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# 15

## Practicing Emotional Strengthening: Principles of Everyday Healthy Living (Session 10 of the Treatment Manual)

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*Let your mind be like a tightly woven net to catch emotions and feelings that come, and investigate them before you react.*  
Ajahn Chah (Thai Buddhist Monk; 1918–1992)

Session 10 helps clients further cultivate inner strength by focusing on emotional strengthening. In doing so, the session discusses balancing positive and negative emotions, understanding the principles of everyday healthy living, and practicing these principles to improve physical and mental health. The session emphasizes that all feelings and emotions are natural and normal. However, depression is associated with lack of balance and an overabundance of negativity. This session helps clients let go of negative cycles by focusing on principles that promote health and well-being.

The session goals include:

- Weekly check-in and review of take-home exercises;
- Understand emotional strengthening;
- Understand principles of everyday healthy living;
- Practice principles of everyday healthy living;
- Use the “climbing the mountain” technique for internal strengthening;
- Review goals and markers of improvement;
- Complete internal strengthening exercises before next session.

These session goals fall within the following chapter goals:

- Continue to consolidate gains through the use of weekly take-home exercises and practice
  - Weekly check-in and review of take-home exercises
- Psychoeducation about emotional strength and balance
  - Understand emotional strengthening
- Integrating extant cultural strengths and philosophies of life
  - Understand principles of everyday healthy living
  - Practice principles of everyday healthy living
- Use the “climbing the mountain” technique for internal strengthening
  - Complete internal strengthening exercises before next session
- Reviewing client goals and markers of improvement.

## **CHAPTER GOAL #1: CONTINUE TO CONSOLIDATE GAINS THROUGH THE USE OF WEEKLY TAKE-HOME EXERCISES AND PRACTICE**

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Similar to other chapters, a major emphasis of the treatment program is to continue practicing various skill sets and take-home exercises. This helps clients consolidate gains and experience the benefits of therapy, which, in turn, facilitates client engagement and decreases the likelihood of premature dropout from the program.

### **Weekly Check-In and Review of Take-Home Exercises**

When conducting weekly check-ins and reviewing take-home exercises, therapists ask clients how their week went so that they can get an overview of the types of difficulties the client struggled with during the previous week. This information is critically important for shaping examples and applying what clients learn in the various sessions to their daily lives. Tailoring examples and metaphors to resonate with the current life difficulties clients are experiencing can help individuals feel heard and cared about. It also helps troubleshoot barriers that led to exercise in completion. More importantly, it also helps promote the feeling that the examples provided by the therapist were developed specifically for them, which helps them feel like the treatment is tailored for their individual life situations.

The exercises assigned during Session 9 focused on learning and practicing various relaxation techniques that reinforce internal strengthening. Therapists explore whether the techniques practiced were helpful or not, and collaborate on improving their efficacy by integrating cognitive reframing and addressing barriers to completion. Integration of cognitive reframing techniques such as the “yes, but technique” that the client learned about in Session 7 can also be readily applied. Furthermore, therapists and clients discuss whether any other not yet tried exercises or activities may also be beneficial.

## **CHAPTER GOAL #2: PSYCHOEDUCATION ABOUT EMOTIONAL STRENGTH AND BALANCE**

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Emotional strengthening is essential to our well-being and is crucial for strengthening our internal self. It is important that clients develop insight to understanding their own emotional needs, as well as the ability to recognize specific triggers (eg, certain people, communication styles, and stressors) that evoke negative emotional reactions. This helps clients engage in preventative strategies that can reduce the likelihood of future problems. In order to strengthen ourselves emotionally, we need to be able to identify the various emotions that we are experiencing. We also need to be able to understand the relative proportioning of positive and negative emotions that we feel. Finally, the more we understand our own emotional needs, the better we are able to understand the needs of others and be emotionally empathic and available.

### **Understand Emotional Strengthening**

Psychoeducation about identifying and understanding emotions is an important part of the therapy process. Session 10 emphasizes that we all experience positive and negative emotions. Although the manual emphasizes that all feelings are to some extent natural and normal, it is still necessary to find balance and not become stuck in a whirlpool of negativity. Life stressors can trigger downward spirals—thus increasing risk for both mental and physical health problems. Although positive and negative emotions both serve intra- and interpersonal functions, the relative proportioning and balance of these different types of feelings can impact our mental health. Emotions can differ in type, intensity, and length. Psychotherapy can help reduce the length and intensity of our downward spirals and depressive episodes. Providing clients with psychoeducation is an important cultural adaptation that can be especially beneficial for Asian heritage populations.

In addition, many people have difficulty differentiating thoughts, cognitions, emotions, and feelings. Sometimes clients will be unable to differentiate thoughts from feelings depending on the emotional insight and awareness levels of the client. Therapists should help clients understand these differences, especially since in many languages and cultures this differentiation is less clear than in Western societies. Understanding the impact of linguistics and defining, interpreting, and labeling emotional experience is an important cultural adaptation, and part of Domain 5 of the Psychotherapy Adaptation Modification Framework (PAMF). The treatment manual

provides psychoeducation about different types of thoughts and feelings that people frequently experience. In doing so, an important cultural adaptation is to use active learning exercises and to take a multisensory approach when providing psychoeducation. A multisensory approach to psychoeducation may incorporate various metaphors, pictures, and worksheets in the hopes of moving away from simply talking about different issues, which is less beneficial. This shift toward integration of visual worksheets and metaphors may also help clients better understand and differentiate thoughts and feelings.

The manual revisits the Tai Chi diagram (pronounced *tàijítú* in Mandarin Chinese—*太极图*) also known as the yin yang diagram (pronounced *yīnyángtú* in Mandarin Chinese—*陰陽圖*). Therapists provide psychoeducation about the importance of balance in our emotions. Clients are asked to take a look at the Tai Chi diagram presented in the manual and to think about their individual balance of positive and negative emotions and energies. An important goal of emotional strengthening is to rebalance the relative proportion of positive and negative feelings that we experience. By placing the list of positive and negative emotions next to the different sides of the Tai Chi diagram, clients are able to see the duality of emotions as well as better understand how specific emotions are related to their energy levels and mood. They can visualize and understand whether they have imbalances in their negative (pronounced *yīnqì* in Mandarin Chinese—*陰氣*) and positive energies (pronounced *yángqì* in Mandarin Chinese—*陽氣*). Clients are shown that when we experience too many negative emotions (eg, anxiety, anger, and depression), we feel weighed down and are less able to experience pleasure and happiness in life. In addition, those who experience too much negative emotion may become very pessimistic, lose perspective, and/or may become less effective at problem-solving.

When discussing positive and negative emotions, it is important not to place value judgments on negative emotions, especially since many clients are attached to these feelings and have used them to cope with life stresses and survive various traumas (eg, using anger to prevent themselves from falling emotionally apart so that they don't become overwhelmed by depression and anxiety). Instead, focusing on the short-term and long-term advantages and disadvantages of feeling various emotions and why we continue to hold on to them is an important emphasis for psychoeducation. For example, feelings such as anger, fear, and shame, serve protective, motivating, and social functions. It is necessary for therapists to provide psychoeducation in a manner that helps reduce value judgment, and instead focuses on acceptance and effectiveness of feeling and thinking in various ways. Especially when working with Asian heritage populations, who are less familiar and comfortable with a therapist, it is very important to normalize and validate the client's feelings and experiences. Focusing on problem-solving and internal strengthening is a better focus than presenting issues in a critical and judgmental manner.

Clients take an active learning approach, and check off the various feelings that they are experiencing. In doing this, they are able to take a step back and visualize the balance of positive and negative emotions. In addition, therapists ask the client to assess how balanced they feel and reinforce the idea that focusing on positive feelings and events in life can also help reduce the negative impact of stress and depression. For clients who are less able to relate to the Tai Chi diagram, therapists can ask them to think about and utilize other metaphors that exemplify balance according to their personal and cultural belief system.

### CHAPTER GOAL #3: INTEGRATING EXTANT CULTURAL STRENGTHS AND PHILOSOPHIES OF LIFE

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One of the chapter goals is to help therapists improve their ability to culturally adapt treatments for their clients. In order to accomplish this goal, it is important to learn how to incorporate personally and culturally relevant extant strengths, beliefs, values, behaviors, practices, metaphors, and philosophies into the therapy process. In the research literature, there is much debate regarding the epidemiological paradox, which refers to increased problem development (eg, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and family conflict) among immigrants with increased acculturation and length of residence in the US, as well as in subsequent generations. Understanding the epidemiological paradox is beneficial because in addition to highlighting culture-general and culture-specific stressors, it also points out the importance of culturally protective factors that may deteriorate over time and reduce the resilience of immigrants and ethnic minorities, which also places them at greater risk for problem development. For example, culturally protective factors include size and quality of social and familial network, social support, size of social networks, traditional healing methods, cultural beliefs and philosophies that reinforce hardiness, and culturally sanctioned activities that help buffer individuals from the debilitating effects of stress. Session 10 culturally adapts psychotherapy by integrating principles of everyday healthy living, which can

serve as important culturally protective factors. These principles are deeply ingrained in Asian heritage beliefs, philosophies, religions, and traditional medicines. Domain 6 (culture-specific issues) of the PAMF includes integrating extant cultural strengths when tailoring therapy for diverse populations.

## Understand Principles of Everyday Healthy Living

This section introduces clients to the principles of everyday healthy living. Therapists ask clients about how successful they were at balancing their emotions recently. Furthermore, they prompt clients to brainstorm ways they might be better able to rebalance their energies and emotions so that they can become more centered and balanced. Therapists emphasize that reflecting upon principles of everyday healthy living can help people improve their mood, feel more balanced, and have a positive outlook on life. They highlight that these principles have been an integral part of many different Asian heritage cultures for thousands of years. Because the treatment manual was specifically developed for Chinese Americans, the particular principles listed in the manual have all been verified as being part of Chinese cultural traditions, philosophy, and religions. In addition, many of these principles are directly related to Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism, and other religions and philosophies which have influenced many different Asian heritage cultures for thousands of years.

However, when using the manual for other Asian heritage populations, it is important to verify whether these specific principles also apply to the client's particular individual and cultural background. Generally speaking, many of these principles are associated with a variety of different Asian cultures. However, not all of the principles presented will necessarily resonate to every individual from every Asian background. Consequently, it is important to confirm and verify which principles apply to the specific culture of the client in order to tailor therapy to their particular beliefs. Therapists can also ask the client if there are additional extant principles that are not listed in the manual, but that are part of their cultural background and may be useful. If there are additional principles that they feel may be beneficial, they can also be applied in a therapeutic manner.

Many of these principles have been around for thousands of years and have strengthened and enriched people's lives during difficult times. They can help people increase insight and awareness, cope with life stresses, stay emotionally healthy, problem solve, and improve relationships with others. Learning how to reflect upon these principles will enable clients to let go of emotional pain and thereby focus on positive aspects of their lives. Therapists ask the client how they might be able to integrate and incorporate each of the principles into their everyday life. They are asked to indicate which principles they most resonate with, and which ones are less applicable to their specific life situations. In addition, they should be asked why it would be important to regularly remind oneself of each of these healthy living principles on a daily basis, as well as during stressful times.

Developing a cueing system that prompts clients to cognitively reframe and to utilize therapeutic interventions during stressful and emotional situations is an important aspect of effective therapy. Cueing can help prevent downward spirals and reduce the likelihood of being trapped in negativity. Clients are asked to think about what might help them remember to reflect on these principles. Therapists should encourage clients to practice these methods both during difficult times, as well as times when clients feel more at peace—which can actually be one of the best times when they can understand and utilize therapeutic principles to address life problems.

In introducing the principles, it is recommended to review all of them before selecting which ones will be emphasized in treatment. After the overview, clients can come back to and more deeply explore and discuss specific principles that they more strongly identify with. A number of principles were listed because we wanted clients to have a flexible menu of options that could be best applied to their particular life situations and problems. Mastering and applying every single principle to the client's life situation is not the goal of the treatment manual. Although this could eventually be done, this would take a great deal of time, and focusing on the most relevant principles is the primary goal.

Specifically, we want clients who utilize skill sets that help facilitate faster change, so that they have positive experiences with therapy. This is especially important for Asian heritage populations. Focusing on implementing too many different principles could result in client confusion or therapists losing the attention and interest of their clients because they feel overwhelmed. Limiting the number of principles they focus on is especially important for clients who are depressed because they typically have limited emotional energy, concentration, motivation, and anhedonia. By initially focusing on the most beneficial principles, therapists will be able to streamline and provide a refined individual treatment plan. The principles of everyday healthy living listed in the manual include:

- Realism (Don't be too critical of self or others and have realistic expectations);
- Impermanence (Life is always changing);

- Cause and effect (Understand the consequences of one's actions);
- Determination (Work hard and try your best);
- Consistency (Following through, being reliable, having stability in life);
- Contentment (Focus on what we do have rather than what we don't have);
- Forgiveness (Learn to forgive and forget);
- Compassion (Toward self and others);
- Letting go (Release the negative emotions that hurt us inside).

A brief description of each principle is provided below:

*Realism* (pronounced héhūxiànshí in Mandarin Chinese—合乎現實). This is an important principle because it is important for people to not be too critical of themselves and of other people. People need to have realistic expectations for work, school, and various life situations and stressors such as family relations, managing conflict, job seeking and unemployment, admission into schools, physical health, aging parents, and financial burdens. According to Buddhism, being realistic, having clarity, possessing insight, and having accurate perceptions of one's surroundings are essential elements of realism, which is a requisite for enlightenment.

*Impermanence* (pronounced fēihéngdìng in Mandarin Chinese—非恆定). Life is ever-changing and continually presents challenges. All people are faced with various life obstacles that are often out of their control. It is important to be able to adjust and adapt one's expectations and understand that most things in life are impermanent. Valuing the principle of impermanence not only will help a person to live in the present moment, but can also increase happiness and reduce dwelling on difficult situations. Buddhism emphasizes the importance of accepting the impermanence of life because it is one of the keys to reducing and being free from attachments and sufferings. Only then can a person find true inner peace and enlightenment.

*Cause-and-effect* (pronounced yīnguǒ in Mandarin Chinese—因果). The choices a person makes can dictate the quality of various aspects of their life. It is important to understand that actions can have either positive or negative consequences. Good choices result in positive outcomes, such as improved life situations, greater happiness, better interpersonal relationships, and enhance physical and mental health. Conversely, poor choices result in the exacerbation of existing problems, interpersonal conflict, social isolation, and also have a negative toll on emotional health and well-being. In Buddhism, karma (also known as the law of cause-and-effect) is an important principle and part of the Four Noble Truths (ie, truth of the cause of suffering). Specifically, people may increase their own suffering by making poor decisions and choices, thus making the cessation of suffering more difficult.

*Determination* (pronounced jiāndìngyìzhì in Mandarin Chinese—堅定意志). It is important to work hard and try your best. In addition, it is important to incorporate the previous principle of realism, and not to overly criticize oneself or interpret outcomes that don't match your initial goal as failures. Determination is also associated with "Right Effort," an essential component of the Buddhist Noble Eightfold Path. It is also part of Confucian philosophy, where diligence and a strong work ethic are heavily emphasized and seen as a key to success. Because not everything in life is easy, dedication and having the "right effort" can be one of the most important principles for preventing problem development and having a sense of accomplishment. This principle applies to work, family and social life, physical health, as well as improving one's mental health by working hard and strengthening oneself in therapy.

*Consistency* (pronounced shǐzhōngrúyī in Mandarin Chinese—始終如一). In order to be successful and have a healthy and successful life, we need consistency. This applies to a number of areas, including being consistent in our exercise routine, social relationships, work practices, and even in the way that we communicate (eg, healthy communication vs passive-aggressive communication). When we are inconsistent, others perceive us to be unreliable, inconsiderate, and lacking in work ethics. Somebody who is consistent also tries to maintain balance and a feeling of centeredness, despite whatever stresses they face or the manner that other people communicate to them (eg, if somebody is yelling at them, they consistently practice responsive and healthy communication in order to reduce conflict and focus on effectiveness).

*Contentment* (pronounced mǎnzú in Mandarin Chinese—滿足). One of Buddha's teaching is that "contentment is the greatest wealth." Specifically, in order to reach enlightenment and achieve optimal health, we need to recognize and appreciate all of the privileges that we have in life. Too much focus on what we do not have, especially when it comes to material goods, can lead people astray and lead to greater suffering. Gratitude and cherishing the positive traits of our family and friends is essential to having healthy relationships. Being grateful and seeing the positive aspects of yourself and your life situation helps us develop a more positive and peaceful mindset.

*Forgiveness* (pronounced kuānshù in Mandarin Chinese—寬恕). Being able to forgive and forget is essential for not internalizing negative life stresses and emotions. Holding grudges and resenting others only increases the negativity in our lives, and ultimately hurts oneself in the end. Although not easy, finding a way to forgive and let go of pain can be extremely beneficial to a person's health. The ability to forgive oneself is just as important as our ability to forgive others. Dwelling and holding onto past issues is also associated with stress generation. For example, when we are resentful, we act and communicate in ways that increase interpersonal conflict. Acceptance and forgiveness of oneself and others is an important teaching of Buddhism. By forgiving, we are able to move on with our lives and allow ourselves to heal.

*Compassion* (pronounced cǐbēi in Mandarin Chinese—慈悲). Compassion is a core teaching of Buddhism and is often promoted by the Dalai Lama. In order to reach enlightenment, a person must have both wisdom and compassion—which are deeply intertwined. Specifically, we must be able to have empathy and understanding of other people's feelings in order to have true insight and awareness. Teaching clients to utilize "wise action" and put themselves in other people's shoes can help promote their emotional intelligence and help them understand other people's perspectives. Moreover, compassionate individuals are better able to respond rather than to react because they are able to think about others, not just themselves. The more we are compassionate toward others, the more likely others are able to be compassionate toward us. When we are compassionate, we are also more capable of forgiveness and less likely to focus on negative feelings such as anger, resentment, and criticism, which can be bad for our health. It is also important that we be compassionate toward not only others, but also ourselves. This is underscored by many Buddhist leaders. For example, Buddha once stated, "If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete." Having love and compassion for oneself is crucial to a long, happy, and emotionally healthy life for oneself and those around you. The 14th Dalai Lama also stated, "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion."

*Letting Go* (pronounced fàngxià in Mandarin Chinese—放下). Learning how to let go of the stresses and worries around us is vital for our inner peace and emotional well-being. Harboring negative feelings toward oneself or others can be toxic and counterproductive. When we don't let go, these damaging feelings eat us up inside and promote interpersonal conflict and poor decision-making. Letting go of anxiety, anger, hate, jealousy, and sadness is essential to good physical and mental health. Although these emotions can be natural initially, they can be damaging in the long run if we hold onto them too long. Life is much more enjoyable when we can focus on the positive and appreciate what we have. This is also a core teaching of Buddhism and many other Asian religions, which emphasizes that overly strong attachments can be destructive. Detachment or the ability to detach is a core clinical skill and aligns with the belief system and philosophies of many Asian heritage traditions.

After reviewing the principles of everyday healthy living, therapists work with the client to apply the more relevant principles to the problems that the client is facing. Clients are asked which principles resonate with them most. In addition, they are asked to integrate these principles into their lives. They are asked to use the principles to guide how they might think about particular situations, communicate in different ways, and problem-solve life situations that they are facing in an effective manner. Clients are asked to discuss with the therapists some of the issues that are affecting their lives. Clients are also asked to think about the advantages and disadvantages of reflecting on different principles. Moreover, therapists point out that by reflecting upon these principles, clients can become internally stronger, and feel healthier, more balanced, and centered. Utilizing principles of everyday healthy living is an important cultural adaptation that integrates extant cultural strengths into Western psychotherapy.

## Practice the Principle of Everyday Healthy Living

During this in-session discussion, clients are asked to practice the principles of everyday healthy living. They are asked to discuss some of the problems they faced during the past week with the therapist. They are provided with the option of choosing from any of the principles listed on the previous page of the manual or practicing one of the two principles listed in the in-session discussion box. The two principles listed in the box are: (1) letting go and (2) realism. These two principles are listed in this section because they are common issues that people from Asian heritage populations struggle with. After discussing and practicing a few of the principles of everyday healthy living, clients are asked how reflecting upon these principles can affect how they think, behave, act, and communicate. This section also foreshadows what is to come next (eg, focusing on one or more of these principles while practicing the "climbing the mountain" technique).

*Principle #1: Letting go*—Clients with mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, have a lot of difficulty with letting go of unhealthy thoughts and emotions. Persistent feelings of anger, jealousy, hate, and excessive sadness can damage our physical, mental, and interpersonal health—thus it is extremely important for clients to learn how to let these feelings go. Clients are taught to say to themselves “let it go,” which is a culturally adapted technique of cognitive reframing but also a direct therapeutic mechanism deeply ingrained in Asian culture that facilitates positive change.

Many Asian heritage clients have a lot of worries that, when one goes unchecked, repeat like a broken record, which leads to difficulties letting go. Clients are taught that even though we all experience a variety of natural emotions, when we are not able to let them go they become chronic and persistent in nature. Similar to what was taught in Session 6, clients are reminded that we may not be in control of our initial reactions, but our secondary responses can be controlled after practicing mental and emotional exercises. By controlling our secondary responses, they become normalized and eventually become our primary reactions.

Clients are asked to take a moment to let go of unhealthy thoughts and feelings. When applied toward other people, they are asked to take a moment to let go of negative feelings that they hold toward others. The phrase “let it go” also has a direct Chinese translation (pronounced fàngxìà in Mandarin Chinese—放下), which we previously discussed is also related to many different Asian philosophies and religions. This phrase also applies to many other heritage populations. For example, in Korean it is called “gaja” (가자). In Japanese, the term is “tebanasu” (手放す). In Vietnamese it is called buông xuống.

There are three direct mechanisms of action in letting things go. First are the internalization, reflection, and the culture-related beliefs and values of the “letting go” principle in and of itself. Similar to a meditational practice, this can be a silent understanding and acceptance, and does not necessarily require verbal or cognitive reframing. Second is the cognitive reframe that is associated with repeating the phrase internally or out loud, over and over again. Third is the incorporation of taking deep breaths and breathing out negative emotions, thoughts, and energy—thereby calming the sympathetic nervous system and activating the parasympathetic nervous system to reinforce the relaxation response. By capitalizing on all three mechanisms, we maximize the therapeutic response of this very effective principle of everyday healthy living. Therapists teach clients to focus on internal strengthening, cognitive reframing, physiological calming, and expelling of negative energies.

*Principle #2: Realism*—This is also a very important principle of everyday healthy living that commonly affects many people of Asian heritage backgrounds—especially since many experience great pressure to work hard, make sacrifices, and become successful. Unrealistic expectations increase criticism toward oneself and others—and criticism is a very common parenting style in Asian heritage cultures that is used to shape and influence behaviors. Consequently, many Asian heritage clients that we see in treatment have unrealistic expectations of themselves and others, and are also overly critical. Holding on to overly high expectations also leads to frustration and perfectionism, which can reduce a person’s effectiveness and decrease a person’s performance when they can’t achieve their goals. Therapists discuss how embracing realism involves having realistic expectations toward oneself and others. Clients are asked to evaluate whether they have realistic expectations intra- and interpersonally. They are asked to take a moment and reflect upon this principle, and to make appropriate adjustments toward their goals and expectations.

## CHAPTER GOAL #4: USE THE “CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN” TECHNIQUE FOR INTERNAL STRENGTHENING

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After completing the in-session discussion and practicing the principles of everyday healthy living, clients are asked to further utilize these principles by applying them to the “climbing the mountain” technique. Specifically, while reflecting upon one of these principles, they are asked to list specific problems that they are facing, specify their goals, and identify the worst outcomes. They are then asked to write down different ways of thinking, communicating, and behaving that will help them reach their goals. In addition, they are asked to identify different ways of thinking, communicating, and behaving, that will decrease the likelihood of the worst outcome occurring. They can choose to apply the principles of everyday healthy living to thinking, communicating, and behaving separately. Or, they can integrate and mix-and-match how they might think, communicate, and act in different ways, all within the same “climbing the mountain” exercise. This problem-focused activity helps the client feel like the treatment is tailored to their life situations, and also increases the likelihood of immediate therapeutic benefits.

## Complete Internal Strengthening Exercises Before Next Session

Afterward, clients are asked to practice the “climbing the mountain” exercise at home and before the next session. They are provided with three worksheets that they can individualize for the particular problems that they are facing. Therapists reiterate that exercising and practice can help improve mental health and effective problem-solving. Therapists should ask the client to evaluate advantages and disadvantages of thinking, talking, and acting in different ways in response to different life situations. They should also ask the client to reflect upon the principles of everyday healthy living while they practice the “climbing the mountain” exercise. In addition, they are asked to evaluate how their mood changes with increased practice.

## CHAPTER GOAL #5: REVIEW CLIENT GOALS AND MARKERS OF IMPROVEMENT

Although this treatment program was initially designed to be 12 sessions, in actuality, many clients may need more time and practice to learn and master the skills taught in the manual. Because this manual was initially designed for a time-limited clinical trial, the treatment was compacted into 12 sessions. However, as discussed in chapter “Introduction to the Manual and Understanding Cultural Complexities,” therapists are welcome to expand the length of the program and/or utilize different sessions separately.

Regardless of whether therapists are using the 12-session manual intact, or modifying implementation and utilizing different components to fit their client’s particular needs, the 10th session is a good time to review the client’s goals and signs of improvement, especially since the treatment program is coming to an end. Clients are also asked to discuss whether there are specific goals or issues that they want to focus on for the next couple of sessions so that a therapist can better meet their needs. In addition, clients are asked whether there are any principles of everyday healthy living that can help them more effectively reach their goals.

If you are implementing the treatment in a 12-session format, this is also a critically important time to discuss future plans because the treatment program will be ending soon. Specifically, will the client continue on with therapy after the program? Will you continue to review different aspects of the manual after 12 sessions? Are there particular sessions that were helpful and that the clients would like to revisit? Is the client going to continue treatment at the clinic after the last session? If the client continues treatment, will the therapist transition into their previous therapeutic style or repeat parts of the manual? Does the clinic have staffing limitations and will the client have the opportunity to continue to be seen every week? If not, how often will the client be able to come in for treatment? For example, when working with community mental health agencies, there is often a staffing shortage and limited resources are available. Many of our clients continued on with treatment, but transitioned to once every 2 weeks or once a month. For some clients who decide to end therapy, multiple sessions to discuss closure may be necessary. Starting this process during Session 10 or earlier can be critically important.

Finally, checking-in with the client about their feelings toward the therapist and the treatment is also good clinical practice and an important cultural adaptation, especially for Asian heritage populations. Specifically, it is good therapeutic practice to discuss whether their goals are being met and whether anything can be done to help address their needs. Evaluating the client–therapist working alliance is particularly important when working with Asian heritage populations. This is because of cultural values and beliefs that reduce the likelihood of asking questions or expressing dissatisfaction with authority figures and healthcare providers. Although some clients may do so naturally, many people are conflict-avoidant and would rather drop out of treatment than take the initiative to bring up issues with their therapists. Some may even fear the therapist’s response.

Our experience is that when therapists discussed whether the program was helping and specifically asked if there was anything the therapist could do better to help meet the client’s goals, clients were more likely to discuss their dissatisfaction than when therapists did not bring it up. In my independent practice, I always let clients know that if they are ever angry, upset, anxious, or dissatisfied with me, to please let me know. I also explain that it is natural and normal to have and experience a variety of feelings toward one’s therapist. Sometimes these feelings are associated with the therapist needing to make adjustments to better meet the client’s needs. Other times, they can also be directly related to the clinical issues and problems that the client has in their lives and with other people. Discussing these feelings is a necessary part of treatment. Genuinely inviting and opening the door for clients to discuss these issues is critical in culturally tailoring the treatment and valuing a consumer-based approach, which can be very effective when working with diverse populations.