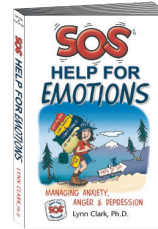
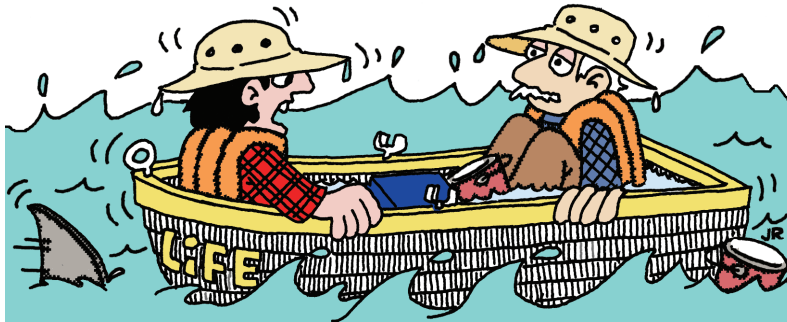


by Lynn Clark, Ph.D.



Getting Professional Help

DEAL WITH THE WORLD AS IT IS,
NOT AS IT "MUST BE" OR "SHOULD BE"



"We have both agreed that our boat should not be leaking and have condemned and damned it! We have also agreed that the world should be fair and that we shouldn't have to deal with this problem! Now what are we going to do?"

It's more adaptive to accept unpleasant reality and deal with it than "shoulding, musting, and demanding" that it not be.

It's important to:

- Accept the fact that there will be periods of time when we'll have reduced ability to manage our emotions
- Know about additional self-help resources, and
- Understand when and how to get professional help

Helping Ourselves Requires Study And Practice

Especially, do the following:

- Deal with the world as it is, not as it “must be” or “should be.”
- Forcefully and repeatedly dispute those irrational beliefs which discourage you from managing and improving your emotions.
Accept the fact that there will be periods of time when you will have reduced ability to manage your emotions. Don't condemn yourself when stressful events pile up, and you begin backsliding and want to give up. As soon as you're able, recover and return to managing your emotions more effectively.
- When bad events occur, change what you can and accept what you can't change.

When And How To Get Professional Help

Mental health professionals can help us to accept what we can't change, to help change what we can, and to help us know the difference.

The journey from childhood to old age is long and often difficult. Bad events occur and our evaluation of those events can lead to long-term anxiety, anger, depression, and other unhealthy and destructive feelings. Our irrational beliefs and unhealthy feelings can block us from achieving contentment and attaining our goals.

If difficulties persist in spite of your best efforts to resolve them, avoid giving in to anxiety, hopelessness, inactivity, guilt, depression, or anger. Contact a therapist or counselor for professional help. Consider the following questions when thinking about counseling.

Q: “When should I get professional help?”

A: Consider getting professional help if you are persistently unhappy or having significant difficulty in social or family relationships. You may also benefit from professional help if you are experiencing significant difficulty in adjusting to work or school demands.

Q: “How do I learn about professional counseling services in my area?”

A: It takes effort to learn about competent counselors and appropriate helping agencies in your community. Ask your physician to recommend the names of at least two counselors. Also discuss the possible benefit of a physical examination since various medical conditions can cause emotional difficulties.

Other sources of information about therapists or agencies include the clergy or friends. Most telephone crisis or help lines and community mental health centers are valuable sources of information. Telephone directories list psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists, marriage and family counselors, and clinical social workers.

Professionals who offer therapy and counseling include: psychiatrists (M.D.), psychologists (Ph.D., Psy.D., M.A., or M.S.), clinical social workers (M.S.W., L.C.S.W.), and licensed counselors. Most states require that mental health professionals be certified or licensed.

Q: “What do I ask the counselor during our first contact?”

A: After obtaining the names of a couple of counselors or counseling services, you’ll need to telephone a counselor or an agency. If the counselor is in independent practice ask to speak directly with the counselor. Briefly, tell the counselor the nature of your difficulties. Mention that you understand that cognitive therapy can be particularly helpful. Also say you have been reading *SOS Help For Emotions* which has a cognitive therapy orientation.

Ask if the counselor can help individuals with the difficulties you have described. If not, ask whom she would recommend. Inquire about her training, experience, and certification for offering counseling or therapy.

Ask about the cost of each visit, the length of counseling sessions, how many visits will probably be necessary, and over what period of time. At least six to ten sessions are usually necessary.

When first beginning counseling or therapy, it's important to schedule weekly visits of at least 45 minutes duration. It's not helpful to begin counseling with once a month sessions or with sessions lasting only 20 or 30 minutes. Most psychiatrists do not have the time to see clients in regular counseling or therapy sessions. For counseling they usually refer their clients to counselors and therapists.

Q: *“Is medication for anxiety or depression helpful?”*

A: Antianxiety or antidepressant medication often can help anxiety, depression, anxiety disorders, and depressive disorders. However, it's important to start counseling along with medication.

The choice of whether or not you take medication is with you and a physician. Only a psychiatrist or other physician can prescribe medication. Most therapists have a working relationship with a physician who will evaluate clients for medication.

Q: *“How do I pay for professional services?”*

A: Counseling and therapy cost money, but so do health care, education, transportation, entertainment, eating out, and vacations. Many health plans pay for therapy or for a given number of sessions. Check with your insurance company or have your therapist check. Also, consider paying for sessions yourself.

Q: *“Do most therapists use Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy or another cognitive behavior therapy approach in helping clients?”*

- A: Considerable evidence supports the value of cognitive behavior therapy approaches. Therapists of various orientations include methods from Rational Emotive behavior Therapy and cognitive behavior therapy in their practice. A number of effective treatments are used to help clients. The effectiveness of therapy largely depends on the training and experience of the therapist, as well as, on the effort of the client.

“No progress in therapy!”

Jennifer told me how she felt like “such a failure” because she had made “no progress in therapy” even though she had been meeting with a psychiatrist and receiving medication for nearly two years.

I asked, “How often do you see him?” She replied, “once a month.” “How long are your appointments,” I inquired. Jennifer said, “About 10 minutes. He asks me how I’m doing, writes some notes, hands me another prescription for medication, and then I leave.”

I was disappointed at what I heard! Jennifer actually is getting “medication only,” but believes she also is getting therapy. I explained that individual therapy sessions are usually 50 minutes with group sessions being longer. I suggested that she talk with her psychiatrist about finding a way to receive talking therapy, as well as medication.

Psychiatrists who regularly meet with patients, but only offer medication due to time constraints, are usually willing to arrange for their patients to also meet with a counselor for talking therapy.

Four Ways To Receive Help

- **Individual therapy** – A therapist meets with one client in individual therapy. In cognitive behavior therapies, clients are asked to study cognitive therapy self-help materials such as *SOS Help For Emotions*.*

- **Group therapy** – A therapist meets with several individuals in group therapy. Group therapy is often

recommended after individual therapy sessions have been completed. It's more cost efficient than individual therapy and has other advantages as well. Individuals gain experience helping each other to recognize and apply principles such as the *three major musts*, the *five hot links*, *disputing irrational beliefs*, *changing demands into preferences*, etc. The group can help individuals identify feelings which are at a low level of awareness. Cognitive therapists usually ask group members to study cognitive self-help materials.

- **Marriage counseling** – *The counselor meets with both partners in marriage counseling or relationship counseling.* Improving the irrational beliefs and low frustration tolerance in both partners can help improve a relationship.

- **Family therapy** – *A therapist meets jointly with all members of a family in family therapy.* Many family therapists believe the best way to resolve both individual problems and relationship problems is by meeting with all family members at one time.

Mental Health Organizations

Consider contacting the following organizations for information about adjustment problems, emotional disorders, counseling, therapy, or self-help methods (Hales & Hales, 1995). Most of these organizations will provide printed material about emotional problems, disorders, or treatments. In some cases they provide names of therapists and self-help groups.

Anxiety Disorders Association of America
11900 Parklawn Drive, Suite 100, Rockville, MD 20852. Telephone (301)231-9350. For anxiety disorders. <<http://www.adaa.org>>

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
Colonial Place Three, 2107 Wilson Blvd, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22201. Telephone (800) 950-6264. <<http://www.nami.org>>
Self-help and advocacy organization for persons with a variety of mental disorders and for their families.

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TO MAN



"Oh, I don't need a book for improving myself! What have you got for improving others? I've got a list here of people who need to change."

National Depressive and Manic-Depressive Association 730 North Franklin Street, Suite 501, Chicago, IL, 60610. Telephone (800) 826-3632. Manic-Depressive Disorder is also called Bipolar Disorder. <<http://www.ndmda.org>>

National Family Caregivers Association
10400 Connecticut Ave, Suite 500, Kensington, MD 20895. Telephone (301) 942-6430. This organization is especially for families of individuals with disorders. <<http://www.nfcacares.org>>

As previously mentioned, the basis of *SOS Help For Emotions: Managing Anxiety, Anger, And Depression* is rational emotive behavior therapy. More information about REBT is available from the following organization.

Albert Ellis Institute For Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, 45 East 65th Street, New York, NY 10021. Telephone is (212)535-0822 or (800)323-4738. Ask for a catalog. The web site is <<http://www.rebt.org>>

ACCEPT THE FACT THAT
THERE WILL BE PERIODS OF TIME
WHEN YOU WILL HAVE REDUCED ABILITY
TO MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS.

GRANT ME
SERENITY TO ACCEPT THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE,
COURAGE TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN,
AND
WISDOM TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.

The Merck Manual Of Medical Information: Second Home Edition at www.merck.com/pubs/mmanual is my favorite book and website for information on health problems and treatments. The website is a valuable free resource, although somewhat technical.