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Customizable Soft-Skills Courseware

Challenging Negative Attitudes

Taking Control of Pessimistic Perspectives
and Stressful Situations



Instructor Guide

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Instructional design and learning philosophy

We are committed to providing the best core-skills content possible for Instructor-Led Training (ILT). The following principles are applied in the development of programs:

Sound Instructional Design

All course content is developed using a variety of research techniques. These include:

- Brainstorming sessions with target audience
- Library research
- Online research
- Customer research (focus groups, surveys, etc.)
- Subject Matter Experts (SME)
- Interviews with trainers

Expert instructional designers create imaginative and innovative solutions for your training needs through the development of powerful instructional elements. These include:

- Learning objectives — effective tools for managing, monitoring and evaluating training
- Meaningfulness — connects the topic to the students' past, present, and future
- Appropriate organization of essential ideas — helps students focus on what they need to know in order to learn
- Modeling techniques — demonstrate to students how to act and solve problems
- Active application — the cornerstone to learning — helps students immediately apply what they have learned to a real-life situation
- Consistency — creates consistent instructions and design to help students learn and retain new information
- Accelerated learning techniques — create interactive, hands-on involvement to accommodate different learning styles

Application of Adult Learning Styles

Adults learn best by incorporating their personal experiences with training and by applying what they learn to real-life situations. Our experienced instructional designers incorporate a variety of accelerated learning techniques, role-plays, simulations, discussions, and lectures within each course. This ensures that the learning will appeal to all learning styles and will be retained.

Please note: Only the pages highlighted in yellow below are those featured in this preview.

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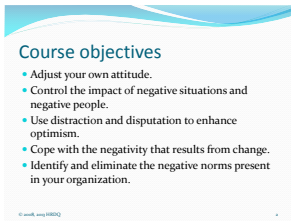
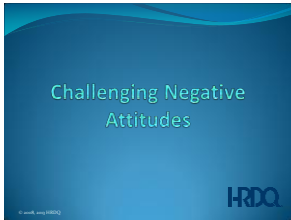
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Course objectives

Successful completion of this course will increase your knowledge and ability to:

- ◇ Adjust your own attitude regarding your work situation
- ◇ Control the impact of negative situations
- ◇ Deal with negative people more effectively
- ◇ Determine how the explanatory styles contribute to pessimism or optimism
- ◇ Practice using disputation to enhance your optimistic side
- ◇ Discriminate between situations that call for optimism versus pessimism
- ◇ Use specific coping tools for dealing with change
- ◇ Identify the negative norms present in your own organization, department, or team
- ◇ Use a four-step process to eliminate negative organizational norms

Chapter One



ADJUSTING YOUR OWN ATTITUDE

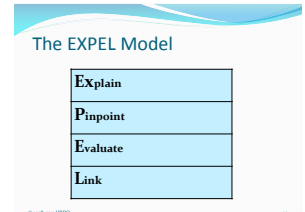
Analyzing reactions

The EXPEL Model

Take a moment to recall a situation that caused you to react negatively or caused you to feel negative. Then analyze that situation using the EXPEL model shown here. The first step is to analyze what happens when negativity takes over. The four steps in the model are explained below.

- ◇ **Explain:** Restate the facts and include your self-talk: What was going on inside your head? How were you explaining the situation to yourself? What were your inner thoughts?
- ◇ **Pinpoint:** Pinpoint the emotional response connection: How were you feeling? Mad? Frustrated? Ignored?
- ◇ **Evaluate action:** Tell what action you took. Did you yell at someone? Did you leave? Consider alternatives. What else could you have done?
- ◇ **Link to self-esteem:** How did you feel when it was all over? Were you happy with the outcome? Did you feel better about yourself?

Four steps
Explain
Pinpoint
Evaluate
Link



You can transition by talking about how you can have a positive attitude and outlook and still be touched by negativity in a variety of situations.

Explain that handling negative situations requires the ability to EXPEL negative thinking and to respond more positively.

Give an example that relates to a personal negative experience you have had before you ask participants to work on the information on this page. Or, use something like a person cutting you off in traffic, or waiting in a long line at the post office while on your lunch hour.

Explain each step of the EXPEL model. Be sure not to get into how you can gain control of negativity on this page, this is just an analysis.

Activity — Have participants work individually on a negative experience. Ask them to share what happened with a partner. This is critical because their explanation to a partner will reveal their true self-talk and their emotional reaction.

The four types of negative people

Negative people can be classified into four categories: whiners, complainers, blamers, and defenders. Each portrays a negative attitude and has a different motivation.

Handling Whiners

The Whiner sounds like this, "Nobody loves me; everybody hates me." Their motivation is to get sympathy.

Characteristics	Common language
Chronically pessimistic.	"Things will never change...."
Takes everything personally.	"Nobody cares about me..."
Full of hopelessness and despair.	"Everyone takes advantage of me..."
Helpless and gloomy.	"This isn't fair..."

Response tips and techniques

To better deal with Whiners, try the tips listed below.

- ◇ Acknowledge the Whiners' hopelessness and despair.
- ◇ Indicate concern for them.
- ◇ Ask: "How are you handling this?"
- ◇ Get good at saying, "That's too bad..." or "That's a shame..." and walk away.


Give each student a 3 x 5 index card. Ask each person to write a description of a person they deal with whom they consider to be negative. The description needs to include a specific situation, specific characteristics, behavior and language. No names.

Review descriptions of each type of negative person. Ask participants to label "their" negative person according to the explanations you provided. Ask participants to put their cards in a bowl or a bag. Each person will then "draw" another person's card. The person who now holds the card will roleplay with a partner the various ways to respond to this negative person.

Participants should use the tips and techniques section for assistance in the roleplay.

Tips for whiners

- Acknowledge the Whiner's hopelessness and despair.
- Indicate concern for them.
- Ask: "How are you handling this?"
- Say: "That's too bad. What a shame."



Your explanatory mode: optimistic or pessimistic

For this activity, imagine you have been stopped by a police officer for speeding on a busy highway during rush hour. (Or recall the last time this happened to you!) On the lines below, write how you would explain the situation, including how you think you would be feeling.

Evaluate your explanatory style by placing a check mark next to the viewpoint that best represents how you felt.

Optimistic		Pessimistic	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your explanation included statements that looked at the situation as being temporary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your explanation included statements that looked at the situation as being permanent.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your explanation included statements that focused on the specifics.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your explanation included statements that were universal.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your explanation included statements that identified the incident as being isolated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your explanation included statements that personalized the situation as something that always happens to you.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Your explanation included statements that assumed your entire life would NOT be affected.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Your explanation focused on taking personal blame for the cause of the bad events or blaming other people for what happened.

Pessimism vs. optimism

Optimistic	Pessimistic
Situation is temporary	Situation is permanent
Focus on specifics	Universal statements
Isolated incident	Recurring incident
Entire life is not affected	Blame self or others for cause

Have participants complete the exercise at the top of the page. The purpose is to give them a glimpse into their tendency toward being more pessimistic or optimistic. Encourage them to include their inner explanations, things like, "It figures, cops are always out to get me," or "That cop must have been overdue to give out a ticket," or "I really need to watch my speed on this stretch of highway."

Next, ask participants to evaluate their explanatory style by choosing the statement that best describes how they were thinking at this particular moment.

Understanding three dimensions of explanatory styles

Pervasiveness

Pervasiveness is defined as the space an event is allowed to take up in a person's time. Universal explanations produce all-around helplessness and specific explanations produce helplessness *only* in the troubled area.

Finding temporary and specific causes for bad events is the core of hope. Temporary causes limit helplessness in time and specific causes limit helplessness in the original situation. On the other hand, permanent causes produce helplessness far into the future.

Explaining bad events	Explaining good events
<p>Pessimist: Makes universal explanations for failures and gives up on everything when failure strikes in one area. For example: “All managers are unfair.” “I’m unattractive.” “Meetings are useless and we never get anything done.”</p> <p>Optimist: Makes specific explanations that relate to a single part of their life. For example: “Max is an unfair manager in this company.” “I’m unattractive to him.” “This meeting is useless and we’re not getting anything done.”</p>	<p>Pessimist: Makes specific explanations for good events and believes they have no impact on other areas or situations in life. For example: “I’m smart at math.” “My programmer knows about Java.” “I was engaging at that meeting.”</p> <p>Optimist: Makes universal explanations for good events and believes they will enhance everything they do. For example: “I’m smart.” “My programmer knows computers.” “I’m engaging.”</p>

Permanence is about time—how long a person gives up after a defeat; pervasiveness is about space. Whether or not we have hope in life is dependent upon our degree of pervasiveness and permanence. Add personal examples as time permits.

People who make permanent and universal explanations for problems tend to collapse under pressure—usually for a long time and across all situations.

Identifying permanent and universal causes for bad events is the core of despair.

Pervasiveness—bad events

Pessimist:
Giving up on everything when failure strikes in one area.
Optimist:
Specific explanations that relate to one area and moving forward in other areas.



Pervasiveness—good events

Pessimist:
Specific explanations that have no impact on other areas of life.
Optimist:
Universal explanations that enhance everything one does.

Identifying characteristics of pessimism and optimism

Both pessimism and optimism have benefits and advantages. The characteristics of pessimism and optimism are listed in the table below.

Pessimism	Optimism
Promotes depression	Promotes positive thinking
Produces inertia	Produces activity
Causes bad feelings	Causes good feelings
Results in self-fulfilling failures	Results in attaining success
Associated with poor physical health	Associated with good physical health

List any possible benefits of pessimism.

List any possible drawbacks of optimism.

Ask participants to think about the last bad day they experienced. Have them place a check mark next to the characteristics of pessimism they experienced. Then, ask participants to reflect upon one of the best days they have ever experienced. Again, ask them to place a check mark next to any of the characteristics of optimism they experienced. Then ask them to brainstorm with two other people and come up with at least five possible benefits of pessimism and five possible drawbacks of optimism.

Possible benefits of pessimism include: may create a problem-solving situation which leads to innovation, it can stop certain situations from getting worse, or it may prevent you from making bad investment deals.

Possible drawbacks of optimism include: overly optimistic team members can create groupthink, creates a failure to take action or risks, and complacency may help your competition become more innovative.

Characteristics of pessimism

- Promotes depression.
- Produces inertia.
- Causes bad feelings.
- Causes self-fulfilling failures.
- Associated with poor physical health.

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Characteristics of optimism

- Promotes positive thinking.
- Produces activity.
- Causes good feelings.
- Attains success.
- Associated with good health.

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Debrief by getting feedback from the group.

Circadian cycles and optimism

Ask participants to jot down the times during the day when they feel the most optimistic.

Use something like flowers that open during the day and close at night as an example of Circadian Cycles.

This same cycle impacts women during their menstrual cycle, causing more depression or pessimism at various times of the month.

You may want to incorporate a discussion about PMS, perimenopause and menopause as it relates to both men and women.

The circadian cycle is a rhythm cycle based on 24-hour intervals. It is exhibited in many organisms. In accordance with the circadian cycles, we also have a Basic Rest and Activity Cycle (BRAC) which makes us most pessimistic around 4:00 in the afternoon and around 4:00 in the morning. Our BRAC also makes us experience our “highs” in the late morning and early evening. This can vary from person to person.

Point out that paying attention to when you are most optimistic and most pessimistic can help you gauge the appropriate time to make high and low-risk decisions.

During the lows of our BRAC we are more likely to be depressed.

- ◇ People are more depressed when they wake up.
- ◇ People become more optimistic as the day wears on.
- ◇ The Basic Rest and Activity Cycle affects optimism.

Depression Cycles

- ◇ Rhythms throughout the day
- ◇ Rhythms throughout the month

We Need Both!

- ◇ Pessimism pulls us back from risky exaggerations of optimism.
- ◇ Pessimism makes people think twice.
- ◇ Optimistic moments give us plans, dreams, and hope.
- ◇ Optimism gives dreams room to flourish.
- ◇ We would never attempt anything without optimism.

Two types of organizational norms

Identify the norms that are present in your organization, your department, and your team by reading through this list of stated and unstated norms. Place an “O” next to the organizational norms; a “D” next to departmental norms; and a “T” next to team norms.

Positive vs. negative norms	
“We’re proud of our organization, the people in it and the products we produce.”	
“I just work here.”	
“We believe in performance excellence.”	
“I’ll do what I need to do to get by.”	
“We’re a team and we want everyone to succeed.”	
“It’s everyone for themselves here — watch out for #1.”	
“We care about our people, and we want to nurture them.”	
“Do what you’re told or there will be consequences.”	
“Our goal is to be profitable and effective.”	
“I’m breaking my back for them, and they’re reaping all the benefits.”	
“We strive to create mutual respect; we value and treat each other accordingly.”	
“You scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours.”	
“Honesty and integrity are part of our core values.”	
“Management never walks their talk.”	
“We constantly strive for a better way to do things; anticipating and enjoying change.”	
“We change for the sake of change, often fixing things that aren’t broken.”	

It is important for participants to discriminate between the climate in the organization, on their team and in their department. It’s possible for all three of these climates to be very different.

Activity — Tell participants to identify the norms in their workplace. Read the statements in the table and place an “O” next to the statements that represent an organizational norm, a “D” next to departmental norms, and a “T” next to team norms.

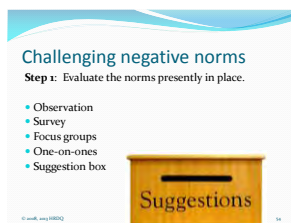
When finished, ask them to determine where the majority of their answers lie for their organization, for their department and for their team.

Challenging negative norms using a four-step process

Review the four-step process to challenge negative norms.

Suggest participants start with the normative indicators listed, but ask them to add other indicators to the list as needed. Ask individuals who have worked on changing norms to contribute other possible indicators.

Brainstorm with the group to add to the list of methods for evaluating negative norms. List them on a flip chart or white board.



Activity — Ask participants to evaluate the negative norms that are present in their organizations. They will list them on the next page and work with these through the four-step process.

A four-step process can be applied to challenge and change negative norms in an organization, department or a team. The steps are to evaluate the negative norms, select positive norms to replace them, identify specific behaviors, and develop strategies.

Step 1: Evaluating negative norms

Evaluate the negative norms present within your organization, department, or team using these normative indicators:

- ◇ Organizational, departmental, team pride
- ◇ Investment in excellence
- ◇ Teamwork and cooperation
- ◇ Participation/acceptance of coaching and training
- ◇ Communication and problem resolution
- ◇ Levels of trust for managers and leaders
- ◇ Attitude toward innovation and change
- ◇ Indicators specific to your organization
- ◇ Indicators specific to your department
- ◇ Indicators specific to your team
- ◇ Other indicators

Methods of evaluating negative norms:

- ◇ Observation
- ◇ Survey
- ◇ Focus groups
- ◇ One-on-one interviews
- ◇ Suggestion box

Course review

1. Locating new opportunities and work on changing your attitude.
2. A, B, C, D, and F
3. B
4. Challenge perceptions, alter self-talk, monitor your reactions and question your beliefs
5. Whiner: sympathy
Complainer: attention
Blamer: avoids responsibility
Defender: self-protection

1. The two choices for taking responsibility for your attitude are:

2. Locating new opportunities requires that you evaluate which of the following? Select all that apply.

- a. Things you really want to do
- b. Things you really like to do
- c. Types of people you enjoy
- d. Things you are skilled at doing
- e. Amount of education you have
- f. Experiences that give you satisfaction

3. When analyzing your reaction to negative situations, it is important to recognize the link between your self-talk and which of the following?

- a. Actions taken
- b. Your emotional response
- c. The available alternatives

4. List the four steps that can be used to control the impact of negative situations.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

5. Identify the motivation behind the behavior of each of the negative people discussed.

Behavior	Motivation
Whiner	
Complainer	
Blamer	
Defender	

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