

## Introduction

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This CD book and the chapter handouts contained within it are designed to assist persons, both in and out of therapy, who need help coping with stress or psychological symptoms. It has been especially aimed at helping persons cope with depression, anxiety, and anger. However, we also recognize there are other common problems as well which may not have a diagnosis or even overt symptoms, and yet be a source of distress and concern for individuals. Problems such as relationship stress and perfectionism have also been included.

The book is broken down into chapter handouts. Each is designed so that therapists can photocopy it and give it to clients to help them develop a solid understanding of their problem and how they can better cope with it. Therapists and related mental health personnel are given permission to copy anything on the CD ROM for use with clients. Each chapter/handout is designed to educate persons about the nature of their problem or disorder as well as giving them specific coping strategies to use. We believe that therapists will find that the handouts provide a useful way to provide information in a short period of time.

Files on this CD ROM are in Adobe Acrobat 3.0, a format which we believe will be readily opened on almost all computers. Free copies of Adobe Acrobat Reader are available at [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com).

If you are a person in therapy reading this book, we hope that it stimulates your thinking and adds to the skills you are learning. If you have not yet decided to take the step of entering therapy you are still likely to find the information here to be very helpful in learning to deal with your problems. Our goal has been to give practical advice which can be understood by non-professionals and which can be quickly and directly applied. We have tried to present current scientific understandings in clear, non-technical terms.

Persons who are not in counseling may also benefit from this book. We do not believe that all persons with psychological problems must enter therapy. Many problems can be dealt with by individuals on their own or with the assistance of friends and family. In fact, the purpose of therapy is to help individuals learn to deal with their problems and to be able to leave their therapist behind.

On the other hand, there is a unique relationship in therapy which is often very healing. Reading about learning how to cope does not substitute for adequate psychotherapy for many persons. In addition, some techniques of coping may be so new or different from a person's usual manner of functioning that having a therapist there to explain the skills, demonstrate them, and provide support in practicing them can be necessary. Many psychological disorders directly undermine the morale of persons, taking away their confidence that they can overcome their problems. In addition, depression can diminish a person's concentration, physical energy, and interest. Anxiety often leads persons to avoid dealing with their problems directly. A good example of this is in

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. In PTSD, the client often avoids anything which might remind them of the traumatic event. This avoidance is generally difficult to overcome without therapeutic help.

The book is divided into different types of problems and different types of coping. There are chapters which focus primarily on a particular technique (such as working on negative thoughts or learning to be assertive) and chapters which focus primarily on a particular disorder (such as depression, panic disorder, social anxiety, and so on). While the symptom problems are sometimes written about as if they were distinct from each other, in real life there is considerable overlap among them. For that reason, it will often be desirable to provide two, three, or even more handouts to a single client.

In preparing this book, we were faced with the problem that some techniques (e.g., cognitive therapy techniques) could be included in almost every chapter. We have created separate chapters on cognitive coping and assertiveness so that these techniques and issues will not have to be repeated in chapter after chapter. We have then referenced the core material in later chapters.

Many of the techniques in this book are cognitive behavioral, focusing on working on negative thoughts and changing specific behaviors. This does not mean that other forms of coping may not also be helpful. It simply reflects the authors' orientation and the fact that there are limits to what can be contained in one book. Some of the techniques are the product of the authors' clinical experience, but most of them have been developed through the research and experience of the entire mental health community. We apologize for not referencing and giving due credit in each and every instance. Because the purpose of this book is to have handouts which can be easily read by a layperson, the inclusion of a great number of references would be unwieldy. In addition, the true origin of many concepts is lost in psychotherapy history. Techniques which may have begun with a single individual have sometimes been refined over and over until it is almost impossible to thoroughly document where a particular one originated. We have tried to give credit to many of the major figures in mental health who developed these techniques by including their works in the reference sections at the end of each chapter.

We have had to exclude some problem areas because of lack of space. Some important topics which have not been discussed in the chapter handouts are alcohol and drug abuse, and eating disorders.

We realize that there are likely to be errors and omissions in the chapter handouts despite our best efforts to prevent these. We are interested in receiving feedback from therapists and clients who use these handouts so that possible future editions might incorporate suggested improvements.