Session 3 Summary for Clients: Evaluating Automatic Thoughts

THE GOAL OF THIS SESSION

- To evaluate automatic thoughts.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS WEEK'S SESSION

- Thoughts influence feelings, behavior, other thoughts, and physical well-being (the stress–appraisal–coping model of pain).
- Automatic thoughts are thoughts or images that can occur in response to pain or pain-related stressors without your full awareness of them.
- Negative, distorted automatic thoughts are harmful for these reasons:
  - They focus your attention on the pain and pain-related stressors.
  - They magnify the perception of pain.
  - The contribute to an inability to direct thoughts away from the pain.
  - They lead to a sense of helplessness.
- Automatic thoughts usually occur right before shifts in emotions or physical well-being.

HOMEWORK REVIEW

- Pick one automatic thought from your Automatic Thoughts Worksheet–1 (ATW-1), and share what you wrote with the group.
- Were you able to identify the effect of the automatic thought on your emotions, behavior, other thoughts, or physical well-being?
- What did you learn about identifying automatic thoughts?
- What problems did you encounter in identifying automatic thoughts?

EVALUATING AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

- *Some* thoughts in response to pain or stress are completely factual.
- *Most* thoughts in response to pain or stress are at least partly based on fact.
- *Often*, however, thoughts in response to pain or stress are somewhat distorted.
- Negative thought distortions have the most (negative) influence on your emotions, behavior, and physical functioning.
- Evaluating automatic thoughts can help reduce negative distortions, which has a positive influence on your ability to cope.
- Using the Automatic Thoughts Worksheet–2 (ATW-2) can help you work through the process of evaluating automatic thoughts.

(continued)

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Automatic thoughts, usually outside your immediate awareness, must be recognized before they can be changed.
- Negative, distorted automatic thoughts are harmful to your adjustment.
- Once you have learned to recognize automatic thoughts, you can use a system to evaluate what part of them is true and what part is distorted.
- Most thoughts are partially true and partially distorted.
- The ATW-2 guides you through the process of evaluating automatic thoughts.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

- Using the ATW-2, note all important automatic thoughts that you become aware of (those that you believe 70–100%). Try doing this each day.
- Rate how strongly you believe each automatic thought.
- Just as you did on the ATW-1, note any shift in emotions or physical functioning, as well as the situation, time, and date.
- Construct a list of factual evidence supporting that automatic thought, as well as a list of factual evidence that does not support that automatic thought.
- After generating your lists of facts supporting and refuting your automatic thought, re-rate it for how much you believe the automatic thought now.
- Bring your homework to the next session, and be prepared to discuss what you have learned.

Automatic Thoughts Worksheet–2 (ATW-2)

Date/ time	Stressful situation	Emotional/physical shift	Automatic thought or image (How much do you believe it? 0–100%)	Evidence* that the thought is true	Evidence* that the thought is not true	Re- bel (0–10

*What are the *facts* regarding this automatic thought or image? Automatic thoughts are almost always partly true, but they often contain some negative distortions of the t