

STRIDE Workbook

Session 5

In this session, we will:

- ❖ Review your practice since our last session
- ❖ Learn helpful skills to manage your most distressing side effects
- ❖ Explore ways to let go of stress and practice a technique called acceptance
- ❖ Practice an acceptance –based relaxation exercise

Managing Side Effects & Acceptance

Review

- *What tools have you used this week to cope with side effects?*
- *Did you notice any coping strategies that were not helpful?*
- *Are there side effects that you feel you have more control over?*
- *Are there side effects that are still bothersome to you?*

Remember, side effects may continue to be present, but less bothersome or less disruptive to your quality of life.

Feel free to write down any related thoughts below:

Side Effect Management:

As we talked about last session, there are many ways for you to gain more control of your side effects, or how greatly they interfere with your life. It's not uncommon to have side effects that are so disruptive that they cause you to have thoughts about stopping your medication or skipping a dose.

Let's learn some more helpful strategies so that you can continue taking your medication without compromising your quality of life. Which side effects would you like to learn coping strategies for today? Turn to the page for that side effect, listed below:

Body Image, Weight, Hair	78
Memory Difficulties and Concentration	81
Fatigue/Loss of Energy	84
Hot Flashes	91
Mood Swings, Sadness, or Nervousness	93
Joint Pain, Muscle Aches, & Headaches	98
Sexuality and Intimacy	102
Sleep	105

Acceptance & Letting Go

You may have done everything in your toolbox to lessen your pain, fatigue, hot flashes, mood swings, or other side effect that is getting in the way for you. In the end, you might realize that while you can lessen the effect it has on you, it might not completely go away.

Given how important it is for you to continue your medication, it may be difficult to come to terms with this reality, but it allows us to practice a new skill, called acceptance. You may have heard people tell you to “get over it” or “just deal because this is how things are.” This is not what we advocate for. We are not suggesting

that you just get over anything. Rather, acceptance is the understanding that you cannot change something that you might like to change, and that you recognize that something may be here to stay that you don’t necessarily approve of.

By accepting the situation, we don’t have to like it, or approve of it.

However, reaching a point of acceptance allows us to move past the resistance, and start finding ways to work within the situation. In addition, when we can accept something, we begin to focus our energy on the things we can address, rather than spend our energy on the things we cannot change.

Here is an example:

Have you ever experienced a strong current when swimming in the ocean or even a riptide?

To get to safety, you must stay calm and either float or swim parallel to shore, rather than against it. You swim along the shore, even though it may take you farther out at first knowing that if you swim against the current, you won’t get anywhere, you will tire out, and won’t reach safety.

Acceptance is learning not to swim against the current. It is the practice of learning to work with the situation rather than resisting and fighting against the situation. Acceptance opens the door for “living with,” while “battling” uses up energy. Just like with the riptide, battling doesn’t get very far, and leaves you exhausted.

- ❖ Acceptance is also a letting go, or a softening. When we tighten or clench around physical pain, we make it worse. Similarly, when we resist against emotional pain, we may become exhausted, and we don't allow ourselves to feel what is normal to feel.
- ❖ It is normal to feel worried, uncertain, and nervous during this time. Fighting against those feelings won't make them go away. Instead, try observing them, or labeling them.
- ❖ You can tell yourself that it is okay to feel that way. It is okay to hurt, to worry, or to feel sad. **It's okay to not be okay.** Use this exercise to practice acceptance.

Exercise 5.1: Acceptance

Gently close your eyes, remembering to take nice, deep breaths.

Notice any negative emotions, feelings, or worries you may have...and just let them be...without judging or resisting them. Give in to the feeling in your body.

Notice any tightness you may feel in your body, you can gently massage that part of your body with your hand or in your mind. Notice any negative emotions or feelings, and just let them be. Tell yourself that it's okay to feel this way... that it's ok to worry, hurt, or feel pain...that it's okay to not feel okay.

Acknowledge whatever you feel in this moment, saying... "this is real for me right now." You may feel that the emotion starts to loosen or release. Acknowledge with an imaginary nod any attitudes, feelings, or thoughts that arise, and just be aware of them, not having to change them or do anything about them.

In a moment, open your eyes, keeping with you the gentle and accepting attitude.

Exercise 5.2: Session 5 Home Practice

1. Expand your toolkit.

Expand your toolkit with strategies you learned this session. Which skills will you use when you are experiencing side effects?

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Diaphragmatic Breathing | Massage |
| Progressive Muscle Relaxation | Acupuncture |
| Mini relaxation exercise | Talk to medical care team |
| Acceptance exercise | Pleasurable activity |
| Mindfulness practice | Distraction |
| Cognitive reframing and adaptive thinking | Modify environmental triggers |
| Physical activity | Seek social support |
| Focus on sleep habits | Optimize nutritional intake |
| Activity pacing | Modify an enjoyable activity |

2. Remember to practice this acceptance-based relaxation exercise, Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR), diaphragmatic breathing, or mindfulness body scan for 5-10 minutes each day.

Notes

Use this “Notes” section in whatever way fits your needs. You may use it to jot down thoughts about the session or the practice exercise.

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