

Cognitive restructuring



Our Thoughts and Thinking Styles

The thoughts we have impact on the way we feel. When we feel low or anxious our thought patterns tend to change. The way that we interpret events is also affected.

Throughout the day we have thousands of thoughts which pop automatically into our mind with little effort. The thoughts often seem plausible. When you feel low or anxious the thoughts you get tend to be unhelpful and irrational.

When something happens in your life, you give that event a meaning. For example, perhaps a friend doesn't phone when they said they would, the meaning you give that might be "she or he doesn't really like me that much because they haven't bothered to call". This thought would have popped up automatically into your head.

These unhelpful thinking patterns can become a habit so that whenever anything is not quite right, you default to an unhelpful thinking style, e.g. mind reading, catastrophising etc.



Unhelpful ways of thinking

Mental Filter

This is where you focus on the negative things.

Are you only noticing the bad things? Are you ignoring the good and average things?

For example, focusing on the fact you have done one thing wrong and ignoring that you have done all the other things right.

Mind Reading

You assume that you know what other people think of you. When you are mind reading you usually think that people are saying negative things about you.

Example: "They think I am stupid"

Fortune Telling

Predicting what is going to happen in the future (again, usually negative things).

Example: "I know I'm going to fail the exam"

Compare and Despair

You compare yourself or your situation to others and their situation. You usually see the good things about other people and the bad things about yourself.

Example: "Other people are better at this than I am"

Critical Self

Here you put yourself down and blame yourself for things that are not your responsibility.

Example: "I'm useless at making friends as they did not talk to me very much"

Shoulds and musts

This is where your thoughts use words like "I should" or "I must". This puts pressure on you and sets unrealistic expectations.

Example: "I should be better at this".



Judgements

This is where you make judgements about situations, events and yourself rather than describing what is happening.

Example: "It is terrible that I got that wrong"

Emotional Reasoning

This is where you feel that it is true so it must be true.

Example: "I feel anxious so I must be in danger"

Catastrophising

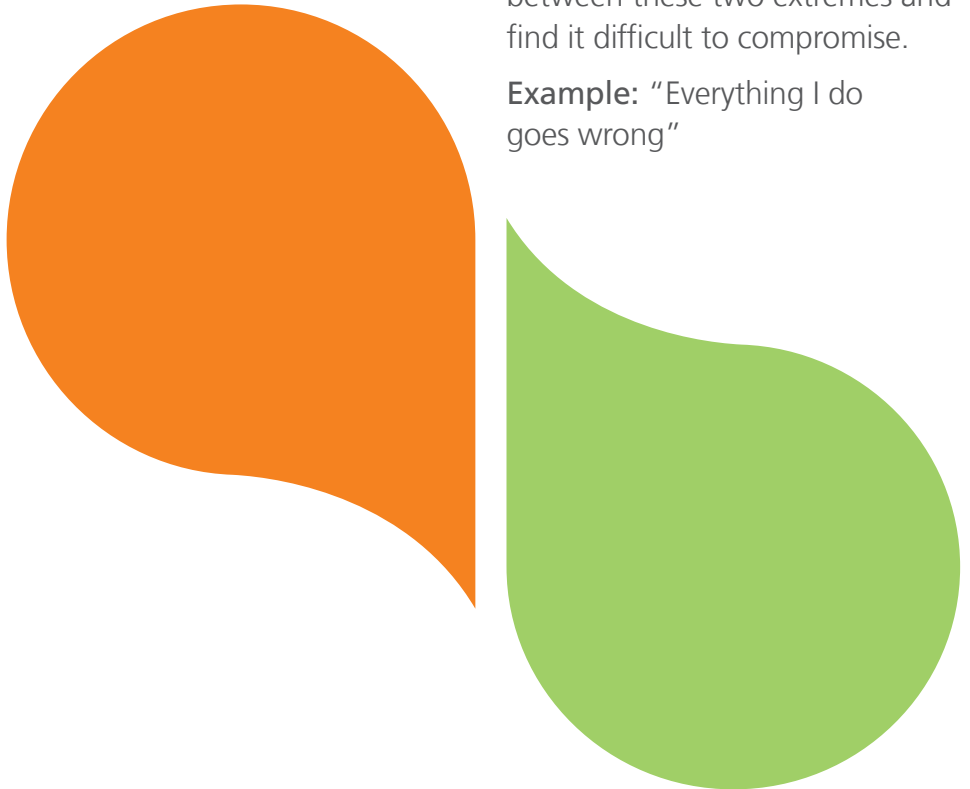
Imagining and believing that the worst case scenario can and will happen.

Example: If someone is late, you think they have been in an accident

Black and White Thinking

You tend to view things at opposite ends of the spectrum, for example good or bad. You don't see things as falling in between these two extremes and find it difficult to compromise.

Example: "Everything I do goes wrong"

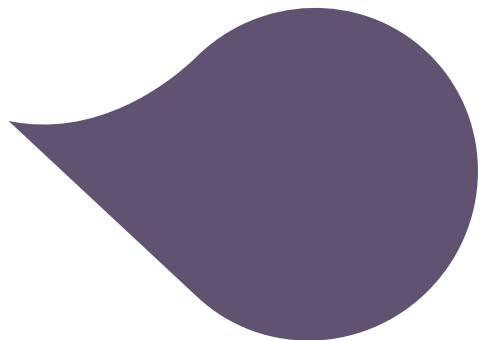


Identifying Unhelpful Thoughts

1. Have a look at the unhelpful thinking styles listed above and see how many of these you identify with. Think of some examples of thoughts that you have and see if you can match them to any of the thinking errors.
2. To be able to change the way you see things, you need to start to recognise and identify these unhelpful thoughts when they are triggered. Over the next week we would like you to start to record these thoughts using the chart provided (see worksheet 1). Whenever you feel low in mood or anxious, record the information in this thought record. We would like you to think about what triggered the unhelpful thought or image, what the feeling you experienced was and the intensity of this emotion (0-100%), and the unhelpful thought and your belief in this thought (0-100%).

Here are some questions which can help you identify some of these thoughts:

- What was going through my mind when I started to feel this way?
- What does this situation say about me?
- What am I thinking about me, other people, or what might happen in the future?
- What is the worst thing that I think could happen to me?
- What am I thinking about how other people view me?
- What am I thinking about other people?
- What thoughts do I have of me in that situation?
- What is it that I am worrying will happen?



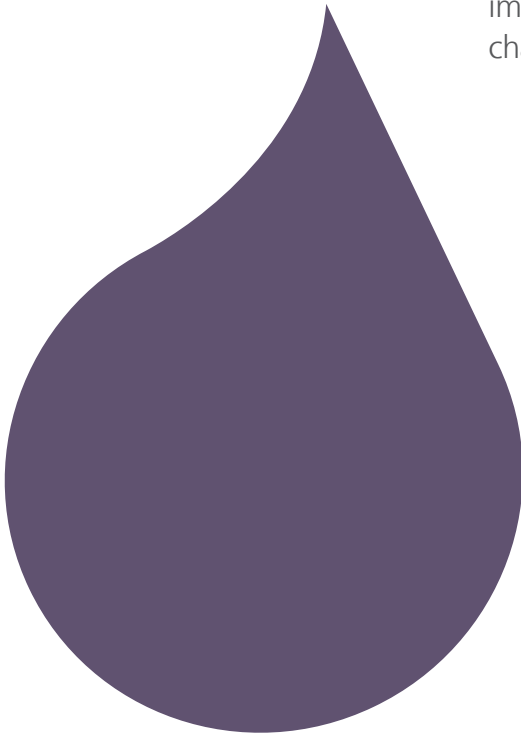
Challenging our unhelpful thoughts

Thoughts aren't facts

Thoughts can be upsetting because we typically take our own thoughts as the truth. One of the crucial first steps in recovery is learning to recognise that such thoughts might be true, but are not necessarily so. Some thoughts are opinions, not facts, and like all opinions they can sometimes be mistaken.

Identifying Hot Thoughts

Whenever we experience an emotion there is a thought connected to it which helps to define the emotion. Hot thoughts are the automatic thoughts that are most charged with emotion and can be identified by the highest belief rating in your thought diary. They can also be persistent thoughts. Therefore they are the thoughts that are important to identify, examine and change in order to feel better.



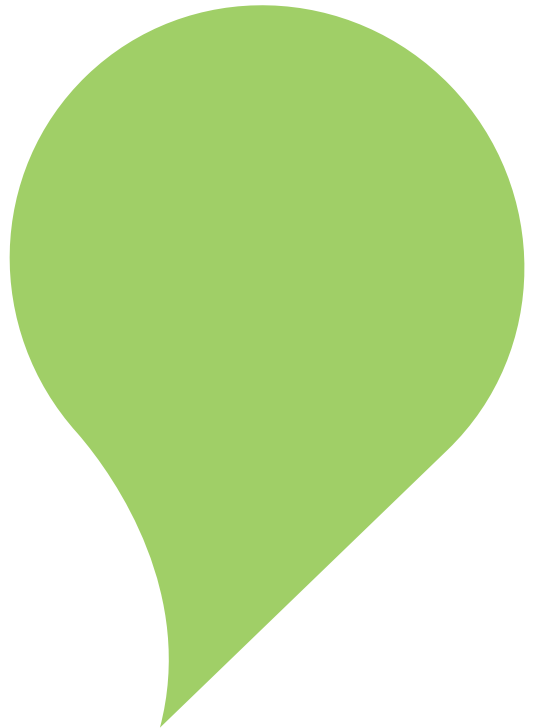
Challenging Thoughts

Once we have identified our hot thoughts, we then need to challenge and revise these thoughts. The aim of thought challenging is to look at our thoughts logically. We are looking to reduce our belief in unhelpful thoughts.

Cognitive restructuring focuses on challenging unhelpful thoughts and finding alternative balanced thoughts that are more accurate. We are looking to change our thoughts to realistic, more helpful thoughts. We are not asking you to simply 'think positively'.

To create balanced alternative thoughts, we must challenge thoughts fairly.

Using the evidence approach, you try to suspend judgement for a while. Then by taking a step back you can look at whether your thoughts are true by looking for evidence for and against them.



Step 1

Identify a hot thought you need to work on. Focus on one unhelpful hot thought at a time.

Step 2

Act as if you are in a courtroom, recording factual evidence. Record all of the evidence that supports this thought.



Step 3

Now list the evidence against the hot thought.

The following questions can help you with this process:

- Is there anything to suggest that this thought is not 100% true?
- If someone I trust had a similar thought to the thought I am having, what would I say to them? What evidence would I get them to look at?
- If I was feeling better, would I think about this type of situation differently? How?
- In the past if I had a similar thought, what would I think about that would help me to feel better?
- Are you falling into an unhelpful thinking style? Remind yourself of these.
- Are you overestimating the likelihood of danger or overestimating the likelihood of a bad outcome?

- Are there any small things that go against my thoughts?
- Are there any positive things about me or the situation that I am ignoring at the moment?
- Am I making any assumptions?
- What are the other ways of viewing the situation? What else might happen?
- Are you underestimating your ability to cope? Have you coped in a similar situation before?
- Am I blaming myself for something that I do not have any control over?
- In five years, if I looked back at this situation, what would I think? Would I look at the situation in the same way?
- If a close friend knew I was thinking this thought, how would they react? What would they think? What evidence would they look at that would suggest that my thoughts are not 100% true?

Step 4

Revise thoughts. Look at the evidence for and against your thought. Create a balanced alternative thought that takes into consideration both sides of the argument.



Why do we revise the thought?

We look for alternative views for our negative thoughts because our thoughts and beliefs are a POSSIBLE way of viewing a situation, but often not the ONLY way. Looking at the evidence for and against your hot thought, what would be a fairer way of viewing the situation?

Example: Someone who felt worthless would not want to revise their thought so that they thought they were the most worthy person in the world. A fair, balanced thought might be that they are worth a lot to family and friends and the people that know them.



Revised balanced thoughts

Old patterns of thinking are like bad habits, and tend to come back again and again. It is easy to slip back into your biased ways of thinking. You can help yourself to break these old habits by making flashcards that help you to develop new habits. Flashcards are small reminders of new ways of thinking that you can carry around with you. You can keep them in your purse, wallet or pocket, or anywhere where they are close to hand.

Example:

Unhelpful thought: "I always make a fool of myself"

Helpful alternative: "I have handled things okay many times before"

Example:

Unhelpful thought: "They think I'm not worth having around"

Helpful alternative: "I know I have something worthwhile to contribute"

Challenging Thoughts

1. Identify your negative thoughts.
2. Challenge them using the questions to help you identify evidence for and against. Use worksheet 2 to record your evidence.
3. Come up with alternative more balanced thoughts using the thought record.



Worksheet 3 - Revising Thoughts

Unhelpful thought	Balanced thought

Tell us, we're listening

Our staff want to know how they are doing. Tell us what you think at www.cnwl.nhs.uk/feedback and then we'll know what we have to do.



Adapted from:

Brosan, L. and Hogan, H. (2007) *An Introduction to Coping with Depression*. London: Constable and Robinson Ltd.

Gilbert, P. (2009). *Overcoming Depression*. London: Robinson. Greenberger, D., and Padesky, C. (1995). *Mind Over Mood*. New York: Guildford Press.

Westbrook, D. (2005) *Managing Depression*. Oxford: Oxford Cognitive Therapy Centre.

This document is also available in other languages, large print, Braille, and audio format upon request. Please email communications.cnwl@nhs.net

We are now able to communicate with deaf or hard of hearing people via Text Relay. If you are making a call from a text phone dial 18001 + 01908 243568

Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany także w innych wersjach językowych, w dużym druku, w alfabecie Braille'a lub w formacie audio.

Polish

நீங்கள் கேட்டுக்கொண்டால், இந்த ஆவணம் வேறு மொழிகளிலும், பெரிய எழுத்து அச்சிலும் அல்லது ஒலிநாடா வடிவிலும் அளிக்கப்படும்.

Tamil

درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے ذرائع پر بھی میسر ہے۔

Urdu

این مدرک همچنین بنا به درخواست به زبانهای دیگر، در چاپ درشت و در فرمت صوتی موجود است.

Farsi

Šį dokumentą paprašius taip pat galima gauti kitomis kalbomis, dideliu šriftu, Brailio raštu ir garso juostoje. Prašome kreiptis el.

Lithuanian

Mediante solicitação, este documento encontra-se também disponível noutras línguas, num formato de impressão maior, em Braille e em áudio.

Portuguese

Este documento también está disponible y puede solicitarse en otros idiomas, letra grande, braille y formato de audio.

Spanish

এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায়, বড় প্রিন্ট আকারে, ব্রেল এবং অডিও টেপ আকারেও অনুরোধ পাওয়া যায়

Bengali

Dokumentigaan waxaa xitaa lagu heli karaa luqado kale, daabacad far waa-wayn, farta indhoolaha (Braille) iyo hab dhegaysi ah markii la soo codsado.

Somali

Настоящий документ по отдельному запросу можно получить в переводе на другие языки, напечатанным крупным шрифтом или на аудиокассете.

Russian