

ATTITUDES ABOUT HOMEWORK

GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

1. Assess the family dynamics or stressors that contribute to the client's resistance to completing homework assignments.
2. Parents decrease the frequency and intensity of arguments with the client over issues related to school performance and homework.
3. Assist in developing a plan to increase the frequency of completion of homework assignments.
4. Complete homework assignments on a regular, consistent basis.

ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS FOR WHICH THIS EXERCISE MAY BE MOST USEFUL

- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Oppositional Defiant

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH THE CLIENT

This exercise is designed for adolescent clients who have frequent arguments with their parents and/or have difficulty completing their homework. The purpose of the exercise is to assess family dynamics surrounding the issue of homework. The parents and client are both required to read three vignettes and respond to their respective questionnaires. The therapist reviews their responses in the follow-up therapy sessions to formulate a plan that will help the client to complete his/her homework more often, as well as reduce the degree of emotional intensity surrounding this issue. *Beware:* The client who has difficulty completing his/her school homework may very well have difficulty completing this therapy homework assignment. The client's resistance to completing the homework assignment may be processed either before or after the homework assignment is given.

ATTITUDES ABOUT HOMEWORK

Families differ widely over how they deal with the issue of homework. In some homes, homework is an issue that precipitates heated arguments between parents and teenagers. In other homes, teenagers experience very few problems with their parents about homework. The following three case studies describe different family scenes focusing on the issue of homework. As you read the case studies, consider how your family may be similar to or different from the families described in dealing with homework issues. After you finish reading the three case studies, please complete the appropriate questionnaire.

FAMILY SCENE I

"I don't have any homework," Jimmy Keller angrily told his father, "and I'm tired of you always nagging me about it!"

Irritated, Mr. Keller replied, "Well, I wouldn't always have to check up on your schoolwork if you would just be responsible and do it. I got a call from Mr. Smith, your math teacher, and he says you have four incomplete assignments. What's up with that?"

"Nothing's up with that," Jimmy responded in exasperation. "I've already turned them in. I did them in—"

Mr. Keller cut his son off, "You told me that when I got a call from your science teacher. Then I went to conferences and found out that you hadn't turned several assignments in. How can I trust you?" The argument continued for a few more minutes before Mr. Keller threw up his arms in frustration and said, "I give up!"

Jimmy stormed to his room, too angry to even try to do his homework. He called a friend instead.

FAMILY SCENE II

"Mom, it's just a rough draft. It's not the final copy. I just wanted to know whether you thought my ideas sounded good," Kimberly expressed in frustration. "You don't have to be so critical about the spelling and punctuation errors. I'll correct those later on the computer."

Pat, Kimberly's mother, said, "You don't have to be so defensive. I'm just trying to help save you time by pointing out the mistakes now. Besides, you don't always recheck your essays for spelling errors."

Kimberly rolled her eyes and thought to herself, "Why did I even bring the essay to her? She's always so picky about the smallest mistakes."

Sensing her daughter's irritation, Pat told her, "Don't roll your eyes at me. I wouldn't have to be so picky if you would just learn to recheck your work."

"Fine," Kimberly said, gritting her teeth. "Just give me the paper and I'll make the corrections." Kimberly snatched the paper from her mother's hand and walked out of the room.

FAMILY SCENE III

Eric's mother came into the kitchen carrying two bags of groceries. She said, "Oh, hi, Eric. I see you've already gotten a jump on your homework. Good for you."

Eric smiled and said, "Yeah, I wanted to get it done before the basketball game tonight. Michael called and asked if I wanted to go to the game with him. Is that okay?"

Eric's mother said, "Sure, if you get your homework done, you can go. And I want you to know that I appreciate it so much that you are taking responsibility for getting your homework done without me having to hassle you constantly. You're a neat kid." Eric completed his homework and called his friend Michael to get a ride to the game.

CLIENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How would you describe a common scene in your home over the issue of homework? How is your family situation either similar to or different from the family scenes described? _____

Similar: _____

Different: _____

2. Describe your typical attitude about doing homework. _____

3. How would your parents describe your attitude about getting your homework done? _____

4. What role have your parents taken with your homework? _____

5. If you were free to say anything to your parents about their attitude about your doing homework, what would it be? _____

6. If there is tension in your home about this issue, what can you do to help decrease the tension? _____

7. What self-defeating behaviors can you stop doing to help complete your homework? _____

8. What do you think your parents can do to help decrease the tension? _____

9. What changes can you make to complete your homework regularly? _____

10. What things can your parents do to help you regularly complete your homework?

Be sure to bring this homework to your next session with your therapist, and be prepared to talk about your thoughts and feelings about this exercise.

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How would you describe a common scene in your home over the issue of homework? How is your family situation either similar to or different from the family scenes described?

Similar: _____

Different: _____

2. How would you describe your son's/daughter's attitude about doing his/her homework? _____

3. Describe your attitude regarding your son/daughter completing his/her homework.

EXERCISE 1.A

4. How would your son/daughter describe your attitude about his/her doing homework? _____

5. What role have you taken in regard to your son's/daughter's doing homework?

6. If you were free to say anything to your son/daughter about his/her attitude toward completing homework, what would it be? _____

7. What changes can your son/daughter make to complete his/her homework regularly? _____

8. What self-defeating behaviors can you stop doing to help decrease the tension with your son/daughter over the issue of homework? _____

9. What changes can you make to help your son/daughter complete his/her homework regularly?

Be sure to bring this homework to your next session with your therapist, and be prepared to talk about your thoughts and feelings about this exercise.

BREAK IT DOWN INTO SMALL STEPS

GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

1. Complete large projects or long-term assignments on time.
2. Implement effective study skills that increase the frequency of completion of school assignments.
3. Improve organizational skills by breaking down projects into smaller steps.
4. Receive rewards for successfully completing projects.
5. Avoid the pattern of procrastinating or “waiting until the last minute” to begin working on a large or long-term project.

ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS FOR WHICH THIS EXERCISE MAY BE MOST USEFUL

- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Bipolar Disorder
- Oppositional Defiant

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH THE CLIENT

This homework assignment is designed to assist adolescents with a learning disability, history of underachievement, or an Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder to complete their large or long-term projects. The therapist, parents, and client are encouraged to sit down as a team to break down projects into smaller steps and then set a deadline for each step. Consultation with the client's teacher is strongly encouraged to help identify the different steps. Encourage the parents and client to implement a reward system to positively reinforce the client for successfully completing each step. It is recommended that the final reward for completing the entire project on time be of greater value or significance than the rewards for completing the smaller steps. Negative consequences may also be used if the client fails to complete a step by the specified time period.

BREAK IT DOWN INTO SMALL STEPS

Are you tired of rushing around at the last minute or cramming the night before to complete a long-term project that you have been given plenty of time to complete? If so, then this exercise will assist you in completing your large or long-term projects in a more timely manner. You are encouraged to meet with your parents, teachers, and therapist shortly after you are assigned a large project to help break down the task into smaller steps. In this way, you will avoid the pattern of procrastinating or putting the project off until the last minute. The project will become more manageable, and you will experience less anxiety or stress. Place this assignment sheet in your notebook to remind you of the steps that need to be completed before you turn in the entire project.

1. First, identify the project that needs to be completed.

Name of project: _____

Class: _____

Final deadline: _____

2. Break the project down into several smaller steps. Establish a deadline for each separate step.

Step	Target Deadline
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____

3. Sit down with your parents, teachers, or therapist and identify a reward for successfully accomplishing each step on or before the deadline. The reward may be the same for each step. Record the date you completed each step and the reward you received in the following spaces.

Actual Completion Date**Reward**

1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____

4. Develop a list of negative consequences for the times when you do not meet your deadline. Record the date you completed the step and the negative consequence you received for not completing it on time in the following spaces.

Late Completion Date**Negative Consequence**

1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____

5. Identify a grand reward for completing the entire project on or before the final deadline:

6. Please respond to the following questions after you have completed and turned in your entire project (and also if you were not successful in turning the assignment in on time).

A. What motivated you to complete each step? _____

B. Were you more motivated by trying to get the rewards or trying to avoid the negative consequences? _____

- C. What obstacles or frustrations did you face along the way? _____

- D. What helped you overcome or work around the obstacles or frustrations? _____

- E. How did you feel about yourself after you completed each step? How about after you completed the entire project? _____

- F. What did you learn about yourself and about organization in doing this project? _____

GOOD GRADE/BAD GRADE INCIDENT REPORTS

GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

1. Explore factors contributing to either good or bad grades on an assignment or test.
2. Implement effective study skills that increase the frequency of completion of school assignments and improve academic performance.
3. Identify how specific responsible actions lead to improvements in academic performance.
4. Attain and maintain a level of academic performance that is commensurate with level of ability.

ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS FOR WHICH THIS EXERCISE MAY BE MOST USEFUL

- Anxiety
- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Conduct Disorder/Delinquency
- Oppositional Defiant Disorder

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESSING THIS EXERCISE WITH THE CLIENT

In this assignment, the client is asked to complete either a Good Grade or Bad Grade Incident Report to identify the factors that contributed to his/her receiving either a good or bad grade. The incident forms will help the client to identify the strategies or positive study skills that he/she will need to utilize on a regular basis to achieve and/or maintain a level of performance that is equal to his/her ability level. The assignment will also help the client begin to take ownership of his/her grades or school performance. The client should be reinforced for taking personal responsibility for doing what is necessary to receive good grades. The assignment may also identify emotional factors or social pressures that contribute to the client's poor grades. The therapist should consider using the incident reports in the therapy sessions with clients who have a learning disability. Teachers or school officials can also be asked to help the client complete these forms.

GOOD GRADE/BAD GRADE INCIDENT REPORTS

GOOD GRADE INCIDENT REPORT

1. Please give a recent example of when you received a good grade on a test or assignment. What grade did you receive? In what class did you receive the good grade? _____

2. Which of these factors and/or strategies helped you to receive the good grade? (Please check all that apply.)

___ Motivation/desire to do well

___ Studied in advance

___ Reviewed material more than once

___ Broke assignment down into small steps over time

___ Studied with a friend or other student

___ Received help from an adult tutor

___ Received tutoring from a peer

___ Asked teacher in class for help to better understand subject

___ Met with teacher after class or before school

___ Asked parent for help

___ Called a friend for help

___ Other (please identify) _____

3. How did you feel after receiving the good grade?

4. How did your parent(s) or teacher(s) react to your good grade?

5. In what other class(es) can you use these strategies to improve your grade?

BAD GRADE INCIDENT REPORT

1. Please give a recent example of when you received a bad grade on a test or assignment. What grade did you receive? What class did you receive the poor grade in?

2. What factors contributed to your bad grade on the test or assignment? (Please check all that apply.)

☐ Lack of study or preparation

☐ Did not study properly

☐ Laziness/lack of interest

☐ Forgot to study for the test

☐ Studied at last minute or did not give self enough time to complete assignment

☐ Chose to have fun instead of study

☐ Rushed through assignment or test/failed to review answers

☐ Made careless mistakes

☐ Do not want to be viewed as nerd or geek if I make a good grade

☐ Did not understand material or subject

☐ Did not seek out help from teachers/parents

☐ Too much homework in other class(es)

☐ Distracted by outside problems or stress

☐ Test anxiety

☐ Too much pressure to achieve by parents or others

☐ Do not want to be expected to get good grades all the time

☐ Other (please describe)

3. How did you feel about yourself after receiving the bad grade?

4. How did your parent(s) or teacher(s) react to your bad grade?

5. What could you do differently in the future to receive a better grade in this class?
