Coping Stress from Workplace: A Proposal and Justification of a Coping Training Programme

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Abstract: This coping training programme is designed for candidates who have entered the company's development scheme and are working as co-manager. These candidates could face many stressors, including organizational stress, such as their role in the workplace, module assessments, reviewing sessions for further work, and other possible individualized stressors. Based on the broad range of possible stressors, this programme is designed for candidates to better understand the stress and coping strategies, which are beneficial for them to adapt to the working environment quickly and pass the scheme more calmly.

Keywords: Coping Stress; Workplace; Coping Training Programme

Component

The programme is consisted of a structured training of coping skills, which includes specific types of skills and cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT) based skills. It is held in 8 sessions (one session per week for 60 minutes). The programme is designed as a mix of distance and face-to-face learning sessions since there is more flexibility for candidates to access the knowledge and fewer constraints of attending time which will not impede their preliminary schedule too much. The web-based sessions are designed as recordings and online submitted homework. However, they are encouraged to complete it by receiving emails that provide supplementary information and tips for each week's session.

Table 1. Summary of the coping training skills programme.

Session	Topic	Homework
1	Understanding stress and coping	Identify Stress Bubble Sheet
2	Interpersonal communication skills	Practice communication skills
3	Goal setting and planing	Steps for Planning Work Sheet
4	Problem solving	Steps for Problem-Solving Work Sheet
5	Relaxation training	Relaxation training for 10 min every day Rate My Day Sheet
6	Positive thinking	Relaxation training for 10 min every day Tracking My Thoughts Worksheet
7	Social support	Relaxation training for 10 min every day
8	Integration	N/A

Session 1 introduces the overview of the programme, including its aim, length, and structure. Session 2 trains the candidates about better interpersonal communication skills. The training is conducted by examining and understanding common communication styles. Session 3 introduces and trains candidates with planning and goal-setting strategies. It mainly focuses on the individualized strategy plans that Rushall and Potgieter (1987) proposed. Session 4 introduces the general principles of problem-solving for controllable stressful situations at first, including the step-based approach. Session 5 introduces the relaxation training of progressive muscular relaxation (PMR), which is a deep relaxation technique. Session 6 introduces the concepts of positive but realistic thinking (i.e., cognitive restructuring). Session 7 introduces the role of social support and its importance in stress coping and management. Session 8 summarizes the previous sessions and integrates the learnt skills for controllable and uncontrollable stress. In particular, this session will be delivered in a face-to-face format since there is a dis-

cussion part with brainstorming for candidates to discuss with other people how to apply these skills effectively to future stressful situations.
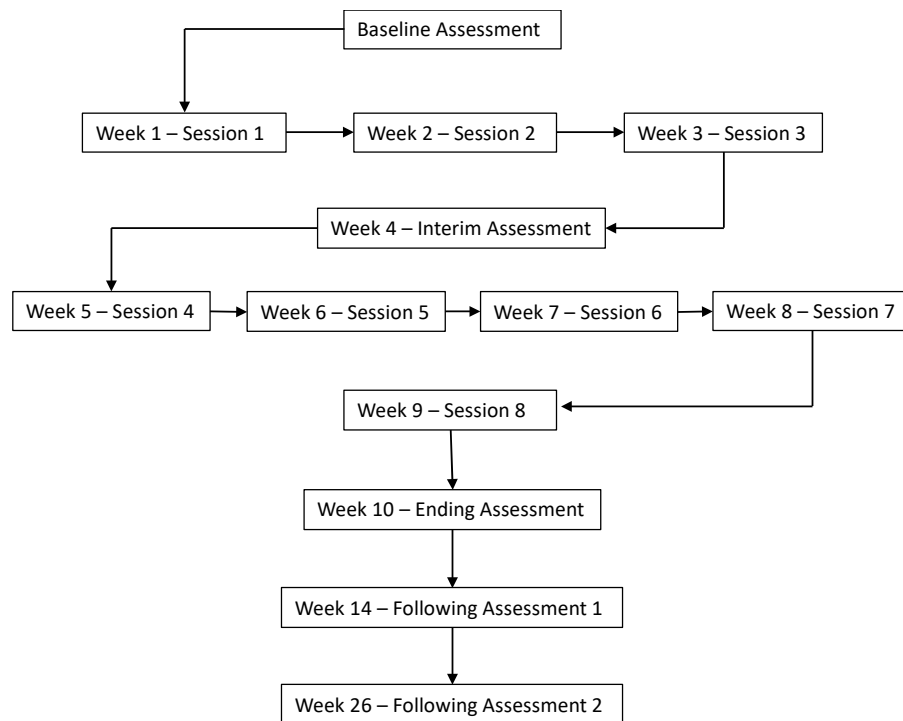

Figure 1. The timeline of the coping training programme.

The assessments are conducted through three scales, including Beck's Hopelessness Scale (BHS) (Beck, 1988), Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 1997), and Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K6) (Kessler et al., 2002). The BHS is a 20-item inventory which is designed to measure the extent of people's negative attitudes about the future. The Brief COPE Inventory is a 28-item questionnaire designed to measure how individuals cope with a wide range of stressful situations. The K6 scale is a 6-item quick tool to measure the general population's mental illness risk. The initial assessment is consisted of all three scales to evaluate the candidates' baseline. In the interim assessment, candidates only need to complete the Brief COPE Inventory. The last three assessments are consisted of all three inventories. These scales have been conducted as measurements in many studies in different domains, which support their validity and reliability.

Discussion

The programme is designed based on the existing training protocols and literature on coping skills. To develop an effective and practical coping training programme, the format is essential, such as the number of held sessions. The holding time for each session is also crucial for the practical implementation of a coping training programme at the workplace. The time should not be too short since the information in each session should be in-depth. However, it should also not be too long, which will pressure participants, mainly when the programme is during working hours. The distance-delivering type of programme has been suggested to be beneficial due to its increased accessibility. It indicates that the format of a computer-based programme will not decrease its efficacy. Moreover, this type of programme is also beneficial for facilitating dissemination based on its standardization (Newman et al., 1997). The efficacy of these promising findings is also found in the programme designed for people in the workplace with limited time for health education (e.g., Mori et al., 2014).

The content of the programme is designed as a mix of many different coping skills and strategies. In certain cases, participants may need to train in given skills for specific instances. In this case, this present programme contains six identical types of coping skills, including problem-orientated, emotion-orientated, reappraisal, and relaxation techniques. In addition to these training topics, homework is another common feature of programme. It is strongly recommended to use since it benefits participants in promoting independent learning and increasing the speed of acquiring coping skills (Richards, 2011).

In this programme, it is started by introducing stress and emotions and their possible consequences. This introduction is significant and necessary, which brings many benefits to participants. Participants can be familiar with the nature of stress and the responses to stress. They are also able to identify the type of stressors in their lives and work settings, which is helpful for them to cope with stress more effectively and precisely. Based on these suggestions, assertiveness training can improve people's communication skills and be helpful for the effectiveness and satisfaction of the interpersonal relationship.

Subsequent to assertiveness, the other two problem-focused coping skills are delivered in the programme. Planning and goal setting are common problem-orientated strategies in the coping training programme. Since the nature of planning is to guide the performer towards an optimal performance at a specified date in the future, planning can be essentially considered a skill for coping with stress or stress management. Besides, problem-solving is another problem-orientated strategy in a coping training programme. In the programme, problem-solving is usually trained through the "what if" scenario. For example, participants are asked a specific question in a situation.

The emotion-orientated coping skill, positive thinking, is another significant skill to cope with stress. It is a core technique in CBT, and it is also called cognitive restructuring. Simply put, it aims to help people identify the cognitions related to negative feelings and challenge the original automatic thoughts to generate an alternative that fits better with existing evidence and leads to more adaptive behaviours (German & DeRubeis, 2016). It is initially developed by Beck (1963) as a part of CBT for depression. This sheet helps people to document their thoughts, emotions and behaviours. In addition, it implicitly encourages people to become more thoughtful about their original interpretations of the event. Furthermore, it was found that cognitive restructuring mediated the relationship between occupational attributional style and job satisfaction (Welbourne et al., 2007). These findings also support the significance of delivering workplace interventions.

Moreover, relaxation techniques and social support are essential in coping training programmes for workplace interventions. When people receive pressure, the body will prepare for potentially dangerous situations, so it is common to associate it with muscle tension. Even though some situations may not actually experience danger, the body will work in the same way. One of the valuable techniques to relax the muscle is progressive muscle relaxation, which mainly focuses on one group of muscles, and people need to practice it consistently. It was found that progressive muscular relaxation significantly reduced participants' psychological distress and increased their positive states of mind. Additionally, social support plays a vital role in coping with stress, and seeking social support is seen as an indispensable coping skill.

In summary, the present multi-component coping training programme is designed for the group of candidates who may experience different sources of stressors. It is based on empirical evidence and literature regarding stress coping. It aims to help participants increase their stress knowledge and enhance professional efficacy. It may also reduce psychological distress and increase job performance if participants complete all sessions and related homework.

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