3.c Tunnel Vision

Prep:

- Handout In-Class Tunnel Vision worksheet
- Homework Tunnel Vision

A. Homework Review

Say: For homework you came up with two unrealistic expectations that you have now or have had in the past and answered a few questions on each. Let’s see what you came up with.

Review the practice work for each student and record homework points.

B. Introduction Discussion

Say: Today we’re going to talk about another way of thinking that can get us in to trouble. It’s called tunnel vision. Sometimes people believe that just one big thing changing in their life will solve all of their problems.

Board: define Tunnel Vision on the board

Tunnel Vision – The belief that just one big thing changing in our life will allow everything to fall into place.

Say: For example, a person might believe that getting a good paying job or getting off probation will allow everything to fall into place. Making big life changes is almost never about one big thing. Instead big changes come about in our life from the little decisions we make every day. These small changes lead into the big changes we want to see.

Example: If somebody wants to play professional football, do they just show up for tryouts? What else do they do?

- Practice, eat healthy, sleep well, stretch, lift weights, listen to feedback from a coach, hire a personal trainer, read about the sport, learn strategies to manage stress on game day, etc. etc.

Say: Of course, they practice on the field and play football. But they also focus on a lot of little things to improve their game and chances of success.

C. Exploring Tunnel Vision

Say: Let’s look at a situation of a guy named Maurice who has some problems with tunnel vision. His situation is this:

Maurice has a pretty long arrest record. He believes that if he gets a decent job, then he won’t get in trouble anymore. Lucky for Maurice when he gets out of prison the last time, the job market is booming. With unemployment so low his cousin gets him a good job in a manufacturing plant right out of the gate. But after about a month, Maurice gets fired because he was pulled for a random UA and tested dirty. He said he was using with his old buddies along with some new guys he met at work. He’s pissed because the guys showed him a way to pass the random drug tests, but it obviously didn’t work. When asked why he used, he said he was fighting with his wife all the time and was really stressed out. He also said he gave up the hard drugs and deserved a little fun. He said the job wouldn’t have lasted anyway because his
boss was an asshole who had power issues and wouldn’t let anything slide. Now he thinks if only he can get a good job in a better work environment, then he won’t have any more trouble.

Facilitate discussion.

Questions:

• Was getting a decent job Maurice’s solution to staying out of trouble?
• What were some Maurice’s risk factors?
  o Substance use, old friends, new antisocial friends, poor coping skills in relationship, attitude about substance use, attitude about boss.
• What were some of the little things that Maurice could have focused on to improve his situation?

Say: In this example, Maurice thought all he needed was a job. But because he didn’t recognize all the risk factors, he mislead himself into thinking getting a job was going to change his life.

Say: Tunnel vision has an easy formula. The formula is: if only I could get, then things will fall into place. For example, in Maurice’s situation, his tunnel vision was: if only I could get a good job, then things will fall into place.

Board: Write formula for tunnel vision on the board.

If only I could get, ____________, then things will fall into place.

Say: Now let’s get some ideas on the board of common things that people might overly focus on if they have tunnel vision as they’re getting released from prison.

Let’s write it ask by asking ourselves, “If only I could get…. then things will fall into place.”

Board brainstorm: Write ideas on board. Keep the brainstorm for a replacement activity later in the lesson.

• a good job
• more money
• off probation
• moved out of the neighborhood / state, area, etc.
• better housing
• away from old friends
• off child support
• more help from others
• sober
• my kids’ mom would leave me alone
• my girl to stop nagging me

Question: Are these things important? (reference a few examples from the list here, “Is having a good job important?”, “Is having money important?” “Is finding housing important?”)

Say: Of course, each of these things can be very important. But it’s when a person has tunnel vision on one thing that could cause problems.
Buy-in Question: What do you think some problems could be with having tunnel vision, and thinking that changing just one of these things will solve all other problems?

Note: Below are notes to facilitate a discussion and get buy-in. Do not just read them from the page. Do your best to get your group to give you these ideas. Think through questions during prep that might help facilitate the discussion (ex. what happens when we think that the major problems in our life are things outside of us that we can’t control?).

- It’s allows people off the hook for making small changes and sticking to small commitments. Instead a person can throw up their hands and say that the problem is something big that they have no control over.
- It says that our problem are something outside of us. This type of thinking doesn’t empower us to change our life by focusing on what we have control over and can change today.
- It tricks us into thinking that there’s one big fix for our problems, or that we won’t continue to have problems in the future – which is not realistic.

Say: Now you’re going to have a chance to apply tunnel vision to your own life and situation.

Handout: In Class Activity – Tunnel Vision worksheet
Ask students to only fill out the “If only I could get, _______ then things will fall into place.” portion of the activity. They should NOT replace yet.

Circle around the room to make sure that each person is on the right track.

D. Replacing Tunnel Vision

Say: As we saw with Maurice, tunnel vision has the potential to cause us a lot of problems. We can become aware of tunnel vision by recognizing that we will still have struggles even when the bigger things in our life begin to fall into place. Remember, it’s not just one big thing that’s going to changes the future. It’s the hard work to change many small things every day that makes the difference.

Let’s go back to our examples on the board and think about the problems that will still exist even if these big areas in life change.

Board Activity: As a group, think about each of the statements on the board and write a new statement which starts with “Even if…, I could still struggle with…” getting ideas from the group.

Examples:

If only I could get a good job, then things will fall into place.
Even if I have a good job, I could still struggle with staying sober.

If only I could get more money, then things will fall into place.
Even if I had more money, I could still get into fights and get arrested.

If only I could get off probation, then things will fall into place.
Even if I was off probation, I could still struggle with getting along child’s mom.
**Handout:** Have students then replace their “if only I could get” statements with an “even if” statement.

**Extra Activity:** If there is extra time break students break into teams of two and practice a Call and Response with their in class activity. Their role play partner will call out the “if only I could get” statement and they will respond back with their “even if” … statement.

E. Homework

**3.c Tunnel Vision Case Study**

Student read and complete questions about Frank.
3.c  In Class Activity

Tunnel Vision

Directions: List 5 areas that you may have had tunnel vision now or in the past.

Example: If only I could get a good job then things will fall into place.

1. If only I could get ____________________________, then things will fall into place.
   Even if ____________________________________________, I could still struggle with ____________________________.

2. If only I could get ____________________________, then things will fall into place.
   Even if ____________________________________________, I could still struggle with ____________________________.

3. If only I could get ____________________________, then things will fall into place.
   Even if ____________________________________________, I could still struggle with ____________________________.

4. If only I could get ____________________________, then things will fall into place.
   Even if ____________________________________________, I could still struggle with ____________________________.

5. If only I could get ____________________________, then things will fall into place.
   Even if ____________________________________________, I could still struggle with ____________________________.
Frank thinks that if he can just get off probation and off his GPS monitor then he won’t have to worry about getting back in trouble. It seems like his P.O. is always the one causing him problems. He decides to go back to jail to get his sentence over with. After a year he’s released with no supervision. He loves not having anyone to report to and feels like he’s finally free. He finds a job through a temp agency working for a construction company and things are going good for a while. He starts hanging out with old friends who aren’t working, staying up late and partying again like he used to before he was on the monitor. He thinks, “I’ve been locked down for so long I deserve to have some fun. Plus, it’s only weed and alcohol. My big issue was selling drugs.” Eventually he begins to come into work tired and hungover. He doesn’t understand why his boss is on his back all of the time – he’s not the only one who’s late. Frank doesn’t think being a few minutes late should be that big of a deal. The temp agency eventually calls him and tells him that the job ended and the company decided not to hire him permanently. Now he’s not working and his child support is not being paid.

What was Frank’s if / then thinking that caused him problems?

What might Frank do now that he has no job?

Did getting off probation change the long-term outcome for Frank?

What were the other risk factors that caused Frank’s problems?

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 