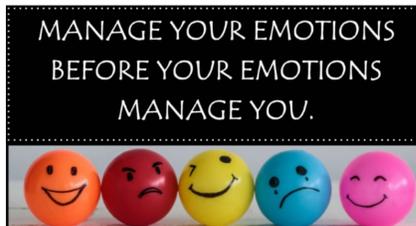




*Building a safe and healthy environment
by effectively educating the community
on positive life choices.*

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CASAC Offices
are located at:

501 W. Third Street
Suites 3 & 4 Sprinchorn Building
Jamestown, NY 14701

(716) 664-3608
Fax (716) 664-3661

and

Greetings!

Even in the best of circumstances, parenting a teen or young adult can be challenging. When substance use enters the picture, you're likely to feel overwhelmed by negative emotions. Whether it's fear of what might happen next, shame associated with the stigma of substance use, resentment that this is happening to your family, guilt that perhaps you could have done something differently as a parent, or grief over lost opportunities that you wanted for your child - these emotions are very powerful.

While there is no magic wand to change negative emotions to positive ones, there are ways to lessen the intensity of the emotion and shorten its duration. With practice, you can learn to disrupt and tame negative cycles. Not only will handling your negative emotions in a healthy way improve your overall outlook, but you will also be modeling healthy coping skills - that don't rely on drugs or alcohol - for your teen or young adult.

Instead of trying to shut down your negative feelings, acknowledge and accept them. The mere act of identifying the emotion underlying your negative feelings can begin to lessen its weight. Our interpretation of thoughts about events, memories, judgments, beliefs, values, expectations and observations give rise to feelings and emotions. This is called self-talk, and it is how we talk to ourselves, either aloud or silently. What you tell yourself in any given moment can be helpful or result in much of the unnecessary upset or distress you feel.

Let's take a closer look at an example of how self-talk related to the same situation can result in three different emotions. Suppose you are meeting a friend at a coffee shop, but she is 20 minutes late.

If you tell yourself, "She's late. I can't believe she's wasting my time like this. I have better things to do than to sit here and cool my heels," the feeling is one of anger. If you tell yourself, "She's late. I wonder if she got into an accident. I hope she's okay," the feeling is worry. If you tell yourself, "She's late. I've been so busy that it's so nice to have a few minutes to myself," the feeling is one of contentment.

Notice it's the same situation, but the interpretation of it drives three very different emotions.

51 E. Third Street
Suite 2
Dunkirk, NY 14048

(716) 366-4623
Fax (716) 366-4624

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Let's look at an example related to substance use: Suppose you learn that your son relapsed. Your thoughts about this situation might include: "I can't believe he did this again. He promised he would stop doing drugs and now it's starting all over. How many times will we have to go through this? What if he never gets well? I just can't stand this anymore." Based upon what you have told yourself, you experience anger, frustration, fear and hopelessness. In looking at the relapse somewhat differently, you could tell yourself, "I know that relapse is often part of the recovery process, and while I'm disappointed, it's a learning opportunity for both of us. We've been through this before and we'll get through this again." While you certainly feel concern and disappointment, there is also hope and a sense of resiliency. Again, it's the same situation, but your self-talk drives the emotions you experience.

Once you've named the emotions and examined the thoughts that led to them, it's helpful to challenge your thinking. Try asking yourself:

Am I over-generalizing? Is this really always true?
Will these thoughts help me solve my problem or reach my goals?

Is there evidence that supports the beliefs I have? Even if it's true, do I have to be as angry/upset/fearful as I am?
Can I think differently about this?

Who can help me think this through?

Am I caught up in worrying about the future (asking, "What if this or that happens?") instead of staying in the present moment?

Asking these questions can help soften your negative emotions and give you the freedom to breathe and think through things in a more useful way.

If you find yourself becoming depressed or extremely anxious, please seek out help from a mental health professional. It may be helpful to find a therapist who specializes in cognitive therapy, a type of therapy that teaches practical ways to cope with persistent and unwanted thoughts.

In the meantime, give yourself a break and try to have compassion and love for yourself.

Source: Partnership for Drug Free Kids

About Us

Since 1974, Chautauqua Alcohol & Substance Abuse Council (CASAC), a United Way partner agency, has provided prevention education and community awareness regarding alcohol and other drugs. CASAC is the only New York State Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) approved and supported alcohol and other drug prevention agency in Chautauqua County. For further information about CASAC's programs and services, call the Jamestown office at 664-3608, the Dunkirk office at 366-4623, or go to CASAC's website, www.casacweb.org.



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