The Unified Protocol is an approach that addresses five core areas in dealing with anxiety, depression, trauma and mood disorders. Much more in-depth information can be found about UP if your are interested on the web. A great resource is [Barlow\_Web Materials.indd (oup.com)](https://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/fdscontent/uscompanion/us/pdf/treatments/Barlow_Web_Materials_07_11.pdf) This is not a hotlink and must be copied and pasted. Read below and there are worksheet sections.

The five areas address in Unified Protocol are:

**Being present and focused in the present**

**Having cognitive flexibility**

**Changing emotional behaviors**

**Being aware of the physical sensations associated with emotions**

**Exposure to emotions and then situations that trigger emotions as skills and tolerance are developed**

This worksheet is based on the Unified Protocol and the other worksheet is based on regular CBT. Both have a great deal of research indicating their effectiveness in dealing with emotional management.

Brief background on UP. Research shows that people with anxiety, trauma and depression struggle with the following:

**A negative mood (shocking right?)**

**view their emotions negatively (duh, flashback suck, panic attacks feel like death is knocking and depression can be debilitating)**

**have aversive reactions to their emotions and therefore make efforts to avoid them or to suppress them.**

So the creator, David Barlow, created a system to counter this in a simple to follow and apply manner. Here is your worksheet.

1. Be Aware of what you Feel in the Here and Now. Don’t judge it. Observe it. Don’t Avoid it, stuff it or run from it. Don’t control it. Just see it, observe it, note how long it is there and watch it pass. Don’t fix it or fixate on it. Appreciate that it is an adaptive response that originated for a reason once upon a time. Tolerate that its uncomfortable. Remember that the more you tolerate it the easier it becomes.
2. Cognitive Flexibility. Examine you old and automatic assumptions about the event, your ability to cope and the emotions. “If I feel this it will take over” “This is unbearable” “I can’t” Challenge these thoughts. Reduce your old patterns of avoidance and reinforce your new patterns of tolerance.
   1. For example, My coworkers disagreed with an idea I had at work and my automatic thought is “they don’t value my contribution”. That gets quickly followed by “I am not good enough at my job” and the final blow is “I will never get promoted”.
   2. The first step is to recognize that this is a thinking trap.
   3. Then to offer a flexible interpretation such as “My coworkers disagree with lots of opinions from everyone, not just me”. “this does not mean I am getting fired”
   4. A final piece of Cognitive Flexibility can be to ask yourself some of the following questions.
      1. Do I know for certain my automatic thought will happen?
      2. What evidence do I have for this thought or belief?
      3. Even if it does happen, can I tolerate it?
      4. If I were not having such a strong emotional reaction, would I still feel the same?
      5. How much does it feel like it is true vs how much evidence is there that its true?
3. Changing emotional Behaviors: Examples of emotional behaviors are avoidance behaviors, like not going to the store due to anxiety, not driving on the freeway, not making eye contact or speaking to people, or yelling at other drivers. They are behaviors that are driven by our emotional state (Before practicing on real life situations like below practice on internal emotional reactions, then move up to safe real life ones with close friends or family then graduate more and more as you gain skill).

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Situation/Trigger | Emotion | Emotional Behavior | Alternative Action or new behavioral choice | Consequence of Alternative Action or new behavioral Choice |
| Social Anxiety | Anxious | Avoid talking and eye contact, excessive apologizing, substance use | Make intentional eye contact and observe reaction of others, limit apologies to only if sincerely warranted, enter circumstance sober and observe your interactions, keep interaction brief and successful. | Temporary discomfort and anxiety  Gather real information regarding how others interact  Recognize your ability to interact with others successfully briefly, leave with sense of success.  Improved interaction skills. |
| Walking in crowded area | Frustrated | Behavioral indications of frustration, sighing loudly, tapping foot to indicate impatience in line, mumbling out loud about line, running into people who walk too closely | Make eye contact and smile, say hello as you pass by or head nod politely, patiently wait in line, listen to calming music while waiting in line | Short term consequence will be frustration.  Long term consequence will be increased tolerance and successful feeling of controlling anger and learning to manage crowd frustration |
| Your turn |  |  |  |  |

1. Step four is to become aware of our emotions as they reside in our bodies.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Emotion I experience in mind | Where does it feel in my body | When I focus on it does it move | I can tolerate this and observe it |
| EX: thought of loss of friend, sad, empty | Sinking in stomach | Goes to gut then lower chest area then throat gets tight | Gets shallower over time when I sit with it then lighter |
| Your turn |  |  |  |

1. Exposure to emotions. Allow yourself to feel emotions and be exposed to them rather than giving into old avoidant patterns.

Exposure tasks are important but difficult. Here is an outline as to how these work.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Negative Automatic thought  I can’t make friends and no one at the luncheon wants to talk with me.  I am boring and no one cares what I have to say.  People only want to talk to me if I can do something for them. | Alternative Thought/Cognitive Flexibility  I have had friends before and I know that.  I do have some interesting hobbies that I could share about.  People are at the luncheon to meet people and get to know new people. | Your space |  |
| Emotional Behaviors  Approach other people that look like outcasts like me that are probably losers too.  Maybe hit the drinks heavily so I feel more relaxed.  Just tell them what they want to hear and get out of there or see if I can do something for them, that way they may like me.  Not approach anyone. | Alternative Behaviors  Make a point to approach people that I may be interested in getting to know.  Try this sober or at least with just one drink so I can see how it feels sober.  Listen and learn about these people and get to know them too.  Approach people, non-defensively and non-judgmentally. |  |  |
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