

## **Unified Alternative Therapies: A Seven Actions Program**

Alternative therapies to drug therapy unfortunately contrast it separately without allying with other alternative therapy programs for an eclectic approach. We are long overdue for combining different types of alternative therapies into a single comprehensive program. Unified Alternative Therapies unifies alternatives into seven categories and advocates actions that promote each type, and can be used in conjunction with drug therapy. Consistently, this comprehensive program incorporates behaviors that promote the Four Dimensions of Mental Health advocated by the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Unifying alternatives to drug therapy creates a multi-faceted approach that is far more effective than any therapy program presented singularly.

Emotional well-being is generally increased through positive life changes and positive habits that promote supportive, life-affirming experiences. Assuming personal responsibility for the journey is essential for success; consistently, agency and empowerment are essential for assuming personal responsibility. Although it is difficult to motivate behavior when goals are distant; regular, minimum time commitments at each action category create habits that promote more affirming life experiences. The schedule of minimum time commitments for each category is provided solely for consideration; each person should determine time intervals that best suit themselves. Habits of regular time commitment to a therapy program are difficult to establish but easier to maintain as initial resistance recedes and habits begin producing rewarding outcomes. Positive habits promote increased emotional well-being.

When painfully depressing experiences obscure a positive path forward, it's wise to seek assistance from supportive people; supportive people promote agency, empowerment and self-advocacy. Supportive assistance from others can provide important feedback about the environment and our relationship to it; counselors are especially educated about public assistance resources. Empathy and transparent social support are critical for a counselor to create a therapeutic environment for a client. Counselors should offer empathy for social and economic injustices and promote increased justice when possible; e-CPR (Emotional CPR) provides valuable guidelines for counselors. Poorly matched counselors cannot provide acceptable care; "peer support specialists" may assist with improving counselor services.

Be mindful that emotional well-being is a human right as advocated by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights with their Universal Declaration of Human Rights (of 1948). The UN declared human rights to "nutritious food ...habitable shelter ...and freedom to make sense of (personal) experience in one's own way."

### **Seven Actions for Improved Emotional Well-being**

**Action 1) Improve physical health for a related improvement in emotional well-**

**being. Satisfy physiological needs and avoid physical illness; consider a minimum of 15 minutes of moderate cardio-vascular exercise, four days per week, plenty of rest and eating a moderate quantity of healthy foods.**

Emotional well-being is related to physical health; satisfying physical needs of safety, exercise, regular nutritional food, a comfortable environment for sleeping, and protection from adverse weather promote emotional well-being. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration should assist with difficulties in managing physical needs upon request.

Good nutrition promotes emotional well-being; nutritional food and clean water (free of heavy metals) are critical for creating enough physical energy for the optimal brain health that promotes emotional well-being. Conversely, food toxins, allergens and nutritional deficits from compulsive dieting harm physical health (and potentially viability) and emotional well-being. Improved physical health from exercise also fosters improved emotional well-being. Exercise should be tailored to a personal concept of recreation to encourage frequency over strenuousness; walking is a good start for most people. Exercise should begin with moderation to ensure wellness; consult a physician if you have any question about whether you are healthy enough for physical exercise. Besides nutrition and exercise, good sleep habits from a physically and emotionally relaxing environment are important for emotional well-being. Unfortunately, it is naturally difficult to sleep when under duress; hopefully, this therapy program will promote better sleep habits.

Exercise, rest and a healthy diet promote physical health and emotional well-being; conversely, toxins harm physical health and emotional well-being. Compulsive substance abuse causes extreme physical sickness and emotional distress that (unfortunately) often promotes a cycle of abuse. Long-term use of neuroleptic drugs is may be similarly counterproductive especially in heavier doses (although their sedative affect may be beneficial during emotional crises especially with natural sleep deprivation). Unfortunately, most neuroleptic drugs are addictive (especially in heavier doses) and withdrawal can be dangerous; The *Harm Reduction Guide to Coming Off Psychiatric Drugs* (by Will Hall) and an educational seminar at the Mad in America website (MadinAmerica.com) may provide valuable assistance.

**Action 2: Create a behavior habit that counters emotionally distressful experiences; consider a minimum of an hour, two days per week. Consider behaviors that best neutralize, confront or otherwise counter personally distressful experiences and tailor a behavior with that goal in mind.**

Distressful traumatic experiences cause anxiety; consider the source of your distress and design behaviors to counter the source of personal issues. Traumatic experiences of social and economic injustice are countered by political activism. Neutralizing other distressful experiences often centers on confronting the specific cause of the distress, preventing others from experiencing similar distress, or comforting those

who have experienced similar distress. Thus victims of sexual assault might consider self-advocating for prosecution, volunteering at a rape hotline, advocating for educational programs for youthful offenders, or campaigning for stronger laws against rape. Consistently, someone who was abused as a child might consider testifying to the truth, advocating for better foster care programs or parenting programs, advocating for stronger laws against child abuse, or volunteering at a Boys & Girls Club. Moreover, someone afflicted by the sorrow of war might consider joining a veterans support organization or an anti-war organization. Consistently, guilt is reduced by actions that counter a transgression- that make a person deserving of forgiveness. Thus a person who injured someone while driving impaired might consider volunteering at Meals-on-Wheels or with programs that make homes more accessible for people with disabilities.

Compulsions (broadly construed) and phobias (broadly construed) are best countered with conditioning techniques as well as addressing the sources of distress.

If actions that counter personally traumatic experiences are difficult to specify, consider community service to generally counter social and economic injustice.

A life change may be necessary if a personal environment is distressful.

Assistance from supportive people who promote agency and empowerment may be helpful when having difficulty imagining an action that counters personally distressful experiences or when changing personal environments.

**Action 3) Create a behavior habit of relaxation therapy (broadly construed); consider a minimum of 15 minutes daily.**

Relaxation therapy is a natural form of therapy that reduces stress and increases emotional well-being; it is impossible to be emotionally agitated while physically relaxed. Consistently, different forms of relaxation therapy from hot mineral baths to meditation have been popular in different cultures for thousands of years.

Choose a form of relaxation therapy that is the most personally enjoyable. Broadly construed, relaxation therapy includes progressive muscle relaxation and deep breathing techniques, massages, saunas and sweat lodges, spas and hot baths, meditation, yoga and Tai Chi, acupuncture, and hypnosis.

Consider increasing time spent with relaxation therapy during periods of increased emotional distress.

**Action 4) Seek positive thinking with mindfulness towards a personal affirmation, and gratitude for one's blessings; consider a minimum of 30 minutes creating habits that promote positive thinking, two days per week; 30 minutes developing social relationships for positive thinking once per week; and a minute of personal affirmation, three times daily.**

Be mindful of your thoughts, behaviors and emotions, and seek a more positive disposition and positive path forward. Although most distressed people resent the repetition of the theme of positive thinking, "counting one's blessings" promotes

emotional well-being. Consistent with the central theme of most self-help books, positive thinking promotes positive thoughts, experiences and memories; conversely, negative thinking promotes negative thoughts, experiences and memories. A positive disposition includes being kind to oneself and less self-critical of perceived shortcomings; self-acceptance is vitally important for improving emotional well-being. Be mindful that people tend to feel isolated when suffering emotionally but multitudes of people feel similarly.

Numerous popular alternative therapies promote positive thinking and related improved emotional well-being. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) provides valuable strategies for promoting positive thinking (including visualizing positive change) and for reducing self-defeating behavior patterns and triggers; it is the most popular form of psychotherapy. Cognitive behavioral therapy may also assist with strategies to improve social relationships (including tips on being supportive without imposing) and to overcome attachment to abusers. *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Basics and Beyond* by Judith Beck and *Feeling Good* by David Burns are popular CBT programs. Narrative Therapy may also be valuable; it exposes injustices underlying negative self-images and “rewrites the narrative.” Consistently, social service organizations may assist with strategies to improve social and/or employment skills to increase emotional well-being. Consider social support (empathy and compassion) from a supportive friend, or your right to social support from a counselor or peer-specialist. Dialectical Behavior Therapy, the Wellness Recovery Action Plan program, Peter Breggin’s Empathetic Therapy, Well-being therapy, Human Givens Therapy, Positive therapy, Existential Therapy, and Paul Gilbert’s Compassion Focused Therapy are additional tools for promoting self-affirmation and reducing self-defeating thinking and behavior patterns.

Affirming music and other entertainment, pleasant aromas and a comforting personal space promote positive thinking and emotional well-being; additional lighting may also be desirable during long, dark winters.

Emotional well-being is also promoted by the natural affirmation of fellowship — social relationships; humans share a therapeutic, affirming natural bond based on our common humanity. Collaborating with people who are confronting similar types of distress generally promotes affirmation and emotional well-being. Social relationships (through peer groups, community service and volunteerism, school and work, recreational and political activities, and religious organizations) generally promote positive thinking and improved emotional well-being.

Consistent with the natural affirmation of fellowship, animal companionship can also promote natural affirmation.

Positive thinking is also promoted by habitually reminding oneself (morning, noon and night) to respect oneself and others, and seek a positive perspective of personal challenges.

Be mindful that painful emotional suffering is the natural reaction to distressful experiences. Use the suffering as motivation for empowering actions; self-advocacy and increased authenticity that promote emotional well-being. Also, be mindful that humans

are naturally resourceful and adaptive, and that there's always hope for improved emotional well-being because "the only constant in life is change."

**Action 5) Create behavior habits that promote emotional well-being; consider a minimum of an hour, two days per week. Consider behaviors that are most likely to eventually create enjoyment in life and create habits to promote them.**

Actions that promote emotional well-being often relate to creative arts including dance; other options include hobbies, social recreation and time spent emerged in a comforting natural environment. A habit that promotes well-being often plays to personal strengths or strengthens personal weaknesses. Consider behaviors that increase personal efficacy (including peer education) if mental distress makes it temporarily repugnant to foster an enjoyable experience.

Assistance from supportive people (who promote agency and empowerment) may be helpful when having difficulty imagining behaviors that might eventually promote some enjoyment of life.

**Action 6) Manage personal business to reduce personal problems that promote mental distress; consider a minimum of 15 minutes of planning and organizing personal tasks, two days per week.**

Painful emotional suffering often distracts attention from taking care of the personal business that promotes physical and emotional well-being; failing to manage personal business promotes distressful experiences (emotional suffering). Organize and expedite personal tasks including scheduling and managing appointments, grocery shopping, cleaning personal space, paying bills, balancing checkbook, etc. Create a more comforting, productive routine to daily life; consider listing regular daily and weekly activities including time allocated for each of the seven actions; periodically update the list. A schedule should include time for creating scenarios in advance that promote better outcomes for "triggers." Consider Occupational Therapy that focuses on promoting the management of personal business if some guidance seems valuable.

For those who have been deep in the "mental health care" system, the Wellness Recovery Action Plan wisely advocates an advanced crisis plan including a legal Advanced Medical Directive. A proactive crisis plan often includes information about responsibility for decision-making during a time of crisis, health care information including choices about primary care and support, often a plan for staying at home, things that help during a crisis and things that aggravate a crisis, and people that help during a crisis and people that aggravate a crisis. A legal Advanced Medical Directive Plan can promote some feelings of empowerment when things seem otherwise; the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration should assist upon request.

**Action 7) Consider the meaning to life and your purpose in life for improved emotional well-being; consider a minimum of 5 minutes twice weekly.**

Consider how best to understand the natural and/or spiritual meaning to life and how to achieve your individual purpose.

Our humanity has natural purpose; unfortunately, human nature has been historically maligned for self-promotion and greed that obscures the cooperation and compromise necessary for promoting species survival. Our natural motivation for species survival demands increased fellowship and an increased appreciation for the stewardship of Mother Earth.

Most people are comforted by a theological purpose to life beyond our natural purpose and the scope of natural science. Natural science is our best tool for understanding the physical world but doesn't address meaning beyond what can be seen and touched. The power of theology to promote healing is well documented and shouldn't be underestimated.

Understanding spiritual purpose promotes emotional well-being whether its natural or theological meaning to life (or both).

**Conclusion:**

Unified Alternative Therapies advocates actions that promote seven categories of alternative therapies; creating positive habits promotes more positive experiences of increased emotional well-being. Humans have intrinsic value and a human right to emotional well-being as advocated by the UN Commission on Human Rights. **“Keep your eyes on the prize”; never abandon your inalienable right to improved emotional well-being!**

**Acknowledgment:** Unified Alternative Therapies is a work-in-progress; feedback is appreciated through the contact form.

**Disclaimer:** As a work-in-progress, this therapy program is not intended to substitute for professional medical or mental health care advice; please see a mental health care professional for specific needs.