

The Changeways Clinic Core Program

Practical Strategies for Personal Change

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An Introduction to The Core Program

Welcome. The Core Program is designed to help you create positive change in your life. It is based on adult education as much as on the principles of therapy. Your trainer will be more of a teacher or a coach than a therapist. In a sense, you will be your own therapist.

Using the skills and information in the program, you will decide which problems you wish to work on. With the help of this manual and your trainer, you will create a plan for carrying out the changes you want to make. For some people this means coping with and overcoming problems like depression or anxiety. For others it means dealing with a major life transition or a difficult life situation.

The information contained in this manual is based on the published research literature. The program was originally developed at UBC Hospital in Vancouver, British Columbia, and is now administered through Changeways Clinic. Visit us at:

www.changeways.com

About the Manual

This manual is designed to accompany The Core Program, an evidence-based and professionally led group experience. Some therapists may decide to use all or some of the materials in one-to-one meetings as well. Regardless, you should not view this manual as therapy in itself, nor as a substitute for professional care.

As you work through the manual, you will find a series of diagrams, quotations, symbols, and exercises. Here's a guide:



Key Point. Ideas in the manual are usually described in detail, then summarized in a single sentence. The *key* symbol appears beside particularly important observations. When you review the material later, look for these key points as reminders.



Whirlpool. Going through personal change is like river rafting: part of the trick is to know where the rough water is. This symbol appears beside descriptions of some of the most common problems. Knowing about them can help you to avoid some of them and haul yourself out of the rest.



Checkpoint. This symbol appears beside brief exercises meant to help you relate the ideas in the manual to your own life. You will find the manual most helpful if you complete these checkpoints as you go.



Writing Exercise. Structured writing exercises can help you plan and carry out personal change. This symbol appears beside each one. Fill them out in a way to suit you: Messy, neat, point form, paragraph form, whatever you like. But do try them.



Additional Reading. Some topics are not covered in depth in the manual. This symbol appears beside suggestions for further reading.

Quotations

The quotations that appear in the manual are from actual participants who have been through the program in the past. Their words are printed in *italics* and are set apart from the rest of the text. We thank these contributors for their help.

Program Contents

The Triangle and Goal-Setting

- Thoughts, actions, feelings: The triangle Triangle & Goals 1
- Setting attainable goals Triangle & Goals 4

Stress, Depression, and Lifestyle

- What is stress, anyway? S D & L 1
- What is depression? S D & L 4
- The sustaining lifestyle S D & L 10

Thinking about Thinking

- Introduction Thinking 1
- Styles of distorted thinking Thinking 6
- Handling changes in mood Thinking 16
- Overcoming negative thinking Thinking 19

The Role of Your Social Life

- Your social network Social 2
- Creating a support team Social 11
- Social balancing Social 12
- Assertive Communication Social 13

The Road Ahead: Preventing Future Difficulties

- Plan ahead for stress Road 2
- The sign in the road Road 4
- The mood emergency action plan Road 6
- Course review Road 8

Class Routines and Expectations

This program has two main goals:

1. To provide information about skills and strategies that help with a wide variety of concerns.
2. To help you apply these ideas in your own life at your own pace.

In order for the program to be helpful, it must be a high priority in your life.

Attendance. Classes will begin on time, so please arrive on time for each session. Each class builds on the previous one, so it is important to attend regularly. If you absolutely cannot attend a session, please call to let your leader know.

The format. Group discussions will focus mainly on problem solving, constructive ideas, and learning the course material. Your leader's task is to present the material as clearly as possible and to help everyone learn. Please feel free to ask questions and make suggestions.

Participation. When contributing to group discussions, be supportive and provide constructive feedback. Avoid harsh criticism. Help others to work toward solutions. Give everyone an equal chance to contribute. Be prepared to set small goals for yourself each week.

Home practice. Although attendance is important, simply attending won't help. It will be important for you to work on the material between sessions as well. We ask that you:

- Read over the materials for each session.
- Complete the exercises in the manual.
- Carry out the home practice assignments you set for yourself.

Trying to do all of your reading and exercises in one sitting can be overwhelming. Instead, we recommend that you set aside 20 to 30 minutes each day for this part of your home practice.

You will not be asked to hand in your written exercises or show them to others. You will, however, be asked to share your progress and your experiences with the material. If there are issues that you do not feel comfortable discussing in the group, you will not be asked to do so.

Confidentiality. Only first names are used in class. All participants agree not to discuss outside the group any material of a personal or private nature raised by others. We also ask that you agree not to reveal who is in the group with you.