

OVERCOMING STIGMA

Skills to Be Taught

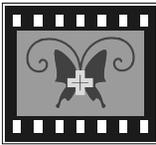
- Understanding the Consequence of Stigmatization
- Decreasing the Strength of “Addict” Self-identity
- Connecting with “Core/Ideal” Self
- Identifying and Strengthening Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Attributes of Healthier, Non-drug Using, Lifestyle
- Redefining the Self as a Non-drug User



COUNSELOR TOOL BOX

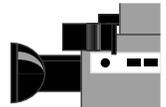
Multi-modal Presentation of Material:

Verbal Didactic presentation of material
Questioning
Group discussion



Visual Visual presentation of major points using slides
Group responses written on flipchart by counselor
Video recommended (not provided): “Eye of the Storm”
Written/Pictorial handouts provided in Client Workbook

Experiential Demonstration: Relaxation techniques
“Mirror” practice exercise
Game: Preparing to act “as if”
Post-group quiz
Stress management/relaxation technique



Materials Flipchart and markers
Overhead projector and slides
Audio tape player and relaxation tape
3×5 index cards
Clock/timer
Pens/pencils
Prizes
“Loaner” Client Workbooks
Handouts:
Group agenda
Group quiz
Joe and Ed Character Profile worksheet
A Mirror into Your Ideal Self worksheet (double-sided)
Certificate of Achievement (as warranted)



Reminders Ensure that all material on quiz is covered well during group.
Quiz material is indicated by **QUIZ ITEM** in the text.
Instructions to counselors are provided in **this typeface.**



Overcoming Stigma

AGENDA

(2-hour group: Adjust times based on beginning time)

- 0:00 **Begin Group** (5 mins)
Introductions – Rules – Time keeper assignment
- 0:05 **Introduction to Topic: Overcoming Stigma** (5 mins)
- 0:10 **Self-fulfilling Prophecy** (5 mins)
- 0:15 **Demonstration: Joe and Ed profiles** (10 mins)
- 0:25 **Effects of Stigmatization** (5 mins)
- 0:30 **Identifying Your “Core” Self** (10 mins)
- 0:40 **Practice Exercise: A Mirror into “Core” Self** (10 mins)
- 0:50 **Creating a Script for “Core” Self** (5 mins)
- 0:55 BREAK** (10 mins)
- 1:05 **Review** (5 mins)
- 1:10 **Giving Your “Core” Self a Voice** (10 mins)
- 1:20 **Game: Preparing to Act “As if”** (20 mins)
- 1:40 **The Value of Self-redefinition** (5 mins)
- 1:45 **Quiz and Feedback** (5 mins)
- 1:50 **Relaxation Tape** (10 mins)
- 2:00 **End**

BEGINNING OF EVERY GROUP (5 mins)

- Group members and counselors introduce themselves and welcome new members
- Group rules are reviewed

Visual

HHRP
GROUP RULES RESPECT

R*elaxation* (complete quiet...no talking, shuffling of papers, or walking around during relaxation exercise)

E*ating* (No eating during group)

S*ober* (don't come to group high)

P*unctuality* (come to group on time)

E*veryone can't talk at once* (no crosstalk)

C*onfidentiality* (what's said in group, stays in group)

T*eamwork* (group members work together towards recovery)

Show Slide 9.1

- Copy of agenda for today's group is distributed to group members
- Ask for a volunteer to serve as time-keeper (to keep group on track and on time)
- Announcement of any graduates from the group today
- Presentation of Certificate of Achievement to those who complete in good standing

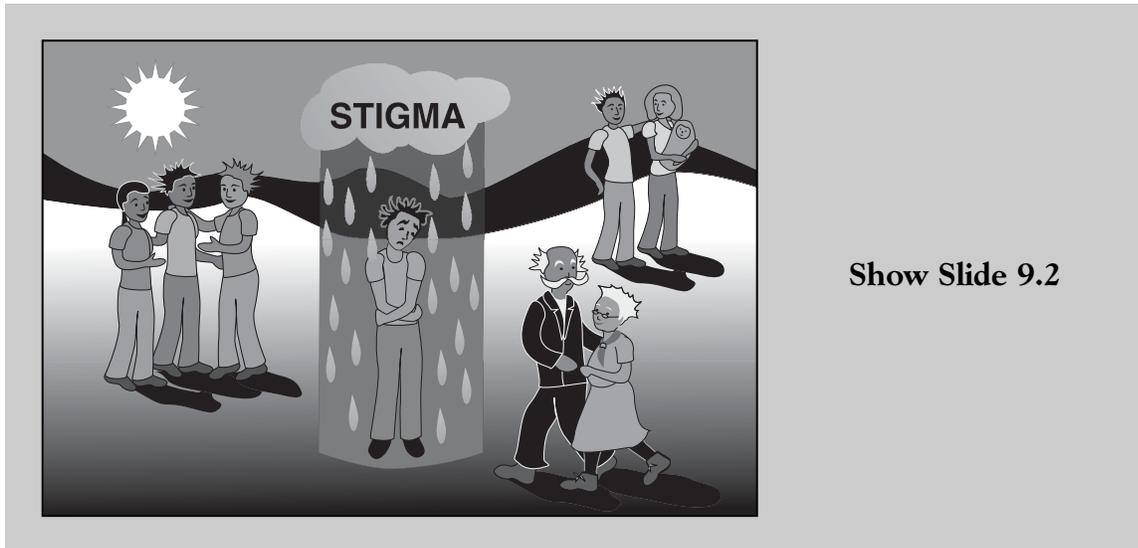
Verbal

Counselor provides introduction to today's topic. (5 mins)

Webster's dictionary defines "stigma" as "a mark burned into the skin of a criminal or slave—a mark of infamy, disgrace, or reproach." When individuals or groups are stigmatized, they are branded or labeled by society as dishonorable, reprehensible. Being stigmatized can influence how you think and feel about yourself and also how you behave. Everyone in this group has probably had personal experience with stigmatization. In our society, individuals suffering from addiction are stigmatized. The word "addict" brings to mind many negative images, and is generally associated with defects in character, criminality, and immorality. This can be an extremely

heavy burden to carry, and can substantially impede your progress along your journey of recovery.

As the slide suggests, it's as if you are walking around under a dark cloud while everyone else walks in the sunshine.



After a while you may begin to internalize society's stigmatizing labels—that is, you come to believe that how other people perceive you must be an accurate representation of your “core” self. You may actually begin to think, feel, and behave just as others expect you to. **QUIZ ITEM** You may also experience shame and depression and engage in behaviors that place you and others at risk for jeopardizing your health, and even your life. The goal of today's group is to weaken the impact of stigma—the negative labels that are imposed upon you by others—and to strengthen your identification with your “true” or “core” self that exists beneath all the labels.

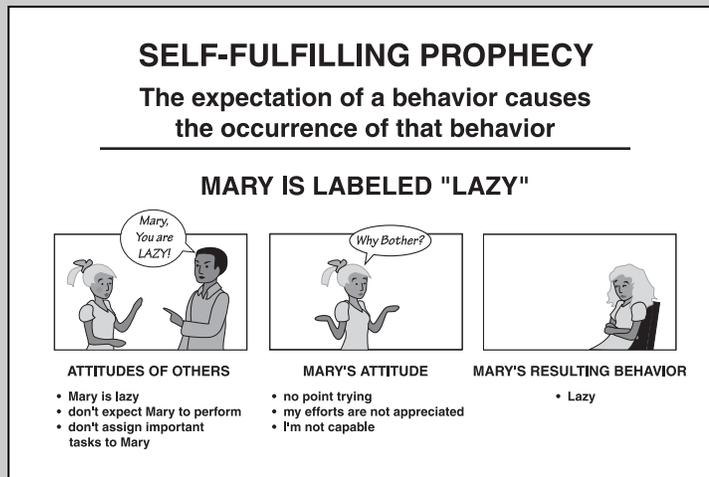
We will begin by considering various examples of self-fulfilling prophecy.

Counselor presents material on self-fulfilling prophecy. (5 mins)

Verbal/
Discussion

A self-fulfilling prophecy is when you cause something to occur because you expect it to occur. So if you internalize a label that is placed upon you by others and begin to behave as the label predicts, your behavior would be an example of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Visual



Show Slide 9.3

On the slide, you see an example. Mary has been labeled as “lazy” by her family. Perhaps Mary’s family placed high value on hard physical labor. Because Mary does not accomplish as much as other members of her family, she is considered lazy. But perhaps Mary is physically incapable of working as hard as the other members of her family. Regardless of how the labeling originally occurred, because of this label and the attitude and behaviors of the family members towards Mary, Mary herself came to believe that she should be a hard worker, and that unless she was perceived by others as a hard worker, she was not worthwhile as a human being. However, her best efforts were never good enough, and she began to doubt that she had the ability to perform these tasks well. She therefore stopped trying, and became “a lazy person.” She fulfilled the prophecy.

Let me give you another example:

Counselor describes the “brown-eyes, blue-eyes” experiment, as follows:

In 1970, a grade school teacher conducted a classroom experiment to teach young white children about racial prejudice. She told the children in her class that blue-eyed children are inferior, lazy, and not very smart. She told them that blue-eyed children could not play with the brown-eyed children and had to drink from a different water fountain. She also told them that brown-eyed children are far superior to blue-eyed children. Brown-eyed children are smarter and work harder. The children then went about their daily lessons. In just a few hours, the work of the blue-eyed children had suffered; they took longer to do their assignments, they seemed unhappy, and

they manifested some behavioral problems. Later when asked why they were behaving this way, the children reported that there was no reason to even try. The opposite occurred for the “superior” brown-eyed children—they felt good about themselves, performed well, and began to disparage the blue-eyed children. When the conditions were reversed later in the experiment, and the children were told that the blue-eyed children were superior to the brown-eyed children, the children reversed their roles, again internalizing the labels given to them, and acting accordingly.

Since this experiment in the 1970s, there have been numerous studies demonstrating the effect of labeling on the behavior of stigmatized individuals.

Note to Counselor: *We recommend showing a 10–15 minute segment from a video entitled “Eye of the Storm” which documents Jane Elliot’s 1970 “brown-eyes, blue-eyes” experiment. It is not included with the materials for this group because permission to duplicate the relevant segment was not provided by the copyright holder. However, the entire video can be purchased from the distributor: Guidance Associates, 1-800-431-1242.*

Counselor leads group in a demonstration of stigmatization, as follows:
(10 mins)

Experiential/
Demonstration

Materials:

Joe and Ed Character Profile Worksheets
Pens/pencils
Clock/timer

Instructions:

I’m going to tell you a story of two men—Joe and Ed—who are applying for the same job. Joe is a heroin addict now in methadone treatment who became infected with HIV by sharing needles. Ed was a thrill-seeker now confined to a wheelchair who was paralyzed in an accident while whitewater rafting. Joe and Ed are equally qualified for the job. That’s all we know about Joe and Ed. The job requires not only the qualifications and work experience that Joe and Ed both have, but also certain personality characteristics and qualities. The interviewers are given a “Character Profile” to complete for each applicant to help them with their hiring decision.

I’m going to distribute the Character Profile worksheet to each of you and ask you to predict how the interviewers would perceive the two candidates. In the first column on the worksheet is a list of characteristics. I’ll read

Overcoming Stigma

each characteristic aloud and you will circle **either** yes or no in the columns labeled Joe and Ed to indicate which of the two job candidates are likely to be thought to have that particular characteristic by the interviewers. Remember to answer as you predict the interviewers would describe Joe and Ed.

Counselor distributes Joe and Ed Character Profile Worksheets and then slowly reads the list of characteristics. After reading each characteristic, Counselor says: Do you think the interviewers would attribute this characteristic to Joe or to Ed? Circle "yes" in either (not both) the column labeled Joe or in the column labeled Ed. Counselor reminds group members that they should respond as they predict the interviewers would respond.

	Joe (the HIV-positive drug addict)	Ed (the paralyzed thrill-seeker)
Courageous	yes/no	yes/no
Mean	yes/no	yes/no
Strong	yes/no	yes/no
Dishonest	yes/no	yes/no
Attractive	yes/no	yes/no
Manipulative	yes/no	yes/no
Ambitious	yes/no	yes/no
Irresponsible	yes/no	yes/no
Trustworthy	yes/no	yes/no
Selfish	yes/no	yes/no
Popular	yes/no	yes/no
Lazy	yes/no	yes/no
Dependable	yes/no	yes/no
Deserves to be sick	yes/no	yes/no

Verbal/ Discussion

Counselor leads a discussion on effects of stigmatization. (5 mins)

Your profile worksheet probably looks like this:

Visual

**INTERVIEWER'S PERCEPTIONS
OF JOE AND ED**

JOE (HIV-positive drug addict)	ED (paralyzed thrill seeker)
MEAN	COURAGEOUS
DISHONEST	STRONG
MANIPULATIVE	ATTRACTIVE
IRRESPONSIBLE	AMBITIOUS
SELFISH	TRUSTWORTHY
LAZY	POPULAR
DESERVES TO BE SICK	DEPENDABLE

Show Slide 9.4

The slide shows that Joe—the HIV-infected heroin addict—was attributed with all seven of the negative characteristics, in the absence of any personal information about the two men.

QUESTIONS:

- Do you all agree that society would perceive these two men differently?
- Is it true that society feels that someone with HIV deserves to be sick?
- Is this especially true for an “addict,” or for anyone infected with HIV?
- Which man do you think would get the job?
- What other negative characteristics are associated with the word “Addict”?

Counselor writes the additional negative attributes provided by group members on the board under the heading “Addict.”

Everyone in this room has to cope with this label and the characteristics attributed to it every day, and some of you may even have come to believe that you really are what this label represents.

QUESTIONS:

- What effect does the label “Addict” have on you personally?
- Does this label really describe who you truly are deep down?

Answer:

- You are **not** the labels placed on you by others.
- So, if these labels are not the real you, who is the real you? Let's go back to the day you were born.

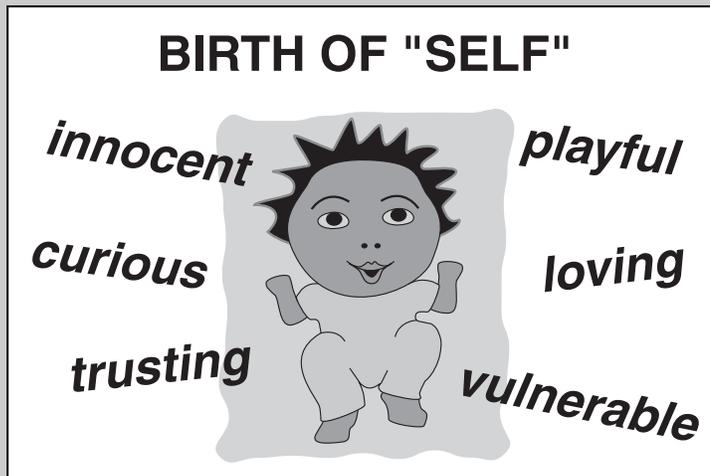
Verbal

Counselor covers material on how to identify your “core” self. (10 mins)

We are going back to the day you were born to see if we can answer two questions:

1. Who were you when you were born? And,
2. What kind of person did that newborn baby have the potential to become?

Visual



Show Slide 9.5

As shown on the slide, when you think of a newborn baby, you probably think—

- innocent, loving and lovable, playful, curious, trusting, vulnerable.
- you begin life as raw potential—awaiting to be fulfilled.
- you have no reason to suspect that there will be any obstacles to fulfilling your highest potential.

Each of us is born this way. Then what happens? Each of us has a need—

- for unconditional love, and
- to be accepted and loved for our “core” self.

Unfortunately, very soon we learn that love is often conditional—that means that we experience love and acceptance only when we behave the way others want us to behave. We learn that our “core” self is not always acceptable, and so other senses of self develop. In order to be loved and accepted by others, we internalize the “shoulds” imposed upon us by others, and our “ought” self is born. This is the person you feel you ought to be in order to receive the love and acceptance of others. This “ought” self may develop into different senses of self at the center of the roles we play, such as student, friend, employee, parent. Each of these roles may be added to your “ought” sense of self. Little by little, layer upon layer is placed on top of your “core” self so that sometimes it is difficult to remember who you really are. You wonder whatever became of that newborn that was so full of potential.

JOE'S "OUGHT" SELF



Show Slide 9.6

Visual

Let's look at Joe's ought self. Joe was raised in a family that placed great value on the external signs of success. Joe's parents had experienced poverty in their own lives, and although they loved Joe, they worried that he would not succeed in life. Joe learned from childhood that he should be rich, successful, powerful, handsome, physically fit, and popular. To be less than perfect was to be a failure. As all children do, Joe tried very hard to internalize the qualities that were important to his parents.

QUESTION: What qualities would each of you include in your “ought” self?

Counselor goes around the room and writes group members’ responses on the board in a column labeled “ought” self.

Verbal

Ideal Self.

Let’s get back to Joe. Joe internalized the need to be perfect; however, he was unable to fulfill his parents’ definition of perfection. As a child, Joe tended towards shyness. He enjoyed quiet time alone drawing and painting, and showed artistic talent; he did not excel in school, and was not physically strong or particularly popular. He never felt comfortable when he attempted to pursue the way of life valued by his parents. Consequently, by the time he reached his teens he was experiencing low self-esteem, guilt and anxiety, and had begun to perceive himself as a failure.

Although Joe’s “ought” self included a number of positive qualities highly valued in our society, it did not include the attributes that Joe had the desire or the potential to express in his life. Let’s take a look at the type of person Joe has the potential to be—Joe’s “ideal” self.

Visual



Show Slide 9.7

As shown in the slide, Joe was born with the potential to experience inner peace and to contribute to society using his artistic ability, and to raise and nurture children. Clearly, Joe’s “ought” self and his “ideal” self are in conflict.

QUESTION: What qualities would each of you include in your “ideal” self that is not included in your “ought” self?

Counselor writes group members’ responses on the board in a column labeled “ideal” self.

Back to Joe. When we left Joe, we were discussing the conflict between Joe’s “ought” self and his “ideal” self.

BATTLE OF THE "SELVES"

Visual

Show Slide 9.8

Let’s look at what happened to Joe as a result of his battle between his different senses of self. As a teenager, he started socializing with other boys who were not doing well in school. Together they used alcohol and marijuana, and their school work suffered even more. Joe dropped out of high school with few prospects. One day, at a friend’s suggestion, Joe tried heroin. The anxiety he lived with was immediately reduced and he was able to enter that peaceful inner world he had always longed for. He was hooked. He could at last experience his ideal self. Of course, this feeling didn’t last long. Soon the drugs were controlling him, and that initial experience of relief from anxiety and the experience of absolute peace was no longer attainable.

When you cannot live to other people expectations for you, or when these expectations do not match your own goals and ideals, you have an imbalance between the “shoulds” and the “wants” in your life, and you cannot fulfill your potential (your “core” self). This can lead to: **QUIZ ITEM**

- low self-esteem, depression, anxiety
- stress and stress-related illnesses
- substance abuse.

This does not mean that other people are to blame for your addiction. It does mean that recovery requires getting back in touch with your “core” self—the person you have the potential to be beneath all the labels imposed upon you. The first step is to identify the characteristics of your “ideal” self and then create a mental image of yourself with these characteristics.

QUIZ ITEM That’s what we’ll do now.

**Experiential/
Practice**

“A mirror into your ‘ideal’ self” (10 mins)

Materials:

Mirror worksheets
Pens/pencils

Therapeutic goals:

Identify attributes of ideal or potential self

Counselor distributes the “mirror into your ideal self” worksheet to each group member.

Instructions:

1. On your worksheet is a picture of a mirror. Imagine that you are looking in that mirror at an image of yourself. Pretend that this is a magic mirror that allows you to see clearly your core self—your “ideal” or “potential self”—the person that you really are beneath all the labels that others place on you.
2. Then inside the mirror—describe your “core” or “ideal” self. Describe the kind of person you would truly like to be and that you believe you would have had the potential to be if only given the opportunity and support. Inside the mirror write down the characteristics you would like to have and the talents and gifts you were born with.

Note: Ignore the areas outside the mirror labeled thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. We will talk about these later.

Counselors may provide a few examples of “ideal” self attributes, if necessary: e.g., healthy, peaceful, creative, loving, confident, generous, intelligent, good parent, spiritual, good friend, artist, athlete.

3. You will have 10 minutes to write a description of your “ideal” self inside the mirror on your worksheet. Begin now.

Counselor walks around the room to provide assistance to group members as needed.

Counselor provides instruction on creating a script for your “core” self. (5 mins)

Verbal

Now we will turn our attention to how you begin to get back in touch with your “core” self—that person that you really are and are capable of becoming underneath all the labels. Begin by imaging that you are an actor who has been given an important role in a play. The character you are to portray is someone with the same characteristics and qualities that you listed when you looked in the magic mirror into your “ideal” or “core” self. As an actor, the first thing you would do is research the role—you would identify how such a person would think, behave, and feel and then act as if you were a person with these characteristics. **QUIZ ITEM**

What you need to do is rather like reverse brainwashing. Brainwashing is a technique used to indoctrinate an individual into a particular system of beliefs. We are all “brainwashed” to various degrees, although we probably wouldn’t call it brainwashing. Changing a person’s beliefs and even self-identity can be accomplished by creating a context in which the individual is particularly receptive, and then repeatedly exposing the individual to a set of beliefs. We all tend to be receptive during childhood and during adversity; however, we are also receptive when in a state of deep relaxation. An example of this is when someone is hypnotized they enter a relaxed state in which they are receptive to hypnotic suggestion.

You can use these techniques in your daily life to get in touch with your “core” self. A positive, health-promoting form of brainwashing is the use of self-affirmations. **QUIZ ITEM** Self-affirmations are positive statements you repeat frequently to yourself for the purposes of changing your beliefs. For example, an actor preparing to play the role of a drug addict may repeat over and over to himself “I’ve got to have drugs to feel good” because this is a core belief of an addicted person. By strengthening this belief, the actor would begin to feel more like an “addict.” He would also attempt to take on the appearance of an “addict” and practice behaving as an “addict” would behave, perhaps by exposing himself to drug-addicted individuals, drug neighborhoods, and drug paraphernalia.

Clearly, you don't want to strengthen your "addict" self-identity. So let's see how you can use these technique to get back in touch with your "core" self?

Let's use Joe as an example again.

Recall that Joe's "ideal" self included being creative, and that his artistic potential was not developed because it conflicted with his "ought" self. If an actor was asked to play the role of "Joe, the creative person" how would he prepare for the part? First, he'd consider how Joe the creative person thinks and feels, what he looks like, and what he does in his daily life.

Visual

JOE'S CREATIVE SELF

THOUGHTS

- I am an artist
- I can express myself
- I can contribute

BEHAVIORS

- Buy artistic supplies
- Draw and paint
- Study art
- Have artistic friends

FEELINGS

- Satisfaction
- Pride
- Contentment
- Inner peace



Show Slide 9.9

As a creative person, Joe's **thoughts** might include:

- "I am a creative person."
(He would have confidence in his artistic ability.)
- "I express my core self through my art."
(He would be proud to reveal his core self.)
- "I contribute to society through my creativity."
(He would value the contribution he could make through his art.)

As a creative person, Joe's **behavior** would include:

- Having the necessary artistic supplies
- Drawing and painting
- Studying art
- Interacting with other artistic individuals.

As a creative person, Joe's **feelings** would include:

- Satisfaction when he paints

- Pride in his creative talent
- Contentment
- Inner peace.

In order for Joe to get back in touch with his “core” self, he would need to act “as if” he were a creative person. AA/NA philosophy tells you to **“Fake it, until you make it.”**

This is how you begin to reclaim your potential. Taking one quality or attribute at a time, you create a life script in which you express your highest potential. Then you act the part until it becomes your reality.

QUESTION: What did Joe need in childhood to enable his “core” self to develop to its highest potential?

Answer:

Joe needed:

- to be told that he was talented and that his talents had value
- the necessary tools and support to express his talent
- encouragement to practice his art
- to experience satisfaction and pride in his art.

Because Joe did not get what he needed in childhood, he now needs to provide it to himself. Again, this does not mean you should blame your addiction on your upbringing. This is not about blame. We all need to learn how to nurture ourselves in adulthood. We’ll talk more about how to do this after the break.

(10 mins)

Break

Counselor briefly reviews material covered before the break. (5 mins)

Review

At your birth, your “core” self was all that existed—you were raw potential just awaiting to be fulfilled. Other selves, such as your “ought” self and “addict” self, developed on top of your “core” self, like layers of an onion, until you forget who you really are under all the labels, stereotypes, and the roles you play. We also talked about how being stigmatized can influence how you think, feel, and behave. **QUIZ ITEM** Stigmatized individuals can come to believe and behave as predicted by the label placed on them—thus

exhibiting a self-fulfilling prophecy. **QUIZ ITEM** Not fulfilling your potential—having an imbalance between your “ought” self and your “ideal” self—can result in depression, anxiety, stress, stress-related illness, and substance abuse. **QUIZ ITEM** Recovery requires identifying the characteristics of your “ideal” self and forming a mental image of yourself with these characteristics. **QUIZ ITEM** Living a healthier lifestyle includes striving towards giving your “core” self a strong, clear voice. We’ll talk about how to do this now.

Counselor shows the previous slide again.

Visual

JOE'S CREATIVE SELF

THOUGHTS

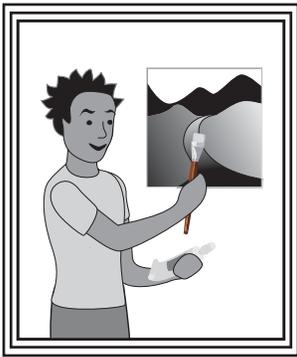
- I am an artist
- I can express myself
- I can contribute

BEHAVIORS

- Buy artistic supplies
- Draw and paint
- Study art
- Have artistic friends

FEELINGS

- Satisfaction
- Pride
- Contentment
- Inner peace



Show Slide 9.9

Verbal

Counselor provides instruction on how to give your “core” self a voice (10 mins)

As we discussed before the break, to strengthen your “core” self and give it a voice, you need to systematically select the attributes that make up your “core” self and then, one attribute at a time, consider what a person with such an attribute would be like. As shown on the slide, Joe selected “creative” as the first “core” attribute to work on, and he identified what a creative person would think, how a creative person would live and behave, and what a creative person would feel. Like an actor preparing for an important role, Joe had to prepare for playing the role of “a creative person.” Before he could actually play the role without effort he had to research it, memorize the script, and rehearse extensively.

This slide shows three techniques that Joe could use to prepare for the role:

TECHNIQUES FOR CHANGE

LIST IDEAL TRAITS

SELF-AFFIRMATIONS

- Create a positive statement
- Use present tense (such as, **I AM** a creative person)
- Repeat statement frequently throughout day
- Leave cards where you see them frequently

VISUALIZATION

- Relax deeply
- Visualize in detail what you will be thinking, wearing, doing, and feeling when you are a person with the ideal trait

ACT "AS IF"

- Act as if you are the person with the ideal trait

FAKE IT UNTIL YOU MAKE IT

Show Slide 9.10

Visual

1. He begins by changing his beliefs. For this he uses **self-affirmations**. This is a technique in which he repeats statements that are consistent with the “core” characteristic he selected. Joe selected being “creative:”

Joe’s self-affirmation might be “I **am** a creative person.”

(**Note:** Always use the present tense for self-affirmations.)

- Joe repeats this statement to himself frequently during the day
 - Whenever Joe looks at himself in a mirror he repeats the statement
 - Joe writes the statement on index cards and places these cards where he will see them frequently (e.g., on refrigerator, TV or stereo, in wallet). When he sees the card he says the statement to himself.
2. Next Joe creates a detailed image of himself as a person with that attribute using **visualization**. This technique is commonly used by athletes and actors.
 - Joe puts aside quiet time every morning when he wakes up to enter a state of deep relaxation and to visualize himself painting and drawing, feeling content and at peace. He does this for 10 minutes at the same time every day, visualizing himself expressing his artistic ability in every detail. He visualizes what he would be wearing, what he would be doing, what he would be thinking, and feeling.
 - He reminds himself to do his visualization daily by placing a post-it note next to his alarm clock and on his bathroom mirror.
 3. **Acting “as if”** is a technique in which Joe will now pretend he is an actor playing the role of “a creative person.”
 - In every aspect of his daily life, Joe pretends he is an actor and acts “as if” he is a creative person. **He fakes it until he makes it.**

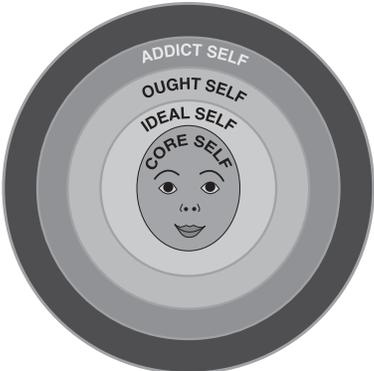
With practice, Joe won't be acting any more. He will actually be a creative person because he will have given voice to that part of his "core" self.

In the past, your thoughts, feelings, and behavior have all served to strengthen your "addict" sense of self. Although you may have become physically addicted to drugs very quickly, you actually didn't become an "addict" overnight. That addict sense of yourself began slowly and gained strength every day. Your thoughts changed, your behavior changed, your feelings changed. The thoughts of a heroin "addict" include: "I can't live without heroin," "I'll do anything to get heroin," and "I cannot cope with being dope sick." These thoughts trigger behaviors such as going to drug neighborhoods, copping drugs, and shooting up using rituals that eventually become a part of you.

Now your goal is to weaken this "addict" sense of self and strengthen your "ideal" self. Not using drugs is one step but, as you know, being an "addict" is much more than using drugs—it is a mindset, a lifestyle, a sense of self.

Visual

What is your "Core" Self beneath all the Labels?



Show Slide 9.11

Before the break, you took a step towards strengthening your "ideal" self by listing those attributes you believe are part of your core self, beneath all the layers. It is time to peel the onion, one layer at a time. Not an easy task, sometimes causing pain and tears, but it is well worth it.

Let's continue by starting our weekly game. This game will help you identify what thoughts, feelings, and behaviors correspond to the "ideal" self characteristics you listed on your "mirror" worksheet so that you can formulate a plan for how you are going to strengthen these characteristics in your daily life.

"Acting as if..." Game (20 mins)

Experiential/
Game

Materials:

- "Mirror into your ideal self" worksheet (completed earlier in the group)
- Blank 3 x 5 index cards
- Pens/pencils
- Clock/timer
- Prizes (e.g., small mirrors, wallet-size self-affirmation cards)

Therapeutic goals:

- To make "ideal" traits specific
- To encourage self-awareness
- To encourage team work and appropriate interaction

Instructions:

1. I am going to divide the group into pairs.
2. Each of you will circle just one of the "ideal" self characteristics that you listed on your "mirror" worksheet. Select the one that is most important to you.
3. Taking turns, you will then work with your partner to identify at least one thought, one behavior, and one feeling that is associated with the characteristic that each of you selected from your "ideal" self mirror. Each of you will write these on the outside of your mirror in the space provided on your worksheet.
4. Then, on the reverse side of the "mirror" worksheet:
 - a. write down a self-affirmation statement that you can use to help achieve that characteristic. (Remember Joe's self-affirmation statement was "I **am** a creative person.")
 - b. copy your own statement onto the 3 index cards provided—these are your self-affirmation cards.
 - c. state where in your home or car you will place these self-affirmation cards.
 - d. state what time of day you plan to do a 10 minute visualization.
 - e. state the memory aids you will use to remember to do your visualization daily.
5. Each group member will read his or her responses to the entire group and briefly describe the planned visualization.

6. You will be awarded points based on:
 - a. The number of thoughts, behaviors, and feelings you list.
 - b. The appropriateness of your self-affirmation statement.
 - c. The number of places you identify to place your index cards.
 - d. Your plan for how you will remember to do your daily visualization.
 - e. The details of your visualization—thoughts, behaviors, feelings—as described to the group.
 - f. The feasibility of your plan to incorporate the attribute into your daily life.
 - g. A bonus point will be awarded for the pair who works best together (i.e., staying on track, helping each other).
7. Your score will be added to your partner's score and the pair with the highest combined score wins the game and a prize. It is therefore in your interests to work closely with your partner.
8. You will have a total of 10 minutes to work with your partner to prepare your responses. I will provide a 5 minute warning, at which time you should have begun working on page 2 of the worksheet. After 10 minutes, I'll call "time," and you will then present your responses to the group. We'll have just 10 minutes to hear everyone's responses, so be brief.

Counselor divides group into pairs, provides 3 index cards to each group member, and refers them to their previously distributed "mirror" worksheet. Counselor reads instructions and game begins. Counselor writes scoring criteria (see below) on the board.

After 5 minutes, counselor informs the group that they have 5 minutes left to complete the assignment. After a total of 10 minutes has elapsed, counselor calls "time." Ten minutes is then provided for group members to describe their visualization and plan to the group. This will require careful time management if group is large. Counselor awards points to each group member as he or she presents to group and then adds the two team members responses together to arrive at the final score for the pair.

Scoring Criteria:

- One point for each thought, behavior, and feeling listed outside mirror.
- Appropriateness of self-affirmation statement (0–4 scale).
- One point for each location for index cards.

- Appropriateness of plan for remembering daily visualization (0–4 scale).
- How detailed was visualization (*i.e.*, did it include thoughts, behaviors, and feelings) (0–4 scale).
- Feasibility of plan to incorporate the attribute into daily life (0–4 scale).

Counselor then announces the winning team and awards prizes.

Counselor instructs group on the value of redefining your “self”. (5 mins)

Verbal

Each of you has now identified an attribute to strengthen during the week. The “mirror” worksheet is yours to keep. Place it in your Client Workbook and refer to it daily. Next week select another characteristic from the mirror and repeat the process until all the characteristics you listed on your “mirror” worksheet are incorporated into your daily life. Soon the expression of these characteristics will become entirely natural to you, and you will have given your “core” self a strong voice. This process of self-redefinition is a very important part of your recovery because your self-identity influences your behavior. For example, when faced with stress, individuals who define themselves as “addicts” automatically experience addiction-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, such as drug use. In contrast, individuals who define themselves as a non-drug-users do not have addiction-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in response to stress. Instead, they use the experience of stress as a signal that a problem exists and that stress management and problem-solving techniques are needed.

Research has found that individuals who are successful in recovery have been able to redefine themselves as non-drug-users. I therefore strongly encourage you to examine your self-identity frequently. Your goal in recovery is to identify with your “ideal,” non-drug-using self and to reduce the strength of your “addict” self-identity.

At the end of every week, think back over that week and ask yourself:

How much did I experience my “addict” self during the past week?

0	1	2	3	4
not at all		moderately		extremely

How much did I experience my “ideal” or “non-drug-using” self during the past week?

0	1	2	3	4
not at all		moderately		extremely

These ratings are on the bottom of your “mirror” worksheet. An additional blank page of the “mirror” worksheet is in your Client Workbook for you to compete next week at home. You can make copies of this blank sheet yourself or you can request additional copies from your counselor. Once you have determined the extent to which you identified with each sense of self during the previous week, make a plan for how you will increase the expression of your “ideal” self the following week and how you will reduce the strength of your “addict” self-identity. Be patient. Remember, it took a while for you to fully identify yourself as an “addict.” It will also take time, as well as hard work, to identify with your “ideal” self.

Quiz

QUIZ WITH IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK (5 mins)

As you know, we end each group with a quiz and a 10 minute relaxation exercise. I’m going to pass around the quiz now.

Counselor distributes the quiz (attached), and reads the items aloud, providing sufficient time for group members to mark their answers.

Detailed feedback:

Counselor re-reads each item aloud to the group, providing the correct answer after reading each item.

1. Is it a self-fulfilling prophecy if you behave as predicted? The answer is **(a)** true. Self-fulfilling prophecy is when you behave as predicted by a label.
2. What can being stigmatized influence? The answer is **(d)** all of the above. It can influence how you think, feel, and behave, and result in self-fulfilling prophecy.
3. What can fulfilling your potential result in? The answer is **(d)** none of the above; a, b, and c (low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, stress, stress-related illness, and substance abuse), can all result when you **do not** fulfill your potential.
4. Is the use of self-affirmations a positive, health-promoting form of brainwashing? The answer is **(a)** true. Self-affirmations are a positive form of brainwashing because you use them to change your core beliefs.

5. How do you begin getting in touch with your “core” self? The answer is (a) you identify “ideal” characteristics and create a mental image of your “ideal” self.

STRESS MANAGEMENT/RELAXATION EXERCISE (10 mins)

**Stress
Management**

We are going to conclude by doing a brief relaxation exercise. I'll be dimming the lights and playing an audiotape. I'd like you to get comfortable in your chair, uncross your legs, and sit quietly with your eyes closed and just follow along with the tape as it asks you to imagine various relaxing scenes. Remember that learning to relax is a skill that takes practice, so if you feel restless at first, just remind yourself that this is a 10 minute gift of quiet time that you give to yourself and to the other members of the group. As we've discussed in this group, this and similar techniques can be extremely useful to you if you incorporate them into your daily life. You can use this tape to help you connect with your “core” self. As you visualize the relaxing scenes, imagine yourself in those scenes, and visualize yourself as a person with the characteristic that you wish to strengthen. See yourself clearly as that person, in every detail -- how you look, what you say, what you think, what you do, and how you feel. For the next 10 minutes become that person.

Counselor dims the lights, says “quiet please,” and begins the tape.

END SESSION

