

## Check the Facts and Problem Solving

These two skills can be used as part of Cope Ahead, or as independent emotion regulation skills to help reduce/change intense emotions regarding situations that have already occurred or are ongoing.

1. DESCRIBE the problem situation.
2. CHECK THE FACTS! (Check all the facts; sort them from interpretations.)
  - a. Are you interpreting the situation correctly? Are there other possible interpretations?
  - b. Are you thinking in extremes (all-or-nothing, catastrophic thinking?)
  - c. What is the probability of the worst happening?
  - d. Even if the worst were to happen, could you imagine coping well with it?
  - e. If you are still faced with a big problem, then start the steps below.
3. IDENTIFY your GOAL in solving the problem.
  - a. Identify what needs to happen or change for you to feel OK.
  - b. Keep it simple; keep it something that can actually happen.
4. BRAINSTORM lots of solutions.
  - a. Think of as many solutions as you can. Ask for suggestions from people you trust.
  - b. Do not be critical of any ideas at first (wait for Step 5 to evaluate ideas).
5. CHOOSE a solution that is likely to work.
  - a. If unsure, choose two or three solutions that look good.
  - b. Do pros and cons to compare the solutions. Choose the best to try first.
6. Put the solution into ACTION.
  - a. ACT: Try out the solution.
  - b. Take the first step, and then the second . . .
7. EVALUATE outcomes.
  - a. Did it work? YEAH! Reward yourself!
  - b. It didn't work? Reward yourself for trying and DON'T GIVE UP!
  - c. Try a new solution.

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## Opposite Action to Change Emotions

Emotions come with specific ACTION URGES that push us to act in certain ways.

Often we escape the pain of the emotion in harmful ways.

These are common URGES associated with a sample of emotions:

FEAR → Escaping or avoiding

ANGER → Attacking

SADNESS → Withdrawing, becoming passive, isolating

SHAME → Hiding, avoiding, withdrawing, saving face by attacking others

GUILT → Overpromise that you will not commit the offense again, disclaim all responsibility, hiding, lowering head, begging forgiveness

JEALOUSY → Verbal accusations, attempt to control, acting suspicious

LOVE → Saying "I love you," making effort to spend time with the person, doing what the other person wants and needs, and giving affection

**ACTING OPPOSITE = act opposite to the action urge when the emotion is doing more harm than good (see Emotion Regulation Handout 4, "What Good Are Emotions?").**

EMOTION-----**OPPOSITE ACTION**

**Fear/Anxiety-----APPROACH**

- Approach events, places, tasks, activities, people you are afraid of, over and over; confront.
- Do things to increase a sense of control and mastery over fears.

**Anger-----GENTLY AVOID**

- Gently avoid the person you are angry with (rather than attacking).
- Take a time out and breathe in and out deeply and slowly.
- Be kind rather than mean or attacking. (Try to have sympathy or empathy for the other person.)

**Sadness-----GET ACTIVE**

- Approach, don't avoid.
- Build mastery and increase pleasant activities.

(continued)

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**EMOTION-----OPPOSITE ACTION**

**Shame-----FACE THE MUSIC** (when your behavior violates your moral values or something shameful has been revealed about you and the shame fits the facts):

- Apologize and repair the harm when possible.
- Try to avoid making same mistake in the future and accept consequences.
- Forgive yourself and let it go.

**GO PUBLIC** (when your behavior DOES NOT violate your moral values and the shame does NOT fit the facts):

- You continue to participate fully in social interactions, hold your head high, keep your voice steady, and make eye contact.
- Go public with your personal characteristics or your behavior (with people who won't reject you).
- Repeat the behavior that sets off shame over and over (without hiding it from those who won't reject you).

**Guilt-----FACE THE MUSIC** (when your behavior violates your moral values, hurts feelings of significant others, and the guilt fits the facts):

- Experience the guilt.
- You ask, but don't beg, for forgiveness and accept the consequences.
- You repair the transgression and work to prevent it from happening again.

**DON'T APOLOGIZE OR TRY TO MAKE UP FOR IT** (when your behavior DOES NOT violate your moral values and the guilt does NOT fit the facts):

- Change your body posture, look innocent and proud, head up, puff up your chest, maintain eye contact, keep voice steady and clear.

**Jealousy-----LET GO OF CONTROLLING OTHERS' ACTIONS** (when it does not fit the facts or is not effective):

- Stop spying or snooping.
- Relax your face and body.

**Love-----STOP EXPRESSING LOVE** (when it does not fit the facts or is not effective, e.g., the relationship is truly over, not accessible, or abusive):

- Avoid the person and distract yourself from thoughts of the person.
- Remind yourself of why love is not justified and rehearse the "cons" of loving this person.
- Avoid contact with things that remind you of the person (e.g., pictures).

*(continued)*

## Opposite Action to Change Emotions (page 3 of 3)

### OPPOSITE ACTION WORKS BEST WHEN:

1. **The emotion does NOT FIT THE FACTS.**

- An emotion does *not fit the facts* when:
  - The emotion does *not fit the facts* of the actual situation (e.g., terror in response to speaking in public)

or

- The emotion, its intensity, or its duration are *not effective* for your goals in the situation (e.g., you feel angry at your math teacher, but three periods later you're still fuming and can't focus on science).

2. **The opposite action is done ALL THE WAY.**

- Opposite behavior
- Opposite words and thinking
- Opposite facial expression, voice tone, and posture

### OPPOSITE ACTION REQUIRES THESE seven STEPS:

1. Figure out the emotion you are feeling.
2. What is the action URGE that goes with the emotion?
3. Ask yourself: Does the emotion fit the facts in the situation? If yes, will acting on the emotion's urge be effective?
4. Ask yourself: Do I want to change the emotion?
5. If yes, figure out the OPPOSITE ACTION.
6. Do the opposite action—ALL THE WAY!
7. Repeat acting in the opposite way until the emotion goes down enough for you to notice.

## Practice Exercise: Opposite Action

Due Date \_\_\_\_\_

Ask yourself the following questions as a guide to OPPOSITE ACTION:

**Observe** and **Describe** the emotion.

What is the current emotion you want to change?

What is your action urge?

Do the opposite action ALL THE WAY.

How did you feel after acting opposite to your emotion?

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