Choosing Life: Empowerment, Action, Results!

CLEAR: Core Skill Session 2
Creating A Vision For The Future
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Creating A Vision For The Future

(60 Minutes)

Session Aims:

- To introduce the concept of the Ideal Self and have the client describe characteristics of his or her Ideal Self.
- To assist the client in developing a life goal in order to motivate positive behavior.
- To teach a new relaxation technique.
Summary of Activities:

**Check-In** (10 minutes)
- The purposes of this activity are to set a positive tone for the session, create a safe environment, increase self-esteem, and shape positive behaviors. Goals set during the previous session are reviewed and the activities and purposes of this session are outlined.

**What is My Ideal Self?** (15 minutes)
- The purpose of this activity is to elicit characteristics of the client’s Ideal Self. The relationship between Feel-Think-Do and the Ideal Self is emphasized. The client is asked to identify where he or she needs to be on the Feeling Thermometer in order to think and act based on his or her Ideal Self.

**How Can I Create a Vision For My Future?** (20 minutes)
- The purpose of this activity is to identify specific life goals by drawing and discussing a picture which describes the client’s future based on his or her Ideal Self.

**How Can I Relax?** (5 minutes)
- The purpose of this activity is to teach the client a new relaxation technique.

**What’s Next?** (10 minutes)
- The purposes of this activity are to reinforce today’s learning, set weekly goals, and to motivate the client to return to the next session by wrapping up on a positive note.
Required Materials: Core Skill Session 2

Handouts
- Possible Ideal Self Characteristics
- Relaxation- Visualization

Worksheets
- F-T-D Grid
- Life Goals: What is Important to Me?
- My Ideal Self

Wall Charts
- Feeling Thermometer
- Guidelines for Goal Setting

Laminated Cards and Additional Items
- Paper and markers (i.e. collage items)

Materials Needed in Every Core Skill Session
- Client Workbook
- Goal Card
- Handout: Guidelines for Goal Setting
- Worksheet: Goal Log
Activity 1: Check-In

Time
- 10 Minutes

Activity Materials
- Goal Log

Counselor Note
The purposes of this activity are to set a positive tone for the session, create a safe environment, increase self-esteem, and shape positive behaviors. Goals set during the previous session are reviewed and the activities and purposes of the session are outlined.

Goal Review
- Welcome back! Let’s start off by sharing the positive steps you’ve taken over the past week.
- These positive steps might include the progress you made on your goals, something beneficial you did for yourself, or an important insight you gained about your thoughts, feelings, or behavior.
- The last time we met, you set a goal.

Review the goal with the client.
- How did it go?

In response to accomplished goals:
- Praise efforts and success.
- Relate accomplished goal to F-T-D.
For example:

- Feeling Thermometer: 10
- Physical reaction: “deep breath, tension released in shoulders”
- Thinking: “I can do this”
- Doing: “Completed my goal”

In response to unaccomplished goals:

- Praise any small effort and approximations to goal.
- Relate unaccomplished goal to F-T-D.

For example:

- Feeling Thermometer: 100
- Physical reaction: “shaky hands, tightened stomach”
- Thinking: “This is too much ... I’m never going to be able to do this”
- Doing: “Gave up”

Identify barrier(s) to goal accomplishment.

Counselor Note

If the Goal Was Not Met

What got in the way of accomplishing your goal from last week?

In order to maintain a safe and non-judgmental environment and in response to clients who may lose their motivation by not having accomplished their goals, positively reframe the unaccomplished goal (i.e., “You did not accomplish your goal because you were trying to take care of yourself by not creating more stress.”).

Model goal setting by addressing that perhaps the “right” goal was not chosen the previous week (i.e., “Maybe the goal was too difficult or could not realistically be accomplished within the designated time frame.”). Use this as an opportunity to emphasize the importance of setting realistic goals in order to optimize success.
Goal Review - continued

- Let’s take a moment and record your progress in your Goal Log.

Record the client’s progress on the Goal Log. The Goal Log is where the client’s short–term, weekly goals are recorded. Keep the goal log in the client’s workbook.

- I see you’ve been working really hard. Unless there is something pressing that you feel we need to discuss today, let me introduce today’s session topic to you.

- Remember that our sessions are about looking at how our feelings - meaning our Feeling Thermometer and body reactions - thoughts and actions are related to each other. Understanding how our feelings, thoughts, and actions affect each other can help us to make healthy choices, to be smart in the way we think and act, to have less stress, and to protect ourselves and other people.

- Today we are going to talk about an important concept called the Ideal Self. The Ideal Self is who you are at your best. You will have the opportunity to identify some of the characteristics of your Ideal Self and learn about how you already express many of these characteristics.

- We will also talk about some of the goals and dreams that you may have for your future. Your Ideal Self and your vision of your future will help you make decisions in your daily life and will help us set some short-term goals at our meetings.

- Any questions before we get started?

Answer any questions the client raises.
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Activity 2: What Is My Ideal Self?

Time
- 15 minutes

Activity Materials
- Handout: Possible Ideal Self Characteristics
- Worksheet: My Ideal Self

Counselors’ Note

Elicit values and thoughts of what is important to the client. Explore how one’s concept of the Ideal Self might impact living a healthy life.

The concept of the Ideal Self is used to help the client pinpoint his or her values as they relate to how he or she would like to behave. Identification of the Ideal Self serves as a guideline for behavioral decision-making.

A client will likely understand that he or she already possesses the values of their Ideal Self. The purpose of the Ideal Self is to have clients use these values to make smart decisions about healthy behaviors.

The client is asked to identify where he or she needs to be on the Feeling Thermometer in order to think and act based on his or her Ideal Self.
Introduction of the Ideal Self

Introduce the concept of the Ideal Self.

► The image we have of ourselves as we would like to be—our positive traits and strengths—is called our “Ideal Self.”

► It reflects what we hope and strive to be, not necessarily what we may be now. It may also include some of the traits that we used to have and somehow lost along the way.

► Your Ideal Self is really a kind of goal, and for this reason it is sometimes called your “hoped-for self”—the type of person you would like to become more and more in the future.

► The decisions and thoughts in our lives can be guided by our Ideal Self. For example, if your Ideal Self is someone who is self-loving, you may be more motivated to take better care of your health. Another example would be if your Ideal Self is someone who is responsible, you might be more likely to keep all of your appointments. So as you can see, our Ideal Self can dictate the choices we make, the thoughts we have, and the type of life we live.

► So let’s spend some time getting a better picture of what you see as your Ideal Self.

Identifying Your Ideal Self

Give the client a copy of the Possible Ideal Self Characteristics handout.

► I am going to give you a list of words that will help you in thinking about your Ideal Self.

► Read through the list and see which words describe the kind of person you want to be. Remember that we each have a unique Ideal Self. There is no right or wrong about the traits that you choose as your Ideal Self. Your Ideal Self consists of any characteristics that you value, ones that are especially important to you.

Allow a minute for the client to read the list. Then give the client a copy of the My Ideal Self worksheet.

► Now I am going to pass out another sheet that has five blanks on it.

► I want you to write down five words that you believe best describe what you see as your Ideal Self.
Identifying Your Ideal Self - continued

- You can use words from the list I gave you or use your own words.
- It doesn’t matter what order you write the words in.
- Do you have any questions?

Answer questions, and then give the client 3-4 minutes to fill out the form.

- Have you finished? Good.
- Would you be willing to share something about your Ideal Self? You don’t need to read everything you wrote down, but you can if you want.

Encourage sharing of the words the client wrote on the My Ideal Self worksheet, but do not put the client on the spot if he or she does not wish to share.

Keep the My Ideal Self handout in the client’s workbook. The client’s Ideal Self characteristics will be used throughout the CLEAR sessions. It is helpful for the counselor to be familiar with these characteristics.

Ask the client to identify a recent situation where the client’s thoughts and actions were guided by his or her Ideal Self. Use the F-T-D Grid handout to link the situation to feelings, thoughts, and actions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Thermometer Reading</th>
<th>Physical Sensations</th>
<th>Thoughts</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Can you think of a recent situation where your thoughts and actions were guided by your Ideal Self?
- Tell me a little about the situation. Let’s write the situation down on the F-T-D Grid worksheet.

Distribute the F-T-D Grid worksheet.

- Where were you on the Feeling Thermometer?
- How did your body react?
What were your thoughts? Let’s write them down on the F-T-D grid.

What were your actions? Let’s write them down on the F-T-D grid.

Thanks for sharing. Looking at the chart, what do you notice? How do you think your feelings, thoughts, and actions were affected by each other? How do you think your Ideal Self impacted your comfort level, thoughts, and actions?

Based on the client’s comments, emphasize that we are often more comfortable (i.e., a low Feeling Thermometer reading) when we operate based on our Ideal Self. Explore the link between the Ideal Self, thoughts, and actions.

Let’s look at the flipside. Can you think of a recent situation where your thoughts and actions went against your Ideal Self?

Tell me a little about the situation. Let’s write the situation down on the F-T-D grid.

Where were you on the Feeling Thermometer?

How did your body react?

What were your thoughts? Let’s write them down on the chart.

What were your actions? Let’s write them down on the chart.

Thanks for sharing. Looking at the F-T-D grid, what do you notice? How do you think your feelings, thoughts, and actions were affected by each other?

If you had been acting as your Ideal Self, where do you think you would have been on the Feeling Thermometer? What kind of thoughts would you have had in this situation? How would you like to have behaved in this situation?

Based on the client’s comments, emphasize that we are often uncomfortable (i.e., a high Feeling Thermometer reading) when our actions are not consistent with our Ideal Self. A high Feeling Thermometer reading may distort our judgment and we may lose sight of our Ideal Self. Subsequently, we experience negative, unhelpful thoughts, which then lead to unhealthy actions.
Identifying Your Ideal Self - continued

▶ We will be using this F-T-D grid you just filled out in our future sessions when we talk about our Ideal Self again.

▶ I would like to ask you one last thing before we move on to the next activity. Where would you need to be on the Feeling Thermometer for you to be able to think and act based on your Ideal Self?

A high level of discomfort often makes it difficult for us to think and behave based on our Ideal Self. It is helpful for the client to develop an understanding of the relationship between F-T-D and the Ideal Self.
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Activity 3: What Do I Want In the Future?

Time
- 20 minutes

Activity Materials
- Goal Card
- Paper and Markers (i.e. collage items)
- Worksheet: Life Goals: What is Important to Me?

Counselor Note
Reflecting on the Ideal Self, the client identifies a series of life goals and draws a picture describing the future they want. Then the client discusses his/her goals, the picture, and his/her future.

The purpose of this exercise is to get the client excited and motivated to participate in CLEAR and learn the skills taught in the program by getting in touch with his or her hopes and dreams for the future. This vision of the future is intended to inspire the client to commit to CLEAR.

The life goals discussed in this session may be referred back to throughout CLEAR as a way of reminding the client why he/she is participating in CLEAR.

Thinking About Your Future

- In the last exercise we talked about your Ideal Self, the person you would like to be at your very best. We also talked about how our Ideal Self can influence the thoughts we have, the choices that we make, and the goals we set for ourselves.

- Now we are going to do two activities to help us think concretely about the future.
Life Goals

First, I am going to ask you to think about some of your goals for the future. You can find these goals in your daydreams, in what you think about when you are alone, and in what you talk to your closest friends about. Why do you think it is important for us to talk about your goals for the future?

Get the client’s response. If needed, discuss that having goals is important because:

1. People with goals are usually more interested in taking care of themselves.

2. People who work toward goals are often happier and more likely to have the future they want.

3. People with goals in mind have a powerful reason for sticking around and living a long, healthy life.

Distribute the Life Goals worksheet.

Our first activity involves completing this Life Goals worksheet. There are different types of goals and dreams that people have; for example: education, work, romance/marriage, friends, achievements, and feeling good about oneself. Some suggestions of life goals are listed on the handout, but they are just examples. I want to emphasize that what is important to one person won’t be important to someone else. Each person’s life goals are valuable. I want you to write in your goals. You can make new categories or use some of the categories on the sheet. You don’t have to share your goal sheet with me if you don’t feel comfortable.

Keep two things in mind as you complete this handout: 1) your Ideal Self, and 2) the guidelines for goal setting we talked about last session.

Review the goal setting steps with the client. It is imperative for the client’s goals to be made according to the guidelines for goal setting in order to optimize the client’s success.

Allow five minutes for the client to complete the Life Goals worksheet.

Would you like to share any of your goals with me? I would like you to keep these goals in mind throughout the CLEAR sessions. These goals, along with your Ideal Self, can motivate you to make the best decisions for yourself in different areas of your life.
Life Goals - continued

The purpose of the goals discussion is to inspire the client to reduce risky behaviors and enhance emotional and physical well-being. For example, if a goal of the client is to obtain a college degree, taking care of his or her health is an important step toward being able to attend classes. And, to stay healthy, the client will need to practice safer substance use and sexual behavior.

This is a good time to discuss how and from whom the client receives emotional support and encouragement.

> Would you be interested in working toward one of these life goals in our sessions together?

Have the client identify the life goal he or she wants to work on during the following CLEAR sessions. Ask the client to write the life goal on the Life Goals worksheet.

> We can make one of your life goals a project and set small goals each week toward accomplishing that bigger life goal. This is important because big life goals can feel overwhelming. It helps to start out by taking small steps. Over time, these small steps will add up and move you closer to your big, life goal.

Support the client in setting a small weekly goal toward his or her life project goal based on the goal setting guidelines.

If the client’s selected life goal or any of his or her identified life goals relate to the menu sessions, tell the client that there are additional sessions that the program offers that can support him or her in achieving that life goal.

Picturing Your Future

Counselor Note

An assortment of magazine, scissors, and glue could be substituted for paper and markers, and the client could be invited to create a collage using material cut from the magazines.

> Begin by taking a minute to really think about what you want in the future. Then use a picture to express it.
In addition to a picture, you can also use certain words, short lyrics, or a poem. Be as creative as possible with the resources that we have available.

If you do not think you are a good artist, don’t worry about it. Clarifying what you want in the future is the goal.

After you have thought about what you want in your future, take about five minutes to draw a picture that represents it. Then we will talk about the picture.

Think about what you want in your future.

Remember to be as creative as possible. Don’t worry if you don’t think you are a great artist or that you can’t draw. Your pictures will be unique expressions of who you are.

Are there any questions?

Allow about five minutes for the client to complete his or her picture.

Tell me about your picture.

Have the client describe it and explain each element. Point out connections with their image of their Ideal Self.

How comfortable were you talking about your future? What reading would you give this discussion on the Feeling Thermometer? Remember, 100 is extremely uncomfortable, and zero is not at all uncomfortable.

Encourage the client to share his or her discomfort levels using the Feeling Thermometer.

I really enjoyed hearing about the future you envision for yourself. You brought up some important issues. Thank you.
Activity 4: How Can I Relax?

Time
- 5 minutes

Activity Materials
- Handout: Relaxation- Visualization

Counselor Note
The purpose of this exercise is to reduce tension and negative thoughts. A new relaxation technique is introduced. Relaxation can ensure that a comfortable Feeling Thermometer reading is maintained so that we can stay in touch with our Ideal Self and, therefore, think and act based on our Ideal Self.

- I am going to take you through a brief relaxation exercise that’s designed to reinforce and strengthen your Ideal Self.
- As you’ll remember, in our last session we talked about the importance of lowering our Feeling Thermometer reading when we are extremely uncomfortable so we can better respond to the stressful situation. You also told me earlier today that you would like to be at a <state Feeling Thermometer reading> in order to be able to think and act based on your Ideal Self. This relaxation technique is useful for helping you reach your ideal comfort level.
- Just listen to what I say and follow my instructions as closely as you can.
- Here we go!

Relaxation Exercise
Get yourself as comfortable as possible. You can close your eyes if you wish.

Let your mind become quiet and become aware of your breathing.

Don’t try to change it- just feel it.
In and out. In and out.

Now take a deep breath in.

Let it out slowly.

With each inhale feel the cool air come in and flow through your chest, your shoulders, your arms, and your fingertips.

Exhale out all of the tension. Pause.

Feel your body become wonderfully relaxed. Pause.

Feel the peace in your body. Pause.

I want you to use your imagination and imagine a place that is safe, calm, and filled with good feelings. It’s a place that is not too cool and not too warm—just the perfect temperature.

Take a look around and notice the beautiful colors. Pause.

Listen and hear the soothing sounds. Pause.

Let this wonderful place surround you. Pause.

Right now, your head is clear and calm.

You think light thoughts. There’s no confusion.

Say to yourself “clear mind, light thoughts.”

“Clear mind, light thoughts.” Pause.

Spend a few moments looking around and exploring the tranquility around you. Long Pause.

On your next breath I would like you to wiggle your toes and fingers. Slowly open your eyes.

Go ahead and yawn and stretch.

How do you feel?

Encourage the client to share his or her feelings.

Distribute a copy of the Relaxation-Visualization handout.
Activity 5: What’s Next?

Time

- 15 minutes

Activity Materials

- Goal Card
- Handout: Guidelines for Goal Setting
- Worksheet: Goal Log

Counselor Note

The purposes of this activity are to reinforce today’s learning, set weekly goals, and motivate the client to return to the next session by wrapping up on a positive note.

Review of Session Content

► We are at the end of our session. Before we set our weekly goal, I just want to review what we learned today and share some of my observations about our session.

► Today we talked about what is important to you and identified characteristics of your Ideal Self. We found that you already show many of these characteristics. We then talked about what you envision for your future and found that many things you want in your life reflect your Ideal Self. Finally, we learned a new relaxation technique, which can help you get back in touch with your Ideal Self during stressful situations so you can think and act in a smart way in the moment.

► I want to point out that your Ideal Self and your vision of your future can help guide you in making decisions in your daily life and can help you set both long- and short-term goals in this program.

Praise the client for something positive he or she did during the session. e.g., “I really liked that you engaged in every activity we did today.”

► Now, let’s take a few minutes and think about what your short-term goal is going to be for the next week.
Encourage the client to select a small weekly goal that serves as a step toward the long-term life goal he or she identified earlier.

- **You can think of a short-term goal that you set for yourself as one step toward accomplishing the Life Goal you selected today to work on.** Very often, short-term goals involve getting information and materials, or learning a skill that you might need to accomplish your bigger goal.

- **As you think about your short-term goal for this week, keep in mind the characteristics of your Ideal Self and your bigger life goals.** Our Ideal Self and our future dreams and goals often influence the types of short-term goals we choose.

Because they influence healthy behavior change, the characteristics of the client’s Ideal Self and his or her life goals should be consistently integrated into weekly short-term goal setting.

**Review of Goal Guidelines**

Review the Guidelines for Goal Setting.

**Guidelines for Goal Setting**

- Important to you, and you are committed to it.
- Realistic. Not too hard and not too easy (40-60 on the Feeling Thermometer).
- Brief, specific, and clearly stated.
- Easy to tell when you have accomplished it.

Answer questions and clarify as necessary.

Suggestions for weekly goals: This week…

- Identify a specific situation where you would like to express one of the characteristics you identified as part of your Ideal Self.
- Take a small step toward one of the life goals you’ve identified.
- Practice using today’s relaxation technique to relieve stress and tension in your life.

The client is encouraged to identify two goals: 1) a short-term weekly goal that supports the client’s accomplishment of his or her long-term life goal identified earlier in the session, and 2) a short-term weekly goal that relates to today’s session topic.
Guidelines for Goal Setting - continued

If the client appears to struggle with having two simultaneous goals, the client may select only one goal, preferably related to the session topic. However, the Counselor should not lose sight of the client’s life goal. It is recommended that the life goal be referred to in each session.

Direct the client to the goal log, and have him or her write out the goal in the Goal Log and on a Goal Card. The client should take the Goal Card home as a reminder for the upcoming week.

► We will review your goal at the beginning of our next session to see how you did. I will keep the Goal Log in your workbook. This way, both of us are on the same page when we meet next time and review your progress with your goal.

The Goal Log will be used during the five Core Sessions of CLEAR to document the client’s goals. The Goal Log is visited during goal review to document the client’s progress toward their goal as well as to identify and problem solve around any potential barriers. Note that the Goal Log is also used at the end of the session during goal setting to record the client’s goal(s) for the coming week.

► Great work today. Our next session will be on [DAY, DATE, AND TIME]. You are working hard to make changes in your life and making progress toward reaching your goals. At this point in your growth, it’s important that we continue to meet without a lot of time in between sessions, so I expect to see you on the date set. Before we stop I would like us to share something that we got out of, or what we liked best about today’s session. I’d like to go first.

The counselor should model this by going first.

Acknowledge and praise the client as appropriate.

Have the client identify benefits of participation. Ask the client the following questions:

► What did you like most about today’s session?
► What did you learn that you could apply to your life?
► What could be improved about today’s session?

END OF SESSION