

Topic - Session 04

Expectations and demands

Background information

Too high expectations and goals are often a reason for not succeeding or failure, because these expectations cannot be met. Further the pressure to perform highly can lead to feeling tense, stressed, and having uncomfortable feelings – which can have negative outcomes on a person's self confidence, sense of self-efficacy, and therefore their ability to perform. This can result in self depreciating thinking ("I am a loser") and negative feelings (annoyance, anger, feeling like a failure, disappointment). Future trials are avoided, as the chance to succeed is level as very low, and one's own expectations cannot be met either ("I am not going to make it anyway"). This may lead to feeling helpless and can trigger depression.

The goal of this session is to observe this connection and to develop strategies to counteract this negative cycle of thoughts. Possible strategies could be: mindfulness and acceptance (perceiving the present moment and the options one has, being open to the present moment), positive self instructions ("I am just going to take a little bit more time for this route. That is okay") instead of "I have to make in x minutes, otherwise I am a failure", becoming aware of negative bias (black and white thinking "If I don't manage to finish this route right away, then I may aswell not try it at all"), dividing bigger tasks/goals into smaller goals (breaking down steps), coming up with realistic goals and appropriate expectations (for example using the [SMART-criteria](#)). This may increase the possibility for success, which in turn may foster enhanced self-efficacy, confidence and mood.

Key questions

Do you know what it feels like to have overly high expectations and demands on you? Do you encounter this 'pressure to perform/be productive' in your everyday life? Who creates that pressure?

Are your expectations always tailored to your possibilities? Where in everyday life are you expecting too much from yourself?

Do you compare yourself with others? (To others who feel are superior to you?) How do you judge yourself usually in this comparison? (devaluing of one's own performance) What does this "competitive thinking" lead to? How can it be prevented?

What do demands that are too high lead to? How do you feel about these?

How do you feel, when you are standing in front of a difficult boulder? What is going through your head? Do you feel like not trying a route at all, because it seems out of reach?

Where in your everyday life do you tend to give up quickly, when the goal seems too far away? How could you deal better with this kind of situations?

Learning goals

To recognise negative emotions and experience of failure as a result of too high expectations on oneself.

Accepting one's own situation, and being able to act effectively along one's own possibilities ("The situation is what it is. I do whatever is helpful in this moment to reach my goals.")

Taking back expectations and demands and being open in the moment: letting go of performance pressure.

Setting goals along [SMART-criteria](#): Breaking down bigger tasks in smaller, achievable steps.