

Recorded Bundle for Individuals with SM (Ages 17 and Older)

Potpourri of Tools to Help You Think and Feel More Bravely (Beautiful ACT, CBT and DBT Techniques)

Ruth Perednik, M.A.

Are You Being the True Version of Yourself? 5 Key Questions to Explore on Your Path Towards Adulthood

Meghan Riordan, Ed.S., LPC, Carmen M. Tumialan Lynas, Ph.D., Cathleen O'Leary, M.A., LCPC

Life After Overcoming SM

Audrey Boggs, Psy.D., Chelsea Gamache, M.S., BCBA

What to Know About Medication as Part of Your Selective Mutism / Social Anxiety Treatment Plan

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We tend to believe our thoughts, including troubling thoughts – and these can lead to feelings of anxiety, fear, distress, and sadness. But are our thoughts true? Are our feelings unchangeable? Our thoughts and feelings can help us be brave, to do things we want to do. They can also be defeatist and stop us from living the life we want. Is there any way to control your thoughts and feelings? Can you distance yourself from negative thoughts? The answer is yes! We can help channel our thoughts and cultivate empowering feelings. How? In this workshop, I will show you several wonderful ways to think more positively, feel braver and more worthy, and calm your anxiety. These tools and practices are taken from cognitive-behavioral therapy, acceptance-commitment therapy, and dialectic-behavioral therapy, as well as mindfulness and guided meditation. All have been proven to be effective in lowering anxiety and moderating thoughts and feelings that are holding us back from living the lives we want. In this workshop I will walk you through several tools, give you examples of how they work, and practice some of them together with you. These can be helpful when we are trying to take steps to overcome selective mutism and anxiety, but also when trying to get through the day and feel good about ourselves. I always feel strengthened and optimistic after teaching these tools, because they give me a feeling of power to believe in myself, let go of troubling thoughts and feelings, and cultivate thoughts that will gradually lead me to a more fulfilling life. I will leave you with some exercises you can practice when you are stressed, when you are attempting something that you haven't done before, or when you are having a hard time believing in yourself. I hope they will bolster you, assist you through challenges, and help you see what a precious person you are.

Are You Being the True Version of Yourself? 5 Key Questions to Explore on Your Path Towards Adulthood

Meghan Riordan, Ed.S., LPC, Carmen M. Tumialan Lynas, Ph.D., Cathleen O'Leary, M.A., LCPC

The systemic nature of anxiety can present itself when someone is feeling anxious and those who care about them are pulled to help reduce the distress by removing the anxiety. This can lead to an anxious-avoidance cycle, leaving the anxious person dependent on others to emotionally regulate during difficult situations, rather than learning how to handle their anxiety more independently (Lebowitz, 2020). When emerging adults avoid these difficult situations, they miss out on learning opportunities, such as learning that they can handle coping with the anxiety-provoking first days of school, going away to college, or job interviews. By stepping out of one's comfort zone and learning how to navigate challenging situations, young adults can increase the likelihood of living a fulfilling, satisfying life, and be their true version of themselves. First, this presentation will consider whether or not others' well-meaning accommodations are helping you get closer to your goals or further away by asking 5 key questions: Who, What, Where, When, and Why. These socratic questions will guide exploration and reflection of your current situation (Padesky, 1993). Asking yourself these questions can bring to light who is accommodating your anxiety by taking care of responsibilities for you, what motivates you to take care of these responsibilities yourself, where/when do anxious-avoidance behaviors tend to occur, and why exploring these questions can foster your self discovery and growth. Next, evidence-based approaches to leading an exposure-based lifestyle vs. an avoidance-based lifestyle will be discussed. Strategies to reduce dependence on others and increase one's ability to tolerate strong emotions while staying emotionally regulated will be reviewed, including strategies from the philosophy of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), an evidence-based practice that uses tools to help people live life closely aligned to their values (Hayes, 2006). When an individual's actions do not align with their values, they experience cognitive dissonance. This dissonance leads to a state of discomfort, which is oftentimes experienced when anxious young adults avoid tasks they are capable of for fear of not being able to handle their anxiety, leaving them feeling unfulfilled, disappointed, ashamed, etc. An exposure-based lifestyle, or in other words, stepping out of your comfort zone, provides learning opportunities for you to violate your expectancies of the negative or aversive outcomes you fear will happen. By living an exposure-based lifestyle, you have the opportunity to learn that the expected negative outcome either did not come true and/or is not as difficult to handle as you expected (Craske 2014). When you learn that you can handle difficult emotions while aiming for your desired outcomes, your confidence increases, you live a life that is more aligned with your values, and, most importantly, you live as the true version of yourself. By exploring the socratic questions of Who, What, Where, When, and Why, we will talk about ways to increase mindfulness and have a better sense of where you are now, where you want to be, and how to get there.

Life After Overcoming SM

Audrey Boggs, Psy.D., Chelsea Gamache, M.S., BCBA

Overcoming selective mutism does not mean living without anxiety or challenges, however, both of these things can be successfully navigated by the formerly SM individual. The co-presenters will give examples from their lived experiences after spending their childhood years with selective mutism. Dr. Audrey Boggs, psychologist, will discuss life obstacles after first speaking in public at age 15. She will talk about graduating high school and college while still very socially anxious, getting her first and subsequent jobs, making friends, singing and doing presentations, and speaking up at work and social situations. Chelsea Gamache is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst who was diagnosed with Selective Mutism at age 5. She will share her experience of overcoming selective mutism and the remaining social anxiety that continued to affect her relationships through high school, college and her career even after being told she no longer met diagnostic criteria for these conditions.

What to Know About Medication as Part of Your Selective Mutism/Social Anxiety Treatment Plan

Kristin Rosseau, M.D., Carmen M. Tumialan Lynas, Ph.D

It is not uncommon for individuals with anxiety disorders to feel hesitant about taking medication, and they may prefer to focus on behavioral intervention. While evidence-based behavioral interventions for anxiety disorders do show effectiveness (Piacentini et al., 2014), it is also supported in the literature that a combination of medication with behavioral intervention yields a stronger treatment effect (Piacentini et al., 2014). Therefore, the gold standard treatment for anxiety disorders is medication with behavioral intervention. However, individuals with anxiety disorders may be unaware of the benefits of adding medication to their treatment plan. This becomes more important to consider when working with the emerging adult population facing life transitions (e.g., graduating high school or college, leaving their familiar social circle, starting their new job, etc.). For individuals coping with social anxiety, selective mutism, other anxieties, and exhibiting a pattern of anxious-avoidance behaviors, navigating on one's own can be very overwhelming, increasing the risk for a mental health crisis. The purpose of this presentation is to provide education on what to know about medication before hitting that point of crisis so that individuals with social anxiety and/or selective mutism can make an informed decision about their care, setting the stage for successful transitions into adulthood. First, the presentation will discuss the role of a psychiatrist in treating anxiety disorders, the common stigmas attached to medication and seeing a psychiatrist, and demystify the role of medication in the treatment plan for anxiety. Second, the biology of medication and the neurochemical imbalance that medication treats will be reviewed so that the audience will have a better understanding of how medication helps with managing anxiety and regulating the strong emotions that come with the transitional phase of launching into adulthood. Common medications prescribed for social anxiety and selective mutism will be reviewed. Finally, the logistics of medication management for this transitioning population will be discussed, including understanding the value of having parents as collaborative partners in the patient's care, HIPAA and confidentiality when the patient turns 18, and what to consider/plan for if the patient will be out of state (e.g., college). Due to the hesitation people may feel regarding adding medication to their treatment plan, they may put off seeing a psychiatrist until a crisis occurs. However, learning the options now, knowing what the path looks like, and taking steps early to prevent a crisis can help one feel empowered, rather than hesitant, about their care.