

Jealousy Learning Experience 25

Self-Management Skills Module

Procedures/Directions:

The following scenario illustrates the skills of **Focusing** ([Self-Awareness Module](#)) and **Reality Checking** [Self-Management Skills Module](#) to demonstrate how we can change our feelings by being aware of the depth of our feelings beyond our initial feelings and by managing our thinking. This example is best used after students understand the focusing and reality-checking skills. See the **Reality Checking Learning Experience** [Self-Management Skills Module](#) and the **Focusing Learning Experience** ([Self-Awareness Module](#)).

Tell students you are going to take them on a guided imagery. You may ask them to put their heads on their desks and follow along.

Imagine it is the Friday before a school vacation, and your family is going on a trip. You have been looking forward to this vacation because you are visiting one of your all-time favorite places. You tell yourself you should be feeling good but are having a bad day. You had to get up early because you didn't finish packing the night before. A significant term paper was due today, and you don't think you did that well on it. Your dad yelled at you because you didn't get your suitcase in the car on time and were late for school. On top of that, you got a bad grade on a test in one class, and another teacher assigned homework over vacation, and now you will have to do homework on vacation. You are sitting in class waiting for it to end when your dad will pick you up to leave on vacation. He reminded you not to be late and that you needed to meet him in the office immediately after this class. He has made it clear that you should not be late because you need to leave immediately after this class so that you won't be caught in traffic. As the teacher talks on, your mind wanders. You think of your love interest that you have been going out with for 4 months. For both of you, it is your first serious relationship. You really like them. They are very kind, you have common interests, and you have a lot of fun together. The relationship has been going very well, and one of the strengths is that you can both share feelings and communicate well. Class ends, and you quickly head to your locker. You wish you had time to see your love interest before you leave, but you know your Dad will be angry if you are late. As you are walking through the halls, you notice that your love interest seems to be flirting with someone. This person is very popular and very good-looking. They listen intently to one another and clearly enjoy whatever they are discussing. They don't notice you. They turn and walk in the opposite direction. You continue, knowing you are already late and your Dad will be upset. Once in the car, you feel very distracted and realize that even though you are going on vacation to one of your favorite places, you are in a bad mood. So, you try to make yourself feel better by doing the following:

1. You deny that you feel bad (deny your feelings and problems) and try to focus on your vacation plans, but that doesn't make you feel any better.
2. You try telling yourself that what is going on is too small to worry about (belittle the feeling or problem) and to just get over it, but that doesn't make you feel any better.
3. You tell yourself to just let it go and not let it get to you (face down the problem), but that doesn't make you feel any better.

4. You lecture yourself about why you shouldn't feel this way and that it is no big deal (lecture yourself about why you shouldn't feel this way), but that doesn't work either.

The person in the scenario tried to make themselves feel better by denying their feelings, belittling them, facing the problem down, and lecturing themselves, but these methods rarely work. So, they decided to use the Focusing process.

Focusing is a skill that can help us discover what keeps us from feeling wonderful at any given time. It can also help us understand feelings, problems, and dilemmas in greater depth than we may initially understand them. A problem is like an iceberg. You initially see the tip, but you must go very deep to discover the base, the part that is making us feel less than wonderful. Once we become more aware of what keeps us from feeling wonderful, we usually feel better. Knowing what is bothering us in and of itself can make us feel better. In addition, it is only when we fully understand our feelings, a problem, or a dilemma that we can do something about it. The person in the scenario went through the Focusing steps and wrote the answers to each question. They didn't try to answer the questions with their thoughts or thinking brain. They allowed the answers to come from the place where they feel. When they felt as if they had fully answered a question, they went on to the next question. At some point, they felt the problem changing, like they were getting closer to figuring it out, like they were getting warmer, like remembering something they forgot. There began to be a shift, a feeling like "this is right." They continued until they had an "ah ha" experience, that "yes, this is what I feel and why I feel this way.

1. Ask yourself: "How do I feel? Why don't I feel wonderful right now? What is bugging me on this particular day? Stay quiet. Listen. Let what comes come. Let all the problems come up and out, making a mental list. Don't get snagged on any one problem. Keep listing the problems until you hear something within you say, *"Yes, except for those, I'm fine."* Make a list of all the things keeping you from feeling wonderful right now...
 - a. **I felt rushed all day from the time I got up, worried that I didn't pack everything I wanted to have on vacation. Dad yelled at me this morning and kept nagging me to ensure I was on time. Being late for school stressed me out; a bad grade on a test made me worried about my grade in that class, worried that I didn't do well on the paper, having to do homework on vacation, and my love interest flirting with someone else.**
2. Ask: "Which problem feels the worst right now? Don't try to make an intellectual choice. Let your body decide which problem feels the worst on this day. Let the answer come from the place where you feel. Ask: "Which problem feels the worst right now...?
 - a. **My love interest was flirting with someone else.**
3. Ask: What does this whole problem feel like? Pay attention to that inner part of you where you feel things. Get a felt sense of what the whole problem feels like. Don't try to decide anything. Let the answer come from within, a felt sense of what this problem feels like.
 - a. **I am angry that my love interest would be flirting with someone else, and they seemed so happy. The other person is very popular and good-looking.**

4. Now ask yourself: What is the crux (the main part) of this problem?" What is the worst of it? What is the main thing in it that makes me feel bad? Ask the question, then wait. Let the main crux of the problem come to you—not from your thinking brain—but from the felt sense itself. Ask: what is the main part of this problem (what is the worst of it)...

a. **I am feeling jealous and insecure. I am worried that they will break up with me for someone else who is more popular and better-looking than me.**

5. Now, take what you consider the worst of it, and check them to ensure it fits your felt sense of the problem. Ask yourself: "Do these words and the felt sense match the problem exactly? Wait for an answer to come from the place where you feel. Ask: Do these words and the felt sense match the problem exactly...?"

a. **Yes, that's it. I'm feeling insecure that they have found someone else they like more, someone who is more popular and better looking than me. I feel jealous and insecure. The worst is that I am scared they will break up with me. Just the thought of that makes me feel lost and lonely.**

The Focusing process helped this person understand their feelings and why. There was a shift from feeling angry at his love interest to an understanding of the feelings behind the anger (feeling jealous, insecure, and worried). In this example, however, more is needed. This person has unpleasant feelings because they imagine that something will happen in the future (when it may not) and will have bad consequences for them (when it may not). This person is having these unpleasant feelings not because of some event that happened (his love interest did not break up with them) but because they are worried that it may occur in the future (when it may not). This person needs to do a Reality Check to determine the probability that their love interest will break up with them and also to determine how bad the consequences would be if it did happen. They need to change the way they are thinking to change their feelings. The steps in doing a Reality Check for this scenario are outlined below.

Doing a Reality Check on Things We Imagine Will Happen in the Future

Sometimes, we imagine that something will happen in the future (when it may not) and it will have bad consequences for us (when it may not). It is our thinking (imagining that something is going to happen in the future) that is causing unpleasant feelings, not because of something that happened in the present. Although it is healthy to anticipate, think about, and plan for stressful situations that may or will occur in the future, becoming too stressed about something that may not happen or have terrible consequences is not healthy. Below are the questions to use when doing a Reality Check to determine the probability of something happening in the future and the extent of the consequences.

1. What am I imagining will happen in the future?

I imagine that my love interest will break up with me for someone who is better looking and smarter than me.

2. What am I feeling, and why am I feeling this way about this event that I imagine will happen in the future?

I feel jealous and insecure that she may like someone else and worried that she will break up with me to be with this person. Just thinking about that makes me feel lost and lonely.

3. What interpretations and assumptions am I making about what I imagine will happen?

I assume that my love interest was flirting. Because I assume they were flirting with the other person, I assume they like that person more than me and want to break up with me to be with that other person.

4. Describe the evidence I have that my interpretations and assumptions are accurate, realistic, and/or rational and that this event will happen. Be very specific and give every detail.

I don't really have any evidence. They were talking with someone else; maybe it wasn't flirting. Our relationship is good. We have fun together and communicate well. There is no indication that anything is wrong in the relationship. And, it seems like we have been getting closer over the last several weeks.

5. If, after answering question # 4, I believe this event may happen, what is the probability that this event will happen in the future?

I think the probability is very low that she would leave me for this other person. This person is very good-looking and popular, but not someone we consider to be a friend. I don't think they have any interests in common. My love interest doesn't care about how someone looks or the fact that they are popular.

6. If this event happened, what are the probable short-, intermediate-, and long-term consequences? How devastating would these consequences (short, intermediate, and long-term) be?

I am sure that in the short term, I would feel rejected, dejected, hurt, and lonely, but I am sure I would get over it. I did get over it when my last love interest broke up with me. It took some time, but I got over it, and now I am with my current love interest.

7. Based on your answers above, write an accurate, realistic, and rational statement that now summarizes your feelings and thinking (interpretations and assumptions) about this situation that you imagine will happen in the future. Discuss the evidence you have that this event will happen, the probability that it will happen, and how devastating the consequences (short, intermediate, and long term) would be. Replace any inaccurate, unrealistic, and/or interpretations and assumptions with those that are accurate, realistic, and/or rational.

I am feeling better after using the Focusing and Reality Checking skills. I don't know why I jumped to the conclusion that my love interest was flirting or that they would dump me for someone else just because they are more popular and better looking, two traits my love interest doesn't even care about. And I don't know why I concluded they were flirting just because they seemed to enjoy each other's company. And it's not like I have never flirted. There is no evidence that they are unhappy with me or our relationship. The opposite is true. We have been having a great time lately and seem to be getting closer over the last several weeks. And I know they would bring it up if something bothered them about me or our relationship.