

MANAGING FEELINGS*

OBJECTIVES OF THE SESSION:

- 1) Understand the connection between feelings or emotions and drug use
- 2) Identify and prioritize those feelings that cause trouble coping, or that represent a possible relapse risk factor
- 3) Identify and utilize specific strategies to cope with one problematic feeling

MAIN POINTS:

- 1) Negative feelings can trigger drug use because individuals who are dependent on substances have learned that drugs can help them temporarily avoid these feelings.
- 2) Positive feelings can also trigger drug use.
- 3) Negative feelings can also worsen other problems (e.g., relationship difficulties) or make it difficult to deal with them successfully.
- 4) Common “high-risk” feelings for opioid dependent individuals are anxiety, depression, anger, boredom, guilt, shame, and loneliness.
- 5) Learning strategies for managing feelings reduces the chances of relapse and improves mood.

List the top 3 feelings you need to cope with in order to reduce the risk of relapse to opioid use:

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING DIFFICULT FEELINGS:

- 1) Recognize and label your feelings
- 2) Be aware of how you show your feelings to others
- 3) Identify and avoid triggers of difficult feelings
- 4) Evaluate the effects of your feelings and your coping style both on yourself and others
- 5) Identify and practice strategies to deal with your feelings
 - a. Talk to a supportive person (e.g., sponsor)
 - b. Identify whether irrational ideas are causing the negative feelings (e.g., “I will never make any progress in my recovery.”)
- 6) Modify strategies based on experience.

*Adapted from Mercer et al. (1992). Group drug counseling manual. Unpublished manual, University of Pennsylvania.