



Wellbeing with Fatigue

Booklet for Participants

Session Five. Thought challenge.

steps2wellbeing
Southampton & Dorset

Action Plan

- Home practice review
- Thought Challenge
- Challenging Unhelpful Thinking Styles
- Home Practice

Questions?

Do you have any questions from last week's session?



Home Practice Review

How did your home practice go? Did you achieve your goals?

What did you learn from your home practice?

A graphic titled "Thought Challenge" featuring two black silhouettes of human heads facing each other. Inside the heads are gears and a target symbol. Above them is a red speech bubble containing a glowing lightbulb. The background is light blue with various icons like gears, arrows, and a target. A red and blue bar chart is positioned between the heads.

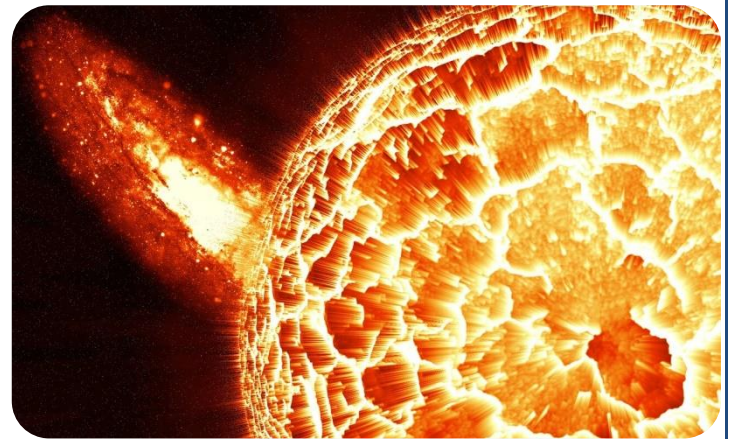
Thought Challenge

Creating balanced thoughts

The key to changing the way we feel is to learn how to change our unhelpful thinking. Thought challenging isn't about ignoring the unhelpful thoughts we have, because that's almost impossible to do, it is about making these thoughts balanced. We have to learn to re-evaluate our thoughts, almost like we are a detective or a lawyer. Instead of just accepting that what we are thinking is true, we must learn to look for evidence to see whether or not our thoughts are accurate.

* "Hot" Thoughts *

Often there will be lots of thoughts going through our mind in a situation. It is not necessary to go through and re-evaluate them all though, as many thoughts follow a similar theme. Usually we can identify a main thought that links most closely to our emotion. We call this the "hot" thought.



"You mainly feel the way you think." Albert Ellis

Thought Challenge Diary

To help us re-evaluate our thoughts we can ask a number of questions, identify evidence pro and against the thoughts, come up with a balanced perspective.

There are a number of questions that we can ask to help us challenge the unhelpful thoughts.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Are there other ways of interpreting this situation?
- What is the evidence that my thought/belief is true?
- Is there any evidence that disproves my thoughts/belief?
- Are there any other explanations?
- Am I jumping to conclusions?
- Am I only focusing on the negative and ignoring any positives?
- Am I over generalising?
- If I was more relaxed & not feeling down, might I think differently?
- Might somebody else have a different view?
- Is what I am thinking entirely true?



Recap

Step 1: Identify the thoughts you were having in the situation

Step 2: Find the “hot” thought

*Step 3: Re-evaluate this thought by answering the questions above
Remember to look for factual evidence rather than your own
opinions*

Thought Diary for Re-evaluating Thoughts

Situation (what, where, when, who)	Emotion (label and rate out of 10)	Thoughts What was going through your mind? Circle "hot" thought	Evidence Supporting Hot Thought	Evidence Contradicting Hot Thought	Alternative, balanced perspective	Re-rate Emotions

Take a break.
You deserve it!



Changing Unhelpful Thinking Styles

Once you can identify your unhelpful thinking styles, you can start to notice them – they very often occur just before and during distressing situations. Once you can notice them, then that can help you to challenge or distance yourself from those thoughts, and see the situation in a different and more helpful way.



This pattern of thinking means that we get tunnel vision and only focus on one part of the situation ignoring the rest. Typically this means focusing on the negatives and not seeing the whole picture.

Challenge:

- **The most important rule for challenging mental filtering is to look for balance.**
- **Look for the opposite of what you filter for**
- **Am I only noticing the bad stuff?**
- **Am I filtering out the positives?**
- **Am I wearing gloomy specs?**
- **What would be more realistic**



a) Fortune telling

We make predictions about what will happen. These predictions are never positive.

Challenge:

- **Am I thinking that I can predict the future?**
- **How likely is it that, that might really happen?**

b) Mindreading

We assume we know that people are thinking and again this is never positive.

Challenge:

- **Concentrate on being specific and accurate**
- **The only way to know others opinions is to ask them (if they will tell you!)**
- **Am I assuming I know what others are thinking?**
- **Those are my own thoughts not theirs**
- **Do not confuse “*intuition*” with guessing.**
- **Consider what else they could be thinking**
- **Accept that everyone has a right to their own thoughts and opinions-we can only control our own thoughts**



Catastrophising

This occurs when we blow things out of proportion; we view the situation as terrible, awful, and dreadful and often fail to focus on how we can solve it.

Challenge:

- **Ask yourself what hard evidence supports my conclusions?**
- **Can I adopt a more accurate perspective on the event?**
- **What are some less terrible conclusions I can make about the event?**
- **What practical steps can I take to deal with the situation?**
- **What’s most likely to happen?**

*“this is
my fault”*

Personalisation

This involves blaming yourself for everything that goes wrong or could go wrong even if you are not responsible or only partly responsible.

Challenge:

- **Identify what else/who else shares responsibility for what happened**

Black and White/All or Nothing Thinking



When we think in terms of extremes e.g. I'm a success or a failure. Thinking this way means that we don't take into consideration any shades of grey.

Challenge

- **Instead of describing yourself/your life in black or white terms, describe specific shades of grey.**
- **Consider use of percentages when describing or a scale or continuum**
- **Where is this on the spectrum?**

Shoulds/Musts

Saying 'I/they should' or 'I/they must' puts unreasonable demands or pressure on us and sometimes on other people. We need to check that these are realistic expectations

Challenge

- **Am I putting more pressure on myself setting up expectations of myself that are almost impossible?**
- **What would be more realistic?**

"everything is
always rubbish"
"nothing good
ever happens"

Overgeneralisation

When we overgeneralise we take one instance in the past or the present and apply it to all current and future situations. Indicators that we are overgeneralising are when we use terms like 'always, everyone, never'.

Challenge

- **Avoid using absolute terms such as *all, every, none, nobody, everybody, never, always.***
- **Avoid statements about the future- you have no way of predicting the future**

- What evidence have I got for that conclusion?
- Do I really have enough data to make this a rule?
- What other conclusion could this evidence support? What else could it mean?
- How can I check this conclusion?

Emotional Reasoning



This involves basing our view of a situation or ourselves on the way that we are feeling.

Saying I know it's going to be bad because we feel like it will be bad.

Challenge

- **Avoid using emotional words about self when viewing situations. E.g. *"I am so anxious therefore I am bound to fail/not be able to cope/not pass"*.**
- ***"I feel helpless...therefore I am helpless"***
- **Look for underlying thoughts that create the feelings.**
- **Just because it feels bad doesn't necessarily mean it is bad.**
- **My feelings are just a reaction to my thoughts**

Magnification/Minimisation



We magnify positive qualities in others but minimise our own.

Challenge:

- **People are all individuals, with unique combinations of strengths and weaknesses.**
- **Concentrate on affirming your own right to be exactly as you are, without apology or judgement**
- **Am I exaggerating the bad stuff?**
- **How would someone else see it?**
- **What's the bigger picture?**



Over to You: Choose and Practice

Summary Session Five

In this session we looked at how to challenge our negative thoughts and unhelpful thinking styles.

Write down one or more key points that you have learnt today:

Suggested Home Practice

You may find useful to read this handbook, reflect upon your thoughts and the psychological techniques discussed.

When you experience a shift in mood this week, use the format we practiced today to change your thoughts from automatic, negative thoughts to more balanced thoughts. Rate your feelings before and after you challenged your thoughts to get a sense of how effective changing thoughts is for reducing unpleasant emotions.