Prologue

An oyster creates a pearl out of a grain of sand. The grain of sand is an irritant to the oyster. In response to the discomfort, the oyster creates a smooth, protective coating that encases the sand and provides relief. The result is a beautiful pearl.

For an oyster, an irritant becomes the seed for something new. Similarly, *Mind Over Mood* will help you develop something valuable from your current discomfort. The skills taught in this book will help you feel better and will continue to have value in your life long after your original problems are gone.

**HOW WILL THIS BOOK HELP YOU?**

*Mind Over Mood* teaches methods that have been shown to be helpful with mood problems such as depression, anxiety, anger, panic, jealousy, guilt, and shame. The strategies described in this book can also help you solve relationship problems, handle stress better, improve your self-esteem, become less fearful and more confident. Further, these strategies can help you if you are struggling to maintain sobriety or to live your life without drugs. *Mind Over Mood* provides structure that can help you proceed efficiently and rapidly in making changes.
The ideas in this book come from cognitive therapy, one of today’s most successful forms of psychotherapy. “Cognitive” means “thought processes” as well as “knowledge” or “perception.” Cognitive therapists emphasize examination of the thoughts and beliefs connected to our moods, behaviors, physical experiences, and to the events in our lives. A central idea in cognitive therapy is that our perception of an event or experience powerfully affects our emotional, behavioral, and physiological responses to it.

For example, if we are standing in line at the grocery store and think, “This will take awhile, I may as well just relax,” we are likely to feel calm. Our body stays relaxed, and we may start a conversation with someone standing nearby or pick up a magazine. However, if we think, “This place is poorly managed. It’s not fair to have such a long line,” we may feel angry. Our body is tense or fidgety, and we may spend our time looking at our watch or grumbling to the clerk.

*Mind Over Mood* teaches you to identify your thoughts, moods, behaviors, and physical reactions in small situations as well as during major events in your life. You learn to test the meaning and usefulness of various thoughts you have during the day and to change the thinking patterns that keep you locked into dysfunctional moods, behaviors, or relationship interactions. In addition, you learn how to make changes in your life when your thoughts are alerting you to problems that need to be solved.

**HOW TO USE THIS BOOK**

This book is different from most books you read. *Mind Over Mood* teaches you skills that are necessary to make fundamental changes in your moods, behaviors, and relationships. Therefore, it is important for you to complete the exercises in each chapter. If you move too quickly through the book without giving yourself adequate time to practice the skills taught, you will not learn how to apply the skills to your own problems. Even some of the skills that look easy can be more complicated than they seem when you actually try to do them.

If a therapist or other professional recommended this book to you, he or she may suggest that you read the chapters in a different order than printed here. While each chapter adds to your knowledge and abilities, some people will not need to use every chapter. Each chapter includes exercises to guide discovery of important learning points. Additional copies of the exercise worksheets can be found in the Appendix at the end of the book so that you can duplicate and use them whenever you think they might help.

We hope that, like many people who have learned the methods taught in this book, you will look back at the initial discomfort that led you to *Mind Over Mood* as a “blessing in disguise,” because it provided you the opportunity and motivation to develop pearls of perspective that will help you enjoy the rest of your life more fully.
Identifying and Rating Moods

In order to learn to manage or change your moods, it is helpful to be able to identify the moods you are experiencing. Moods can be difficult to identify. You may feel tired all the time and not recognize you are depressed. Or you might feel nervous and out of control and not recognize that you are anxious. Along with depression and anxiety, anger, shame, and guilt are very common moods that are problematic for people (see Chapters 10–12).

IDENTIFYING MOODS

The list below shows a variety of moods you might have during a day. This is not a comprehensive list: You can write additional moods on the blank lines. This list helps you pin down your moods more specifically than simply “bad” or “good.” Notice that moods are usually described by one word. By identifying specific moods, you will be able to set goals for emotional change and track your progress toward those goals. Learning to distinguish between moods will enable you to choose actions designed to alleviate particular moods. For example, certain breathing techniques help nervousness but not depression.
If you have trouble identifying your moods, notice changes in your body tension. Tight shoulders may signal that you are afraid or tense; a heaviness throughout your body may signal depression or disappointment.

A second way of becoming better at identifying your moods is to see if you can notice three different moods a day. If this is difficult to do, you may want to pick six of the moods from the list above and write down situations in your past in which you felt each one.

When Vic first began cognitive therapy, he thought he was feeling anxious and depressed. As he learned to identify moods, he discovered that he was also frequently angry. Although he had not had a drink for three years, he reported that he felt the urge to drink whenever he feared he would get “out of control.” When he and his therapist looked closely at the times Vic sensed being “out of control,” it became apparent that at these times he was feeling very nervous or angry. When nervous, Vic experienced a rapid heartbeat, sweaty hands, and a sense that something terrible was going to happen. He labeled these sensations being “out of control” and would have the urge to drink because he thought alcohol would help him regain control.

Vic obviously tended not to be very specific about his mood, often saying that he was “uncomfortable” or “numb.” One of Vic’s initial therapeutic tasks, therefore, was to begin to distinguish among his thoughts, moods, and

<table>
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<tr>
<th>MOOD LIST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insecure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enraged</td>
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Other moods: _______ _______ _______ _______
behaviors in different situations in his life. In order to make the changes he wanted to make, Vic needed to be able to recognize the differences between these important parts of his experiences.

When Vic learned that his primary emotional difficulties were with anger and anxiety, he began to focus his attention on the situations in which he felt angry or anxious. He learned to distinguish his irritable anger from the fearful worry of his anxiety. He began to identify these moods, instead of lumping them together as “numbness.” As Vic began to isolate what he was feeling, it became apparent to him that when his mood was anxious he was thinking “I’m losing control.” When his mood was angry, he was thinking, “This is not fair—I deserve more respect.”

Ben, at the beginning of therapy, said he did not feel like being with his family or friends as much as he used to. He said he preferred to be alone. As Ben began to closely analyze the situations from which he wanted to isolate himself, he discovered that he would often be thinking that others (family or friends) did not need him or want to be with him. He also realized that he was predicting (thinking) that if he got together with other people he would not have a good time. As he was thinking “They don’t want to be with me” and “If I go there I’m not going to enjoy myself,” he recognized that his mood was sad. During therapy, Ben learned the connection between his thoughts and moods and how to distinguish between them.

It was important for Vic and Ben to distinguish among situational factors (part of environment), thoughts, and moods. Situational factors can often be identified by answering the following questions:

1. Who was I with?
2. What was I doing?
3. When did it happen?
4. Where was I?

As a general rule, moods can be identified in one descriptive word. If it takes you more than one word to describe a mood, you may be describing a thought. Thoughts are the words or the visual images, including memories, that go through your mind.

The distinction among thoughts, moods, and situational factors is important for you to learn. By distinguishing among thoughts, moods, and situational factors, you can identify the parts of your experience that are in need of change.
REMINDER BOX

- Situations can be described by asking yourself:
  Who? What? When? Where?
- Moods can be described by one word.
- Thoughts are the words and images that go through your mind.

EXERCISE: Identifying Moods

Worksheet 3.1 is designed to help you identify your moods and set them apart from other important aspects of your life. In order to complete the worksheet, you need to focus on a specific situation in which you had an intense or powerful mood.

WORKSHEET 3.1: Identifying Moods

Describe a recent situation in which you had a strong mood. Next, identify what moods you had during or immediately after being in that situation. Do this for five different situations.

1. Situation: ____________________________
   Moods: ______________________________

2. Situation: ____________________________
   Moods: ______________________________

3. Situation: ____________________________
   Moods: ______________________________

4. Situation: ____________________________
   Moods: ______________________________

5. Situation: ____________________________
   Moods: ______________________________

One of Vic’s responses on Worksheet 3.1 looked like this:

SITUATION: I'm alone, driving in my car, on the way to work at 7:45 A.M.

MOODS: Frightened, anxious, insecure

One of Ben’s responses was the following:

SITUATION: I received a phone call from Max asking me to play golf.

MOODS: Sadness, grief

As the examples illustrate, knowing the situation does not always help us understand why someone felt a particular emotion. Why would a golf invitation make Ben feel sad? The presence of strong moods is our first clue that something important is going on. Later chapters teach you why Ben and Vic—and you—experienced the particular moods described on Worksheet 3.1.

RATING MOODS

In addition to identifying moods, it is important to learn to rate the intensity of the moods you experience. Rating the intensity of the mood allows you to observe how your moods fluctuate. Rating your moods also helps alert you to which situations or thoughts are associated with changes in moods. Finally, you can use changes in emotional intensity to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies you are learning.

In order to see how your moods vary during the day, you’ll find it convenient to use a rating scale. Ben and his therapist developed the following rating scale for his moods:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>50</th>
<th>60</th>
<th>70</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>90</th>
<th>100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>A little</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>Most I've ever felt</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

The therapist then asked Ben to use the scale to rate the moods he listed on Worksheet 3.1. For the golf invitation, Ben’s ratings looked like this:

SITUATION: I received a phone call from Max asking me to play golf.

MOODS: Sadness, grief
These ratings indicate that Ben experienced a high level of grief (90) and a medium level of sadness (50) while on the phone with Max.

**EXERCISE: Rating Moods**

On Worksheet 3.2, practice rating the intensity of your moods. On the blank lines, copy the situation and moods you identified on Worksheet 3.1. For each situation, rate one of the moods you identified on the scales provided. Circle the one mood you rated.

**WORKSHEET 3.2: Identifying and Rating Moods**

1. Situation: __________________________
   Moods: __________________________
   0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

2. Situation: __________________________
   Moods: __________________________
   0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

3. Situation: __________________________
   Moods: __________________________
   0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
4. Situation: ____________________________________________

Moods: ________________________________________________

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

5. Situation: ____________________________________________

Moods: ________________________________________________

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100


Since identifying and rating moods are important skills, continue to use Worksheet 3.2 to practice them until you can label and rate your moods easily. You may also want to read Chapters 10–12, which provide detailed descriptions of depression, anxiety, anger, guilt, and shame. The more you learn about moods, the easier it becomes to notice and name them. Once you are comfortable with identifying and rating moods, you are ready to proceed to Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

- Strong moods signal that something important is going on in your life.
- Moods can usually be described in one word.
- Identifying specific moods can help you set and track goals, as well as enable you to choose interventions designed to alleviate particular moods.
- It is important to distinguish among situations, moods, and thoughts (Worksheet 3.2).
- Rating your moods (Worksheet 3.2) allows you to evaluate the strength and track the fluctuations of your emotional reactions.