CanOps
Empowering Public Safety

Up / Down Exercise for Reintegration

Purpose

The Up/Down Exercise is a structured tool used in reintegration programs to help individuals process and reframe emotionally charged experiences—particularly those tied to critical incidents. It supports mental health recovery by identifying emotional responses and guiding participants toward cognitive reframing.

Preparation Steps

- Ensure privacy and emotional safety.
- Provide writing materials or a whiteboard for visual mapping.
- Explain the purpose and structure of the exercise to the participant.

Execution Steps

- Participant shares the story of the incident or situation.
- Coach writes out the narrative in segmented parts.
- Coach reviews the detailed narrative with participant asking them to identify the emotional association for each segment:
  - ↑ for positive feelings
  - ↓ for negative feelings
  - = for neutral feelings
- Coach guides the participant through the detailed narrative again focusing on each ↓ segment. Participants are asked to expand and explain the rationale for these.
- Coach facilitates reframing the identified negative feelings by identifying areas that the participant had no control over, providing alternative perspectives, and focusing on positive outcomes.
- As the points identified with negative feelings are discussed, participants are asked if they want to change the symbols to either an up arrow for positive feelings, or an equal sign for neutral feelings. Many of the down arrows will be reclassified voluntarily by the participant based on new insights and perspectives.
- Coach tallies up/down/neutral arrows before and after the exercise to illustrate the change. Participants are encouraged to photograph these totals for their own personal use and reference.

Estimated Duration

Average time required: 4 hours per session.

Impact

Participants have reported reduced guilt, improved emotional clarity, and enhanced coping strategies for future events.