

Ways of Uplifting Unhappy People and Depressed Individuals: Making it from Session to Session

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Abstract

All too often, clients have a difficult time maintaining a positive mood and attitude from the time of one counseling session to the following week. Thus, clinicians need to often provide some suggestions for clients to maintain their composure from one session to the next. This paper will briefly review some of these coping strategies.

1. Introduction

Clients are often depressed, some are suicidal, some dealing with anxiety and the therapeutic hour each week is what keeps them going in this tumultuous world. After the therapeutic hour is over, some clients are faced with a return to an unsatisfying job or life and need encouragement to make it to their next therapy session.

Some therapists may encourage their clients to read a book or pursue a hobby as a distraction and others may simply encourage their clients to “hang in there” and reassure them that things may improve over time and that they are making remarkable progress in therapy.

Some individuals may need additional assistance to make it from one therapy session to another. Thus, this paper will focus on some realms which may be beneficial and helpful and also provide a different perspective on life. People might consider examine the joys and pleasures of life and delve into perhaps unexplored realms. Not all of the following will be helpful or relevant but perhaps readers and clients will find some helpful hints of activities to pursue which may help them and provide some uplift between therapy sessions.

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If you are an atheist or agnostic or do not believe in a supreme being, you can ignore the following section and move on to a later paragraph, but for many, religion is a source of comfort, solace, and consolation.

Some people may be encouraged to pray or read daily devotionals (which may or may not be biblical). Some individuals may enjoy specific books of the Bible while others may simply open the book and start “Bible Skimming” until they find something that appeals to them.

One need not be religious or spiritual to be uplifted by Psalms or Proverbs or to enjoy the 4 gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Norman Vincent Peale in his many books used to write a “prescription” for some of his sad and lonely and depressed and anxious parishioners and those who consulted him about a wide variety of problems. I will follow his lead and suggest the following:

Psalm 23:1-6 is probably the most well-known one in the Bible and it has brought comfort and solace to many.

Psalm 27, 1-2 and Psalm 34 18 are both uplifting and provide comfort and solace to many.

Lamentations 3 :25-26 and Isaiah 41:0 are noteworthy.

Jeremiah 29:11 and Deuteronomy 31:8 may assist the weary.

Of course, in the New Testament- whatever version you prefer to use is fine- Matthew 3-10 provides us with the Beatitudes. These things have stood the test of time.

If you do not believe in God, religion, spirituality, then you can ignore all of the above, but some people view the Bible as simply the literature of a time in the past set in a faraway land.

For those who enjoy this type of endeavor-here are 3 additional resources for you:

1. www.manhoodjourney.org
2. www.bayshorechurch.org
3. www.thecove.org

Some people crank up the tunes on their way to work or when they're taking a break, or even while working to mute the blasé thoughts, feelings, and hum drum of the daily grind. Some individuals find this exciting or stimulating and, in some cases, relaxing.

Individuals need to ascertain what music from what generation and what genre appeals to them. One person may enjoy jazz and other rock and roll and another country and western. Classical music can soothe and relax or invigorate with the William Tell Overture- otherwise known as the Lone Ranger Symphony.

Others tap into their creative side - doodling, drawing, and some sketch and may even take up painting as a hobby or distraction or diversion.

Total immersion in any hobby may be beneficial and therapeutic and take one's mind off the current political situation.

Some individuals may begin thinking creatively about problems and solutions. These solutions can run from changing one's perspective to seeing problems as challenges or opportunities for learning.

And others may resort to challenging themselves to 'think outside the box,.'. They may want to learn about divergent thinking or flexible thinking or a totally different philosophical stance.

2. Daily Challenges

This could be as simple as completing a daily crossword puzzle or Sudoku that the individual finds challenging, but not impossible (in their zone of proximity) or thinking about unusual solutions to common problems, or unusual solutions for unusual problems. And of course, dealing with difficult people can become exasperating and frustrating unless one can figure out how to avoid them and/or make a game of it.

Often humor can enter into this equation. Albert Ellis [1] has written extensively on this. People can find fun, humor, mirth, frivolity, jokes and witticisms can be quite helpful. There are books in the library on various forms of humor and comedy.

Shaughnessy [2] has indicated that humor, in his opinion, is the "royal road to wellness" And we can certainly ignore the infinitely small probability of him being wrong.

For those who enjoy food, cooking a good meal, indulging in a special snack or eating out somewhere they find highly enjoyable, or cooking for others can lift the spirits.

Attempting to find the best restaurant that has the best food with the best service at the least price may be challenging and enjoyable. Certain cities, New Orleans, for example, are a rich source of a wide variety of tastes and culinary pleasures and delights.

Sharing a meal with a good friend and discussing a recent movie or television show or book can serve as a wonderful source of inspiration. Further church services can also be uplifting and if the first one does not appeal then one can seek other religions and compare and contrast the preaching and the services.

For some, reaching out to others and sending good morning texts, and even a birthday card or well wishes via a postcard card might be uplifting and might bring joy to another person's life.

For some individuals, reaching out to a friend or relative, planning a get-together (social and something to look forward to) may also be uplifting.

The key in all of it, is breaking the stream of negative thoughts by focusing on something pleasurable and stimulating.

Getting out of one's head, so to speak, and engaging with something outside of themselves is important.

Knaus [3] has written about how to get out of a rut. There apparently are a lot of people who are in a rut so to speak and are unhappy and underemployed and under the weather. In some instances, therapy provides an opportunity to take a good long hard look at where they are in life and what goals and meanings still beckon.

Reading a book (even just a chapter before work), watching an episode of a TV show, or listening to a different radio station or television station can bring a new perspective to one's world.

For the creative mind, writing something - maybe journaling, letter to a friend or family member, the dream they had last night, the beginning of a story, coloring, drawing, or etching - activities individuals enjoy and likely don't engage with nearly as much as they wish they could - a sort of guilty pleasure because so many other 'life' things take priority.

People can write poems and letters to important people to see who responds. For some, the creative process is of itself healing and therapeutic.

Masturbating or having sex, if one has a willing partner, can be a welcome respite from the burdens of the world and perhaps can provide an uplift for the other person as well as burning off some calories. Needless to say-protection is needed in this day of COVID and SARS and AIDS. But solitary pleasure can also be found in simple deep relaxation with a glass of wine or port. Deciding to improve one's health by going to the gym, or simply going for a run, or a bike ride, can be beneficial and therapeutic and can help with weight management.

Whatever the activity, when it's pleasurable and stimulating, brain chemistry changes, endorphins, oxytocin, serotonin and dopamine get released.

There are many "self-help" books, and many of these authors recommend changing one's thinking, beliefs, attitudes, philosophies, or maybe even changing one's political party, church, or job.

For some, planning a trip- be it a long ocean voyage or maybe a trip to a museum or a park can be therapeutic and may even be more enjoyable than a trip to your therapist.

3. The Wisdom of Norman Vincent Peale

Norman Vincent Peale could conceivably be called the first cognitive therapist. Although not everyone is enamored of him, here is a link to some of his most profound sayings."

https://www.azquotes.com/author/11448-Norman_Vincent_Peale#google_vignette

His books are available in most public libraries and some have found his ideas quite helpful.

4. The Ludicrous and Preposterous

Often people have to create their own sense of humor and their own interests. Some are interested in music of the 60s 70s and 80s and others are into television shows of the past. Some of the most memorable were Bonanza, Magnum PI, and the A-Team, and some of us enjoyed F-Troop. Here is a brief glimpse at the show with its opening theme that will live forever:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihcd1XInF24&t=6s>

Playing the theme song from various television shows can engage and excite your co-workers-so play this at the beginning of every day:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIaXl7SqbBw>

And who could forget the original A- Team?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UAO2JBjRRBk>

Doing the ludicrous or preposterous can provide a brief respite from the difficulties of life and enhance leisure moments. And listening to one's favorite songs from the past can do the same. So here is one from Dean Martin:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-2_OstpR5c&list=RDz-2_OstpR5c&start_radio=1

And I know that there are many teachers out there who are discouraged on a daily basis, so just for you, here is one famous substitute teacher.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQaLic5SE_I

5. Kindness

Being kind to others often provides a meaning and a purpose to one's life and can provide an emotional uplift. Viktor Frankl [4] author of "Man's Search For Meaning" has hypothesized that those who have a purpose, a meaning to their lives live richer and more fulfilling lives and meaningful lives. His system of logotherapy would incorporate kindness, being kind to others who are less fortunate than we are. Giving to others, caring for others-this indeed is part of the human experience- being kind to others.

For some, being intimate- and engaging in self-disclosure can be beneficial and helpful and result in personal wellness [5].

A good summary of the work of Viktor Frankl can be found in Shaughnessy [6].

Here is a great song by the great guitarist Glen Campbell about trying a little kindness.

<https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=www.you%20tube%20glen%20campbell%20try%20a%20little%20tenderness&mid=14CF8F864D2A9FE3487214CF8F864D2A9FE34872&ajaxhist=0>

And here is a poem from the third author about the benefits of kindness.

A Shared Kindness

We are gifts to each other

This is how I feel

Do something kind

Go make it real

No act is too small

When given from the heart

Make a difference to someone

You need only start

The joy you will feel

Helping someone out

May actually surprise you

It's what life's about!

Whether friend or stranger

It matters not

A simple gesture

Give what you've got

In the end

Your joy will be theirs

To 'gift' other people

No feeling compares

Take it from me

One day at a time

Open your heart

And feel the "sublime"!

People may forget what you say to them but they rarely forget how you made them feel.

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