

Coping with Mania Using a “Balance Sheet”

Objective

To decrease the probability of experiencing a full-blown manic episode through use of the balance sheet technique.

What to Know

The onset of mania or hypomania can sometimes be a pleasant experience over a period of days or weeks, when you feel energized, excited, and optimistic. However, as your symptoms escalate, you might begin to experience irritability, insomnia, and agitation.

You might be aware of patterns in the development of your symptoms. For example, hypomania or mania may begin with insomnia and progress to other symptoms like increased sexual interest or euphoria. Your thoughts might change, and you might realize you are feeling “high.” Recognition is an essential step for intervening early to prevent full-blown mania. Here are some of the early signs of hypomania and mania.

- changes in the way you view people or situations
- changes in the amount and quality of new ideas
- increased optimism and grandiosity
- exaggerated sense of well-being and self-confidence (euphoria)
- overestimating your abilities
- underestimation of the negative consequences of your choices
- many new ideas and plans that often have the potential to be successful
- difficulty distinguishing between good ideas and grandiose delusions
- impairment in the ability to concentrate and follow through with plans
- the tendency to rush into activities or make decisions without carefully considering pros and cons
- feeling so optimistic you ignore potential negative consequences
- belief you have special powers
- suspiciousness of others or general paranoia
- racing thoughts
- unusual talkativeness
- tendency to overestimate how much can be accomplished and underestimate the time it takes to complete tasks
- easily distracted
- impaired social judgement
- decreased sense of self-awareness during interactions with others

Do you experience any of these symptoms? Write down the top three symptoms that indicate you are beginning a manic or hypomanic cycle.

So, what can you do to manage these symptoms and avoid escalation?

- learn to recognize early subtle mood, thought, or behavioral changes
- seek help from a mental health professional upon onset of early symptoms
- evaluate and change distorted or unhelpful thoughts and beliefs, or ideas such as suspiciousness or grandiosity
- organize and schedule activities, events, ideas, or plans
- limit overly stimulating activities
- maintain consistent sleep patterns
- stick to a daily routine
- set realistic goals
- practice self-care activities like eating nutritious foods or meditating
- avoid alcohol and illegal drug use
- seek help from family and friends
- have a plan in place before mood changes occur
- reduce stress at home and at work
- keep track of your mood every day
- continue treatment and/or medications as prescribed

This worksheet will help you manage your thoughts to prevent mania through use of the balance sheet technique.

What to Do

First, recognize the thoughts you have when you are shifting into hypomania or mania. For example, when you are in a euphoric mood, overly positive thoughts might not be helpful because they can cause your mood to spiral toward mania. Just like negative thoughts are unhelpful when you are depressed, overly positive thoughts can also be unhelpful when you are in a hypomanic cycle. Be aware of these thoughts and write them down.

Practice this activity before you actually start feeling manic – preventing a full-blown manic episode is about EARLY recognition of the warning symptoms – and doing things before symptoms escalate.

The balance sheet will help you record thoughts you are having when you are in a mildly or moderately elevated mood. You might not know whether your thoughts are helpful, so write them down. Some of your thoughts might be unrealistic or grandiose, and very different from how you normally think.

In the second column, write down a more “balanced” thought to replace each initial unhelpful thought. Make copies of the balance sheet so you can use it with other symptoms.

Balance Sheet

When you feel euphoric, you think:	Alternative, balanced views:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What evidence do you have that your thoughts are true? • What facts or details have you ignored or overlooked? • What are some other ways to view the situation? • If you were not feeling hypomanic, what would you be thinking? • What is a more balanced view of this situation? <p>Notes:</p>

With whom can you share this worksheet? How can this person support you?

Did this activity prevent a full-blown manic episode? Explain.

What are some other ways you can prevent the escalation of your symptoms?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
