example we've provided below:

Your physician will not prescribe a medication to you because she thinks you'll react badly to it.

**OPTIONS**

1. Get a second opinion
2. Go to the Buyer's club
3. Refuse to leave her office until she prescribes it
4. Negotiate with your doctor
5. Enroll in a clinical trial

**OUTCOMES**

of #1. Hassle of dealing with another doctor, going to appointment, etc.

of #2. The quality of the prescription is uncertain

of #3. You might get arrested

of #4. This will require patience

of #5. Uncertainty. You may not get the drug

**ORDER**

Best Option    Negotiate with your doctor

Second Best    Get a second opinion

Third Best    Enroll in a clinical trial

**USING PROBLEM-FOCUSED COPING (PART TWO)**

How do you cope with changeable aspects of the situation?

You and your roommate just received an eviction notice. The house you have rented and enjoyed for the past 5 years is being sold. You have to be out in 30 days. Rental property in the area is at a premium. The vacancy rate is now at about 1%. The rentals that are available in the same area where you now live are very expensive .

**OPTIONS**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**OUTCOMES**

- of #1. \_\_\_\_\_
- of #2. \_\_\_\_\_
- of #3. \_\_\_\_\_
- of #4. \_\_\_\_\_
- of #5. \_\_\_\_\_

**ORDER**

- Best Option \_\_\_\_\_
- Second Best \_\_\_\_\_
- Third Best \_\_\_\_\_

U S I N G P R O B L E M - F O C U S E D C O P I N G I N Y O U R L I F E

Now try problem-focused coping with a situation you encounter this week in your own life. Remember to focus on the problem-solving aspects of the situation.

First describe the specific stressful situation. Use the **who**, **what**, **when**, and **where** questions:

1. When did it happen?
2. Who was involved?
3. Where did it happen?
4. Exactly what happened?

Second, ask the "can do" questions to determine what is changeable about the situation, and to prepare yourself to do problem-focused coping:

1. What could I do?
2. What could someone else do?
3. What could be done to avoid it?

USING PROBLEM-FOCUSED COPING IN YOUR LIFE (CONT.)

Finally, brainstorm **options**, anticipate **outcomes**, and rank the **order** of your options for your own specific stressful situation.

**OPTIONS**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**OUTCOMES**

- of #1. \_\_\_\_\_
- of #2. \_\_\_\_\_
- of #3. \_\_\_\_\_
- of #4. \_\_\_\_\_
- of #5. \_\_\_\_\_

**ORDER**

- Best Option \_\_\_\_\_
- Second Best \_\_\_\_\_
- Third Best \_\_\_\_\_

**YOU NOW HAVE APPLIED PROBLEM-FOCUSED  
COPING TO YOUR LIFE!**

**SORTING PROBLEM - AND EMOTION-FOCUSED COPING STRATEGIES**

Below is a list of coping strategies. Sort them into "Problem-focused" and "Emotion-focused." Some of these strategies may not be particularly effective. Some could be used for both purposes. Remember, the way to tell them apart is to ask these two questions:

- Are they directed at changeable aspects of the situation?  
If so, they are **problem-focused**.
- or-**
- Are they directed at your emotional reactions to the situation?  
If so, they are **emotion-focused**.

Check the appropriate column for each item listed below:

<b>C O P I N G   S T R A T E G Y</b>	<b>E M O T I O N - F O C U S E D</b>	<b>P R O B L E M - F O C U S E D</b>
Using negotiation skills .....		
Physical exercise .....		
Meditation .....		
Creating a plan of action .....		
Being assertive .....		
Talking to someone else about your feelings.....		
Drinking .....		
Practicing self-affirmation .....		
Applying time management skills .....		
Humor .....		
Downplaying the importance of a situation .....		
Speaking clearly and making sure you are understood .....		
Turning the problem over to a "higher power" .....		
Looking for sex .....		
Seeking practical advice from a friend .....		

**SORTING PROBLEM- AND EMOTION-FOCUSED COPING STRATEGIES (CONT.)**

Here are the coping strategies as we have defined them:

<b>C O P I N G S T R A T E G Y</b>	<b>E M O T I O N - F O C U S E D</b>	<b>P R O B L E M - F O C U S E D</b>
Using negotiation skills .....		✓
Physical exercise .....	✓	
Meditation .....	✓	
Creating a plan of action .....		✓
Being assertive .....		✓
Talking to someone else about your feelings.....	✓	
Drinking .....	✓	
Practicing self-affirmation .....	✓	
Applying time management skills .....		✓
Humor .....	✓	
Downplaying the importance of a situation .....	✓	
Speaking clearly and making sure you are understood .....		✓
Turning the problem over to a "higher power" .....	✓	
Looking for sex .....		✓
Seeking practical advice from a friend .....		✓

You may find that these strategies do not neatly fit into either problem-focused or emotion-focused categories. For example, exercise definitely has an enhancing effect on well-being and emotion. But it also could be considered a problem-focused strategy if the problem is being overweight. Similarly, being assertive might help solve a problem as well as helping you feel good about yourself.

## S E S S I O N V

### R E T R E A T R E V I E W

During the retreat you may have felt that you were better at one type of coping than another. Join the crowd – most of us are. Remember, you had the chance to try out emotion-focused coping options like visualizations, hiking, eating, humor, talking with others, and exercise. You also used problem-focused coping like negotiation, listening skills, and the Three O's. It all follows a set of steps:

- Step 1: Identify the general stressors that are pressing on you.
- Step 2: Break some of them down into more specific situations.
- Step 3: Decide which specific situations are changeable and which are not changeable.
- Step 4: Use problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies.

As you begin to know your coping options better, you can make decisions about which ones to improve, which ones don't need improvement, and which ones you would never use at all! Choose the coping skills you'd like to work on during the rest of the sessions and share your decision with the group. There's almost always someone in the group who can provide some help!

At the retreat and throughout the sessions you've been able to see how you and other members of the group have different strengths. One person may be a genius at providing problem-focused support, while someone else may be a natural at giving emotion-focused support. As you begin to identify which members of the group are skilled at providing a certain type of support, you should also find it easier to identify these same skills in members of your social world. Being able to identify the coping support skills of your social world is important for building a working support network. We will focus more on support networks in the next few sessions.

At the retreat we talked about the stresses associated with living with HIV as well as what you may have learned from your experience and whether you have identified anything from the experience of living with HIV that has enhanced your life.

### **A F F I R M A T I O N S F O R T H E G R O U P**

Giving people "affirmations" (recognition and congratulations) is a way to show that you appreciate them and the help they provide. We'll discuss affirmations more in the next couple of sessions, but let's begin now to affirm the other group members for their skills and expertise. Don't forget to affirm yourself—you've worked hard to learn these skills and to help the others learn them as well.

Each person in the group has contributed to the success of the sessions. Some people have helped by letting the group know about the coping skills with which they have a hard time; some have nurtured by quietly listening and reflecting; and others have made a difference by jumping in and asking lots of questions. You each have unique strengths, and will continue to help each other develop those strengths throughout the remaining group sessions.

Congratulate yourself for putting in a lot of work over the weekend.

**G A I N I N G P O W E R & M O B I L I Z I N G**

This week you will be designing your own exercise to help you practice what you learned at the retreat. Think back to what you learned, what knowledge you took with you from the retreat. Think about what you identified as your coping strengths. Now think about what you see as areas in which your coping skills need practice or improvement. Identify a way you can practice one of the skills you think needs practice during the week before our next meeting. Write down in this space what you plan for your exercise. Then record the results here.

S E S S I O N V I  
N E G O T I A T I O N S K I L L S

Most stress evolves out of interpersonal situations. Negotiation is a skill you can learn that will help you proactively solve problems that may involve interpersonal conflict. People who don't know how to negotiate often get very frustrated. The frustration adds to the problems that already exist and requires additional coping.

The **goals** of negotiation are to:

1. Reach a satisfying agreement.
2. End amicably.

## P H A S E S O F N E G O T I A T I O N

Phase 1: **Entry**

Be soft on people. Hear them out. Define the problem.

Phase 2: **Exploration**

Explore interests, options, standards. Brainstorm options.

Phase 3: **Give and Take**

Exchange offers. Identify areas of agreement and disagreement.

Phase 4: **Closing**

Verify your agreement. Affirm the other person as well as your ability to negotiate together.

**The Odd Couple**

Sam drives a very nice Toyota and loves to putter around the house cleaning. The socks in his dresser are lined up by color. His shirts all hang in the same direction on identical hangers. His desk is clear, except for six pencils, which are all sharpened and lined up in a row. Tom, his roommate, drives a geriatric Volvo,

fast, and leaves stuff lying about. He has several pairs of different colored socks, in a heap, on his closet floor. His dresser is draped with last week's laundry — clean and dirty. Tom's desk is buried beneath piles of junk, including old coffee cups and muffin wrappers.

Sam wants Tom to keep the house neater. Tom wants Sam to relax, live life, and quit bugging him.

It's Saturday. The negotiation begins:

**Phase 1 – Entry**

- Be soft on the people, hard on the problem.
  - Sam: "We have a problem. I know that you and I are different about keeping things neat, but we need to come up with a solution that will leave us both reasonably happy."
  - Tom: "I don't have a problem, except for your nagging. You seem to have a problem."
- Hear the other person out.
  - Sam: "Tell me more about the nagging."
  - Tom: "I get very upset when you prod me to clean things up. It reminds me of my mother. I have never been clean and neat, nor do I think I will ever be clean and neat. In fact, I feel almost morally righteous about being messy."
  - Sam: "Let me tell you how I feel. If things aren't ordered, I begin to feel crazy, out of control. I don't think this will change about me, either. What can we do to work this out?"

**Phase 2 – Exploration**

- Explore options, brainstorm.
  - Tom: "How about I mess up half the house, and you clean half the house."
  - Sam: "That doesn't work in the kitchen and bathroom. How about we alternate cleaning."
  - Tom: "I don't clean."
  - Sam: "Would it be okay if you lived in a clean house, so long as you didn't have to clean it?"
  - Tom: "Yes, I guess so."
  - Sam: "How about hiring a cleaning person?"
  - Tom: "That sounds okay. But I'm not sure I can afford it."

**Phase 3 – Give and Take**

- Make an offer.  
Sam: "I'm concerned enough about cleanliness to be willing to pay for 75% of the cleaning. Is that acceptable to you?"  
Tom: "Sounds reasonable."
- Identify areas of agreement and disagreement.  
Sam: "I'll call the Clean Queens. Only — hands off them while they are working."  
Tom: "Okay, hands off — during your 75% of the time. That's reasonable, don't you think?"  
Sam: "No, not okay. I want the job done 100%. So I want hands off 100% of the time they're here."

**Phase 4 – Closing**

- Agreement and affirmation.  
Tom: "Okay, okay. Hands off. Actually, I'm glad that we worked this out. I felt tension and I didn't like it. And I like living with you."  
Sam: "You're a mess, but basically you're a friendly mess. I like living with you too."

**IF THE OTHER PERSON WON'T NEGOTIATE**

- Confront the problem, not the person.
- Look for what is behind his or her position. Don't attack it.
- When the person takes a position, ask why.
- Ask questions. Get more information. Pause.

**REAPPRAISAL**

Sometimes you may think you can negotiate a solution, but later decide that you can't. Give yourself permission to change your original appraisal. Otherwise, you may become locked into a counterproductive pattern. If a solution cannot be negotiated you may be comfortable simply agreeing to disagree; or you may decide it's not that important to you; or you may continue to feel that it matters and take another course of action. In our example above, if Tom won't negotiate, Sam may decide to move out.

U S I N G N E G O T I A T I O N S K I L L S

Set up a minor negotiation. With a friend or lover who you know will have her or his own ideas, negotiate what restaurant or what activity to do sometime this week. Follow the guidelines to see how they work:

- Phase 1: **Entry**  
Be soft on people. Hear them out. Define the problem.
- Phase 2: **Exploration**  
Explore interests, options, standards. Brainstorm options.
- Phase 3: **Give and Take**  
Exchange offers. Identify areas of agreement and disagreement.
- Phase 4: **Closing**  
Verify your agreement. Affirm the other person as well as your ability to negotiate together.

S E S S I O N V I I  
G I V I N G A N D R E C E I V I N G  
S O C I A L S U P P O R T  
(P A R T I)

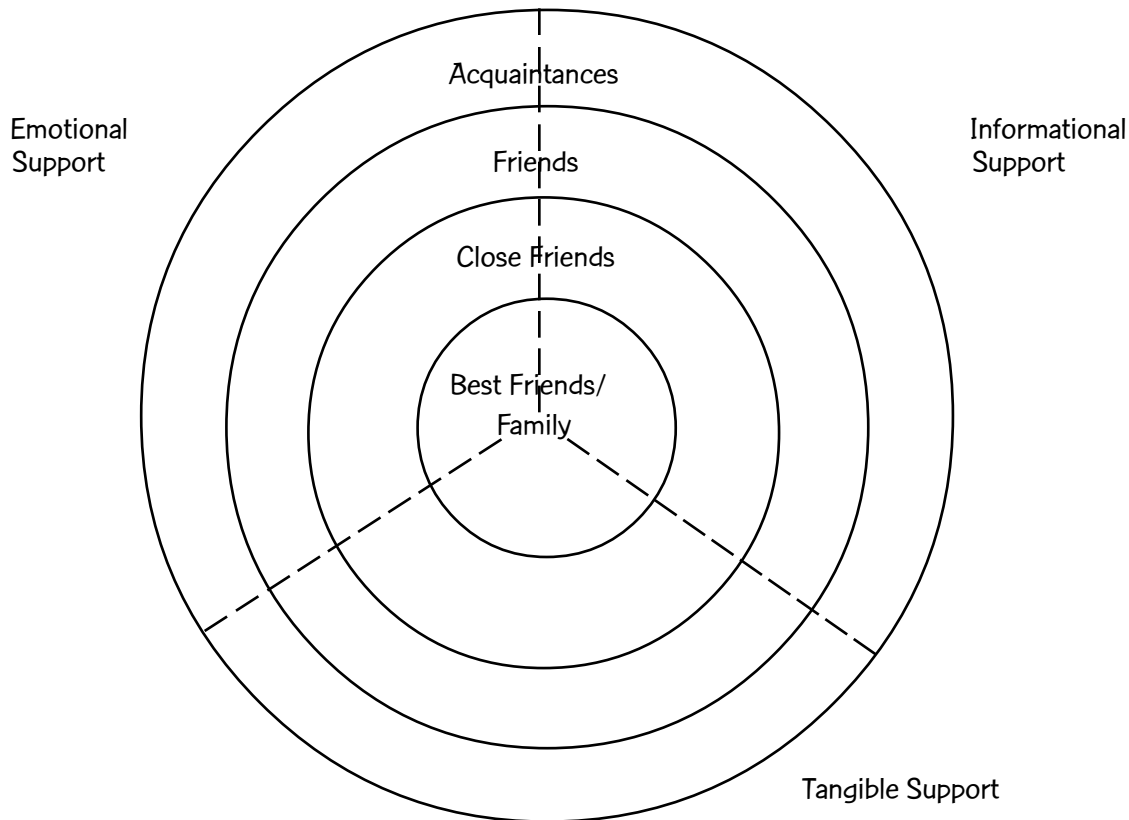
D E F I N I N G S O C I A L S U P P O R T

There are several types of support each of which has emotional components.

- **Emotional support:** Words and actions that make a person feel cared about, understood, and affirmed. For example, emotional support may include empathy, caring, love and trust.
- **Informational support:** Information, advice, or suggestions.
- **Tangible support:** Money, labor, assistance, or aid in kind, for example.

As both givers and receivers of support, we may occupy a variety of different positions in social support networks. Some people have watched their social support networks crumble over the years of the epidemic. Close friends have died, others have moved away, and still others have become depressed and withdrawn. At the same time, some people's networks have not been as directly affected by the epidemic.

Who are the members of your network? Whose networks do you belong to? Look at the diagram on the next page to help place yourself and the members of your network.



**PROVIDING SUPPORT**

Being asked for support and providing support to others can help us know that we are valued and that we have important things to give. Sometimes requests are unclear making it hard to know how we want to respond. When a request is unclear, it can help to get more information. Ask for specifics. If you decide to say no to the request and saying no is hard for you:

- acknowledge that the request matters to the person,
- decline the request without rejecting the person, and
- be specific about what you are saying no to. (Would you ever say yes to this request? Are there parts of the request you would say yes to?)

The level of support provided is often negotiated (formally or informally). You may decide to say yes to some parts of a request and no to others. In addition, it helps prevent misunderstandings if you clarify together what you have agreed to do or not to do.

**IDENTIFYING YOUR SUPPORT FORTE**

What kinds of support are you good at providing to others? If you are not sure, think about the kinds of things for which others come to you. That may give you some clues.

**YOU AS A SUPPORT PROVIDER**

In what ways did you provide support to others this week? It doesn't have to be anything major. (In fact, the things that seem minor can have a major impact.) Does it correspond with what you listed as your forte? How did you feel as the support provider?

**SAYING NO**

Think about times you have said no to a request from someone. How did you feel? Write down all the ways you felt even if they seem contradictory or not what you were "supposed to" feel. Is there anything you want to handle differently when saying no?

When was a time you said "no"?

How did you feel?

What, if anything, do you want to handle differently next time you are faced with saying "no"?

S E S S I O N V I I I  
G I V I N G A N D R E C E I V I N G  
S O C I A L S U P P O R T  
(P A R T I I)

C H O O S I N G W H O M T O A S K F O R S U P P O R T

Effectiveness in choosing the appropriate person to ask for support depends on:

1. Figuring out what kind of support you need.  
"Is the support I need emotional, informational, or tangible?"
2. Being aware of the support strengths of your providers.  
"Who provides me with support, and what kind of support do they provide?"
3. Matching your needs and your providers' strengths.  
"Who can best provide the kind of support I need currently?"

Sometimes we may look for a particular kind of support from a person who is not able to provide it, even though he or she may be wonderful at providing another type of support.

The following scenario demonstrates the sensitivities required to fit the support provided with the support wanted (particularly in a primary relationship or close friendship):

Tom, an artist, fell in love with Joseph, a computer programmer, because Joseph, aside from being sexy, seemed to have a grasp on the practical realities of life. Before too long Joseph was doing Tom's taxes and helping him to promote the business of selling his art.

Meanwhile, Tom, expressing the creative and emotional life of the relationship, had covered every wall of the apartment with post-modern pieces, bought tickets to opera and rock concerts, and periodically delighted Joseph with surprise gifts of flowers, beautiful shirts, and new styles of condoms.

One day Tom had an emotional problem. Roger, the gallery owner who was handling Tom's art, was getting a divorce. Rather than do business, he preferred to complain to Tom about what a louse his wife was, knowing Tom would understand. Tom spent two hours listening to Roger, got no work done, and came home with a headache.

TOM: Oy, I think I am going crazy.

JOSEPH: You look awful. What's the problem?

TOM: Roger is getting a divorce and I am the psychiatrist. I got no work done, and I feel frustrated and upset.

JOSEPH: You shouldn't listen to Roger when he goes on like that. You guys should stick to business. What commission is he going to give you?

TOM: I told you I didn't get any work done today. How would I know? He kept saying nasty things about his wife's support group.

JOSEPH: Why didn't you tell him to see a psychiatrist or counselor? I know a good cheap one, a real "straight from the shoulder" kind of guy.

TOM: I don't know why I didn't do it! I was too frustrated, confused.

JOSEPH: You shouldn't be frustrated. If you just remain assertive and stick to the facts, he'll shut up about his wife.

TOM: Joseph, just a minute. I just realized something. I am **upset** and what I really need now is **emotional support**. You are giving me **practical suggestions** and some of them are good, but right now I don't want **advice**. I want **nurturance!**

At this point the two gentlemen have reached a crucial juncture. Tom, the elected emotional support person for the relationship, in his upset has encountered Joseph's practical support in the wrong place at the wrong time.

**Key question:** Can Joseph rally to support Tom emotionally?

**If the answer is 'NO,'** we may have a fight on our hands:

JOSEPH: So you think you've had such a hard day. Do you know what my boss did today? No, you don't. Why? Because you have been kveching about Roger and you haven't asked me a thing about **my day**. That's why!

TOM: Once in awhile, I think it is my turn to get a little emotional support. When was the last time you initiated sex? When was the last time you held me in your arms and just let me cry? I'll tell you when. Never! That's when.

**If the answer is 'YES:'**

- Tom wins: He feels nurtured, and he calms down.
- Joseph wins: He develops a new skill for his support repertoire.
- The relationship wins: It can provide a broader, more varied base of support to its members.

TOM: Joseph, just a minute. I just realized something. I am **upset** and what I really need now is **emotional support**. You are giving me **practical suggestions**, and some of them are good, but right now I don't want **advice**. I want **nurturance!**

JOSEPH: Huh? I thought I was helping. What's wrong?

TOM: Every time I express a feeling, you say "Do this" or "Don't do that." I just want you to listen. That's all. Just listen for 10 minutes.

JOSEPH: You know these feeling things are a little hard for me, but shoot. Try it. I'll listen. Go on. Talk.

TOM: My back is tight. Ah, there! There! You got it! Now rub. So anyway, I thought if I heard one more ugly angry misogynous word I would scream.

JOSEPH: So go ahead. I'll hold you while you scream.

TOM: Hey, you're getting the hang of it.

## GETTING THE SUPPORT YOU WANT

### Asking for it

In the previous example, after some exasperation, Tom **asks** for the support he needs.

Often an individual may be unwilling to ask for support:

- "Oh, I don't want to impose."
- "He should know me well enough to know when I need it."
- "What's the point, I won't get it anyway."
- "I've always kept my problems to myself."

Some simple techniques that will help you ask for support:

- Let the person know what you need. If you're busy, leave a phone message or drop them a note.
- Be specific about how much support you need.
- Monitor the process: Try to be aware of your comfort receiving support, and of your support provider's comfort in giving the help for which you are asking. If it feels uncomfortable or doesn't seem to be working, remember that you can stop and that you can go elsewhere for help.

### **TAKING CARE OF YOUR SUPPORT PROVIDERS**

Like any good resource, your support network needs to be maintained and rewarded. Some ways to let people know you appreciate their efforts are to:

- Acknowledge the support, being specific about how the person is helping.
- Return the favor when you can. (What kind of support are you best at providing to others?)
- Provide feedback about how things turned out.

**SEEKING SUPPORT**

Choose a specific stressful situation this week for which you need support. First determine the nature of the support you need, then ask for support from a person in your network responsible for that kind of support. Give him or her permission to say no and be specific about the amount of support you need. Write your reactions to the process below:

How comfortable were you asking for support?

How comfortable did you perceive your provider to be giving the support?

How well did the support you wanted match the support you received?

What feedback did you give to your helper?

How could you get support in a better or smoother fashion in the future?

**A P P R E C I A T I N G T H E P E O P L E W H O H E L P Y O U**

This week, find a means of giving small symbolic gifts to each member of your support network that you have listed above. These can be simple and inexpensive, but can express an affirmation or thanks for their being a support person in your life.

S E S S I O N I X  
T H I N K I N G A B O U T  
P R I O R I T I E S

This week we talked about a strategy for reevaluating priorities and regoaling. People tend to begin to reprioritize and regoal at times that they experience important changes in their lives such as testing positive, getting diagnosed, evaluating results to new meds, and so forth.

The process of reprioritizing and regoaling may first be experienced as discomfort or as a question of, "What do I want to do with my time and my life?" Or there may be feelings of sadness and irritability. Things may just feel "off." Conversely, there may be feelings of excitement and challenge.

We tend to **regoad** when:

- An objective has been reached and a new goal is desired.
- Values or priorities change,
- Interests or needs shift,
- The potential satisfaction of reaching a current goal is outweighed by the apparent difficulties of reaching it.
- Current goals do not appear to be attainable,
- New options become apparent.

There seem to be **stages** or **phases** of regoaling as follows:

- Identify the need to shift or change a goal.
- Choose a new goal.
- Identify the value(s) underlying the goal, and focus on the values as the goal.

The idea that there are stages does not imply that there is a set way in which one should go through the process in order to do it right. Regoaling is a process. We move in and out of phases.

Frequently, phases overlap. We move back and forth between phases. We don't complete the first thing, check it off the list and go on to the next item. Regoaling is not often a clear and distinct process, although we may be able to identify particularly significant markers along the way.

Loss is part of change. Sometimes, even when we want to make a change and we are sure it is for the better, actually making the change is very hard because it requires us to give up something known, something familiar, and risk taking on something new that we do not know as well.

You can use the coping skills we've been talking about in this group in the process of reprioritizing and regoaling. Some aspects of the process of regoaling will call for dealing with emotions. Others will be concrete problems to be solved. At each step along the way, general situations may need to be broken down into smaller parts and each part addressed. At times it may be helpful to seek out people for support. Sometimes you may need to pause and figure out what sort of support you need - e.g., whether you need a listening ear, advice, information, or something else.

## **IDENTIFYING PERSONAL VALUES**

In identifying your personal values, think about what you feel are the most important aspects of your life. How would you describe your goals, aims, expectations, hopes, or dreams? What underlying values do these express or reflect for you? Is the current expression of those values serving you well, that is, are you doing what you want to be doing?

## **EXERCISE**

The exercise for this week is again one that you design for yourself. For example, you might want to take some more time to sort out your priorities. If so, an exercise might be to call one of the other group members during the week to continue to talk about what your priorities are. If you are considering going back to work, an exercise might be to gather information about return-

ing to the paid workforce. Another exercise might be to carry out a desired activity that you have identified as a priority in your life. For example, if you have identified spending more time in nature as a priority, you might plan to go for a walk on the beach. Get in touch with your group leaders or other group members if you would find that helpful in designing an exercise that's right for you.

### **P R I O R I T I E S**

Use this space to outline the exercise you have set for yourself this week. When you have completed your self-designed exercise, make notes for yourself here about how it went, and any plans you have for continuing in the future with what you began here.

S E S S I O N X  
C O P I N G S A B O T A G E

Now that you have learned a model of how to cope, we are going to point out some ways good coping can be sabotaged. People can sabotage their own efforts unconsciously. Identifying how you may sabotage your own coping skills will give you the chance to counter self-sabotage. In this session, we ask you to take a look at your own forms of sabotage. In our next session, we will look at ways to counter self-sabotage.

**HOW DO I SABOTAGE MY OWN GOOD COPING?**

Good question. Usually you can hear it in statements you make or thoughts you find yourself having. Listed below are some examples of types of sabotaging self-statements. (A further description of the 15 types of self-sabotaging statements is included at the end of these questions.) For a moment, take a humorous and humble look at yourself and decide whether you are likely to make statements such as the following:

Please check the appropriate column.	Doesn't Sound Like Me	Sounds Like Me
<p><b><u>FILTERING</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sure it's a nice day, but it's somewhat windy, it could cloud over, and the forecast is for rain.</li> <li>2. They gave a talk on HIV drugs that had some information, but the information was sketchy, the presentation was boring and the room was too hot.</li> </ol>		

**HOW DO I SABOTAGE MY OWN GOOD COPING? (CONT.)**

Please check the appropriate column.	Doesn't Sound Like Me	Sounds Like Me
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>POLARIZED THINKING</u></b></p> <p><b>DIRECTED INWARD</b></p> <p>3. It is important that I do things perfectly; otherwise I feel like I have failed.</p> <p><b>DIRECTED OUTWARD</b></p> <p>4. It is important that my friends do things perfectly; otherwise I feel that they have let me down.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>OVERGENERALIZATION</u></b></p> <p>5. Since she said that tacky thing about me in the staff meeting, she must be an ax murderer. I pity her children.</p> <p>6. The doctor said I am HIV-positive. That means it is all over.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>MIND READING</u></b></p> <p>7. I know exactly what Boyfriend is thinking right now. He doesn't want sex because he is angry at me for working so many hours.</p> <p>8. When the doctor told me I had a cold, I could tell he thought it was AIDS and wasn't telling me because he didn't want to upset me.</p>		

**HOW DO I SABOTAGE MY OWN GOOD COPING? (CONT.)**

Please check the appropriate column.	Doesn't Sound Like Me	Sounds Like Me
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>CATASTROPHIZING</u></b></p> <p>9. I heard that you are sick. I know a great mortician.</p> <p>10. As soon as he said, "I can't go out tonight," I knew that I would never see him again.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>PERSONALIZATION</u></b></p> <p>11. When I meet someone new, at first I try to figure out which of us is smarter, more handsome, or makes more money.</p> <p>12. He was staring in my direction. I thought "He must be attracted to me," until he came over and hugged his friend who was standing right behind me.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>CONTROL FALLACIES</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>TOO MUCH EXTERNAL CONTROL</b></p> <p>13. Fate is in charge. I haven't got a lot to say about what happens to me.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>TOO MUCH INTERNAL CONTROL</b></p> <p>14. I am responsible for the feelings of others.</p>		

**HOW DO I SABOTAGE MY OWN GOOD COPING? (CONT.)**

Please check the appropriate column.	Doesn't Sound Like Me	Sounds Like Me
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>FALLACY OF FAIRNESS</u></b></p> <p>15. The world would obviously be better off if there were no nuclear weapons, but no one seems to care.</p> <p>16. My turn for a promotion is long overdue, but the boss keeps picking women who wear sexy dresses. It is unfair!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>BLAMING</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>BLAMING OTHERS</b></p> <p>17. It is the rotten doctors' fault that he died.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>BLAMING YOURSELF</b></p> <p>18. What a schmuck I am! If I had done something differently I may have been able to save him.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>SHOULD S</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SHOULDING ON OTHERS</b></p> <p>19. You should be able to make more money so we can live in the style to which I am accustomed.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SHOULDING ON YOURSELF</b></p> <p>20. I should have been a full professor by now.</p>		

**HOW DO I SABOTAGE MY OWN GOOD COPING? (CONT.)**

Please check the appropriate column.	Doesn't Sound Like Me	Sounds Like Me
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>EMOTIONAL REASONING</u></b></p> <p>21. I feel silly for what I did, therefore I must be a silly queen.</p> <p>22. That person ticked me off. I am an angry fool.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>FALLACY OF CHANGE</u></b></p> <p>23. If I give him support, listen to him, and take care of him, he will become the kind of man that I can truly love.</p> <p>24. First, I am going to tell the boss I need a raise. If he says no, I am going to go to his boss, and hint about his dirty deals. Then I am going to go to Personnel, and threaten a lawsuit. Once I get my raise, I'll be truly happy.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>GLOBAL LABELING</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>NEGATIVE</b></p> <p>25. He wears a hairpiece and his nails are professionally manicured. He must be a lawyer.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>POSITIVE</b></p> <p>26. He fills his jeans nicely and has blond hair. He must be my next lover.</p>		

**HOW DO I SABOTAGE MY OWN GOOD COPING? (CONT.)**

Please check the appropriate column.	Doesn't Sound Like Me	Sounds Like Me
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>BEING RIGHT</u></b></p> <p>27. I get into situations with other people where there is only one problem: I am right and they are wrong, and they won't admit it.</p> <p>28. I spent two hours trying to make him see my point. He finally told me I was being a jerk. I am not a jerk, I just know what is right!</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>HEAVEN'S REWARD FALLACY</u></b></p> <p>29. After all I've done for you, you treat me this way.</p> <p>30. I stopped having unsafe sex in 1982. I don't use drugs. I joined the church. I am good to my friends. How come I tested HIV positive?</p>		

So how did you do? It can be very difficult to look at the ways we sabotage ourselves. So give yourself a big pat on the back for approaching a really difficult topic.

## **COMMON FORMS OF SELF-SABOTAGE**

Self-sabotaging statements often become habitual. Sometimes we don't even notice that we are making them. The first step toward countering our negative self-statements is noticing what we say to ourselves under what circumstances. During the next week, try to identify any negative self-statements that would fall into one or more of the categories below.

A good way to get feedback about our own behavior is from a trusted friend or other trusted 'outside observer.' This kind of feedback can be helpful, even if it is sometimes startling.

Ask your 'outside observer' to go through the previous exercise and the categories below with you, and tell you the types of self-statements he or she has heard you make.

### **The 15 types of Self-sabotage:**

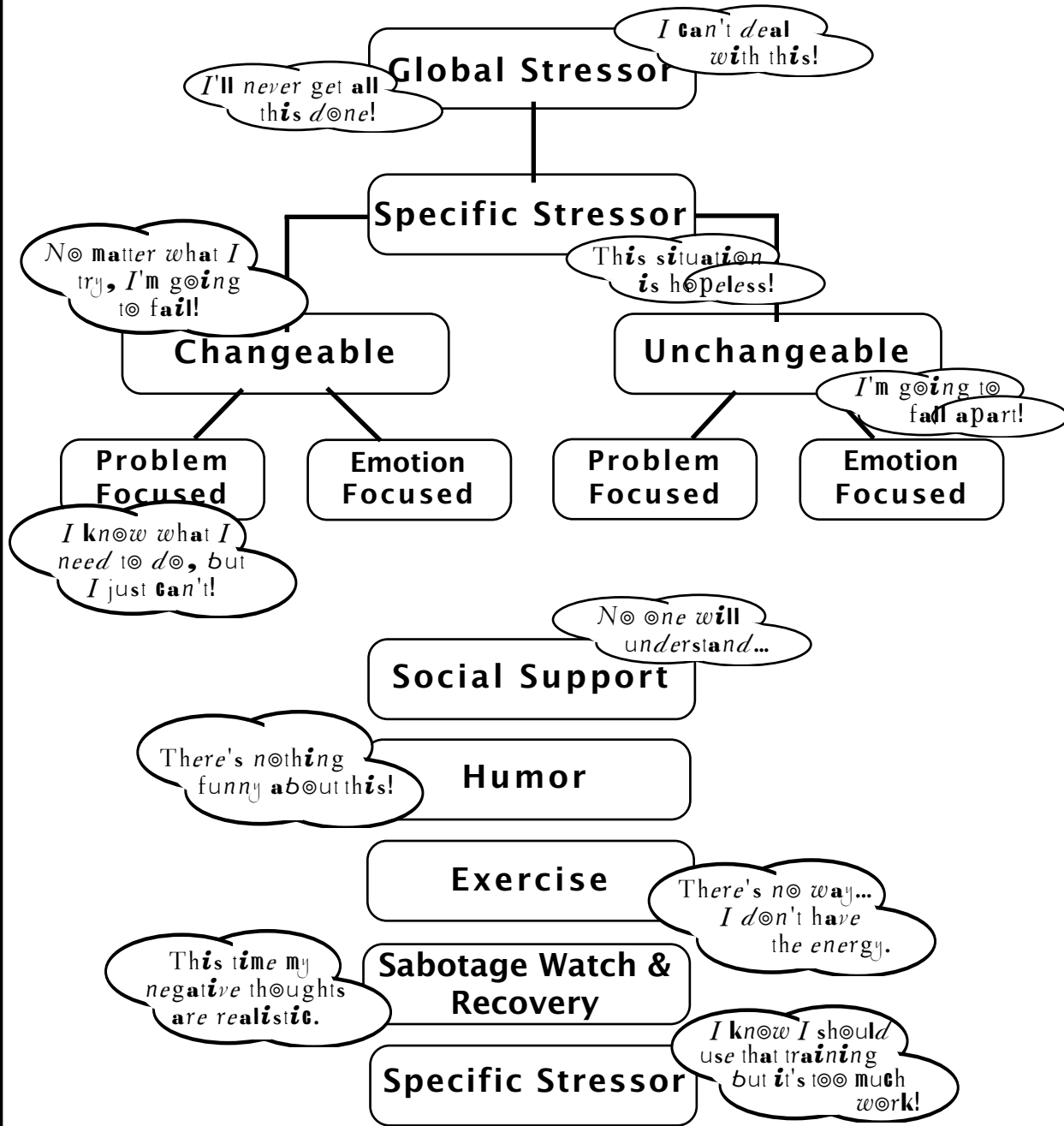
1. **Filtering:** You take the negative details and magnify them while filtering out all positive aspects of a situation.
2. **Polarized Thinking:** Things are black or white, good or bad. You have to be perfect or you are a failure. There is no middle ground.
3. **Overgeneralization:** You come to a general conclusion based on a single incident or piece of evidence. If something bad happens once you expect it to happen over and over again.
4. **Mind Reading:** Without their saying so, you know what people are feeling and why they act the way they do. In particular, you are able to divine how people are feeling toward you.
5. **Catastrophizing:** You expect disaster. You notice or hear about a problem and start "what if's:" "What if tragedy strikes?" "What if it happens to me?"
6. **Personalization:** Thinking that everything people do or say is some kind of reaction to you. You also compare yourself to others, trying to determine who's smarter, better looking, etc.
7. **Control Fallacies:** If you feel externally controlled, you see yourself as helpless, a victim of fate. The fallacy of internal control has you responsible for the pain and happiness of everyone around you.
8. **Fallacy of Fairness:** You feel resentful because you think you know what's fair, but other people won't agree with you.

9. **Blaming:** You hold other people responsible for your pain, or take the other tack and blame yourself for every problem or reversal.
10. **Shoulds:** You have a list of ironclad rules about how you and other people should act. People who break the rules anger you and you feel guilty if you violate the rules.
11. **Emotional Reasoning:** You believe that what you feel must be true — automatically. If you feel stupid and boring, then you must be stupid and boring.
12. **Fallacy of Change:** You expect that other people will change to suit you if you just pressure or cajole them enough. You need to change people because your hopes for happiness seem to depend entirely on them.
13. **Global Labeling:** You generalize one or two qualities into a negative global judgment.
14. **Being Right:** You are continually on trial to prove that your opinions and actions are correct. Being wrong is unthinkable and you will go to any length to demonstrate your rightness.
15. **Heaven's Reward Fallacy:** You expect all your sacrifice and self-denial to pay off, as if there were someone keeping score. You feel bitter when the reward doesn't come.

On the next page you will see a drawing of boxes and clouds. In the boxes are the elements of coping effectiveness that we've been practicing. In the clouds are examples of self-statements that undermine the coping process. Many of these statements reflect feelings of helplessness or hopelessness, or negative thinking. When a person is feeling depressed, their picture of the world is colored by feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and negativity. An effective antidote is good coping.

CLOUDS OF SELF-SABOTAGE<sup>1</sup>

1. From *Thoughts and Feelings* by Aaron T. Beck, page 26.



**IDENTIFYING NEGATIVE SELF-STATEMENTS**

Next week we will discuss ways to recover from these sorts of negative self-statements which sabotage our effective coping. The first step towards recovering from these statements is to become aware of making them. As mentioned above, these ways of talking to ourselves often become so habitual and second nature that we do not even notice what we are saying to ourselves. During this week try to be aware of the negative self-statements you tell yourself. What type of situations tend to elicit these statements from you? Jot them down in the space below.

## **S E S S I O N X I R E C O V E R I N G F R O M C O P I N G S A B O T A G E**

### **T H E L I N K B E T W E E N T H O U G H T S A N D B E H A V I O R**

Self-defeating thoughts are unproductive and can influence emotions and behavior: whatever we tell ourselves, we are likely to believe and act on. Research has shown that restructuring how we think about ourselves and our world can result in a corresponding change in how we behave. Looking at the thoughts and self-statements we make when trying to cope with stressful situations can help us to actually improve our coping behavior. At each point that coping can be sabotaged, there are statements you can use to help yourself recover from self-sabotage and continue with the coping skills you have learned.

### **C O N T R A S T O F S E L F - D E F E A T I N G A N D S E L F - E N H A N C I N G T H O U G H T S**

Let's look at an example. Say, for instance, you are in a situation where you will be meeting a new person for the first time. There are any number of thoughts that could occur to you before, during, and after such a meeting. Let's look at the possibilities of negative self-statements that could come up in this situation. Then we'll look at some positive statements that could be used in the same situation.

#### ***The Self-Defeating Scenario***

Before meeting:

- I bet I won't come across very well.

- This person probably won't like me.
- I'll blow this chance to establish a good relationship.

During meeting:

- I'm not making a good impression on this person.
- This person is probably wishing our meeting was over.
- I'd just like to leave and get this over with.

After meeting:

- Well, that was a lost cause.
- I can never talk intelligently with a stranger.
- How stupid I must have sounded.

### **The Self-Enhancing Scenario**

Before meeting:

- I'm just going to try to get to know this person.
- I'm going to be myself when I meet this person.
- I'll find something to talk about that I enjoy.
- This is only an initial meeting. We'll have to get together more to see how the relationship develops.

During meeting:

- I'm going to try to get something out of this conversation.
- This is a subject I know something about.
- This is a subject I know nothing about, so I'll learn something.
- It will take some time to get to know this person, and vice versa.

After meeting:

- That went OK; I'll do even better next time.
- It was easy to discuss topics of interest to me.

- I was able to just be myself.
- Each meeting with a new person gives me a chance to know someone else and explore new interests.

As you can see in the example:

1. Thoughts are the link between the situation and the resulting emotions; and,
2. Coping thoughts are incompatible with self-defeating thoughts.

### **TYPES OF SELF-ENHANCING THOUGHTS**

1. **Situation-oriented statements** help reduce the potential level of threat or severity of the anticipated situation:
  - “It won’t be too bad.”
  - “It can be a challenge.”
2. **Task-oriented statements** refer to the plans, steps, or behaviors a person will need to demonstrate during the stressful situation, such as:
  - “Concentrate on what I want to say or do.”
  - “Think about the task.”
  - “What do I want to accomplish?”
3. **Coping-with-being-overwhelmed statements** help a person stay calm and relaxed during tense moments. These include:
  - “Keep cool.”
  - “Relax, take a deep breath.”
  - “Stay calm.”
4. **Positive self-statements** are used to encourage ourselves or reinforce our coping efforts. Such self-statements include:
  - “Great, I did it.”
  - “I got through that all right.”

Positive self-statements can be used during a stressful situation and especially after such a situation. They may be general praise like:

“I really handled that pretty well.”

...or they may be very specific such as:

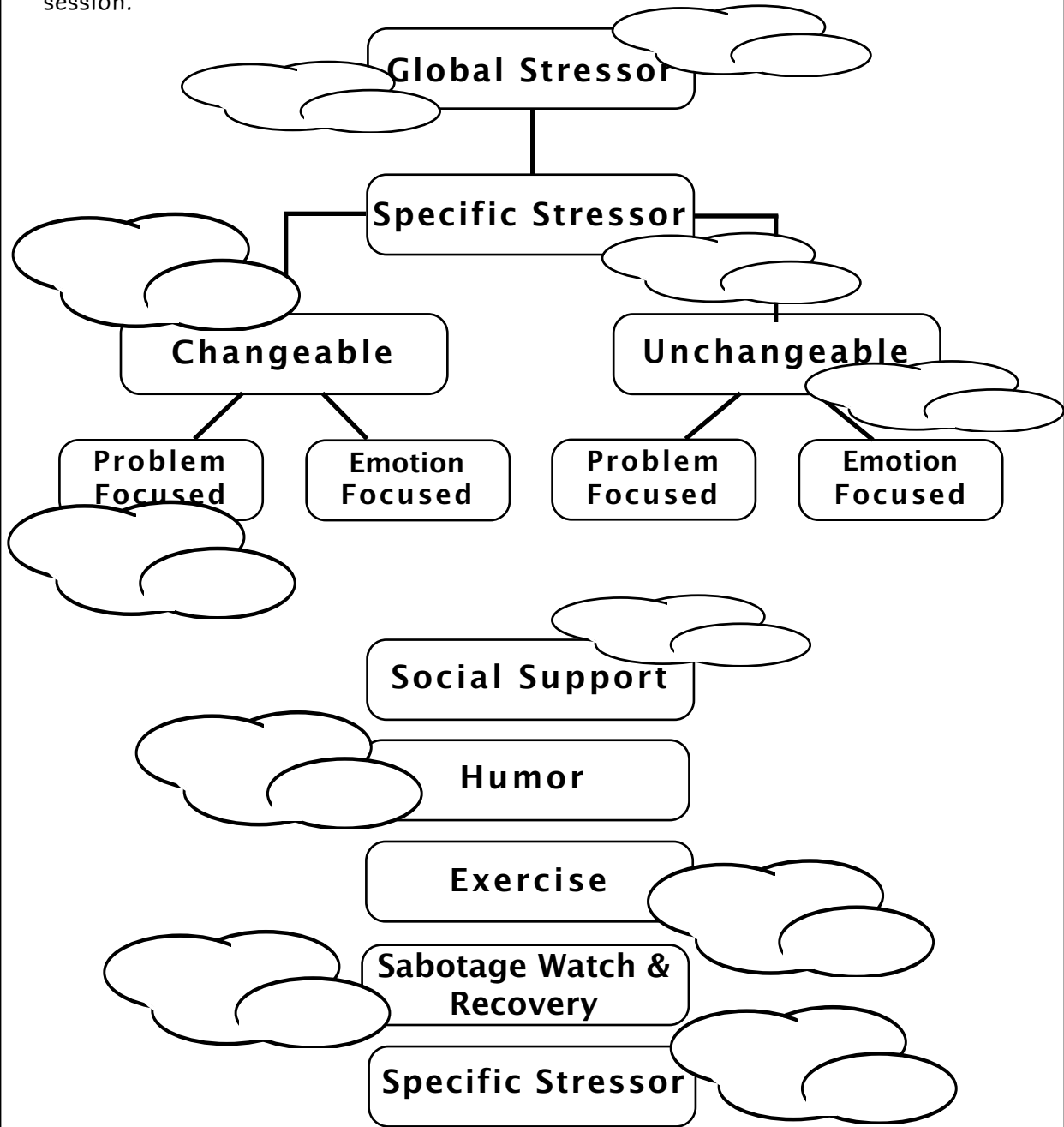
"It was great the way I managed to maintain eye contact during most of that meeting."

**A helpful point to remember:**

We aren't often conditioned to say positive things about ourselves. It may feel awkward or even silly at first, but give it a try.

**RECOVERING FROM THE CLOUDS OF SELF-SABOTAGE**

In the diagram below, fill in the empty clouds with positive statements you could make to counter the sorts of negative self-statements made in the cloud diagram from the last session.



## **S E S S I O N X I I**

### **C H A N G E S**

Tonight marks the transition from our weekly meetings to our monthly meetings. It may be tempting to try to ignore the change since we will be meeting together again in a month. However, there have been so many changes and losses in the Gay community and in HIV related areas that we think it is important to pay attention to what one more change means to you personally.

We've talked about many ideas, some of which may be new to you, while others may be familiar but structured or organized in a new way. How can you use what you have learned so far to cope with the transition to monthly meetings? The transition to monthly meetings is an unchangeable situation. What feelings come up for you? Are there aspects of the situation that are changeable? Can your social supports be helpful at this time? How has it been to get to know your fellow group members? We'll talk more about these questions and others in our upcoming meetings together.

Looking at our habitual behaviors, such as how we cope with stress, and making changes can be hard. Give yourself credit for your efforts during the past twelve weeks.

#### **WHAT COMES NEXT?**

We hope you'll continue to use what you have learned about coping to help manage the stresses of day-to-day life. Remember that change takes time and practice. That's where the monthly meetings come in. The meetings to come are designed to help you continue to develop and strengthen your new coping skills. After this week, we'll be meeting once a month for three months and then once every two months for six months – a total of six more group meetings. Take time to write down the meeting dates in the calendar at the end of this section.

## VISUALIZATIONS

On the retreat and during our weekly meetings, we did some relaxation and visualization exercises which may be helpful to you when you're looking for emotion-focused coping techniques. Some people find that they like specific types of visualizations; while others discover that they don't like to use visualizations at all. Explore different options and see what works best for you. You can find visualization and relaxation tapes and books in many bookstores and libraries. You can also create one for yourself: write a script that seems helpful, and then record it on a tape or memorize it. We've included a practice text similar to the kinds of visualization we've done in the group.

### Practice Visualization

This visualization script is meant to be a simple tool which you can use anytime you're feeling stressed out. It doesn't require much, just a relatively quiet space where you can close your eyes for a few minutes. Read it over a few times to get the basic sequence, then give it a try. As you practice, you may find things you want to change or expand. Remember, the visualization is a tool for you. Shape it however you'd like to make it a helpful and pleasurable experience.

- Sit or lie comfortably.
- Close your eyes.
- Take in three very deep breaths: with each breath, take a little longer to exhale all the air, and try to breath in a little more with each inhale.
- As you breathe, picture yourself in your safe, comfortable space.
- See, feel and hear this place as you continue to breathe.
- See yourself lying down in your space.
- As you are lying down, picture inside your lungs any stress that you are feeling. Give the stress a shape, color and texture (gray fuzz, black dots, purple squiggles....).
- Now take in a very deep breath of air from the calm, comfortable place where you are.

- With each breath, picture the air you inhale rushing into your lungs and picking up the stress residue; and as you exhale; see the air carry the residue out of your lungs, clear out of your body, and off into the distance, until it disappears.
- Repeat these cleansing breaths until your lungs are clear of all the stress you had pictured there.
- Take a few more breaths, noticing the increased capacity of your lungs, and the ease with which your chest rises and falls as you breath.
- Feeling relaxed, energized and full of good clean oxygen, allow yourself to return to wherever you were when you began, but bring with you a very deep breath of good clean oxygen from the space you have just visited.

**STRESSFUL SITUATIONS**

In between meetings make some notes for yourself about stressful situations you encounter. As unforgettable as some events may feel in the moment, they can fade over the course of a month. Jot down a few reminders about the situation. Include, for example:

What was stressful?

How did you cope with it?

What would you like to have done differently?

**VISUALIZATION EXERCISE**

Do one visualization exercise between now and the next meeting 1 month from tonight. Use this space to make some notes to yourself about what you want to include in your visualization.

How did it go? Do you want to change anything for the next time you do a visualization?

**RELAXATION EXERCISE**

Do one relaxation exercise between now and the next meeting 1 month from tonight.

## **S E S S I O N X I I**

### **C H A N G E S**

Tonight is our last weekly meeting and the beginning of the transition to meeting every other week. It may be tempting to try to ignore the change since we will be meeting together again in two weeks. However, there have been so many changes and losses in the Gay community and in HIV related areas that we think it is important to pay attention to what one more change means to you personally.

We've talked about many ideas, some of which may be new to you, while others may be familiar but structured or organized in a new way. How can you use what you have learned so far to deal with the change in meeting frequency? The transition to meeting every other week is an unchangeable situation. What feelings come up for you? Are there aspects of the situation that are changeable? Can your social supports be helpful at this time? How has it been to get to know your fellow group members? We'll talk more about these questions and others in our continued meetings together.

Looking at our habitual behaviors, such as how we cope with stress, and making changes can be hard. Give yourself credit for your efforts during the past twelve weeks.

#### **WHAT COMES NEXT?**

We hope you'll continue to use what you have learned about coping to help manage the stresses of day-to-day life. Remember that change takes time and practice. That's one reason why the rest of the meetings are important. The meetings to come are designed to help you continue to develop and strengthen your new coping skills. After this week, we'll be meeting approximately every other week for the next 9 months. Take time to write down the meeting dates in the calendar at the end of this section.

## **VISUALIZATIONS**

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**VISUALIZATION EXERCISE**

Do one visualization exercise between now and the next meeting 2 weeks from tonight. Use this space to make some notes to yourself about what you want to include in your visualization.

How did it go? Do you want to change anything for the next time you do a visualization?

**RELAXATION EXERCISE**

Do one relaxation exercise between now and the next meeting 2 weeks from tonight.