

MOOD MATTERS

SESSION 4 COURSE WORKBOOK



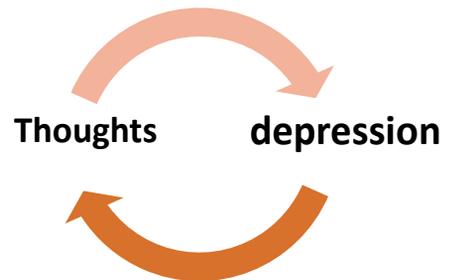
Session 4: Thoughts

Focusing on our thoughts...

Do you ever...

- *Worry about things by going over them again and again in your mind?*
- *Dwell on the negative?*
- *Criticise yourself all the time?*
- *Expect the very worst to happen and jump to the very worst conclusion about everything?*
- *Focus on what other people think of you?*

When you feel depressed, negative or unhelpful thinking can be a natural response. Having these kind of unhelpful thoughts over time can make us believe that we're useless, that nobody likes us or that we are not good enough. Our thoughts play a big part in driving how we feel and behave. Therefore, if we are thinking negatively, we might begin to feel lower and want to do less.



What Is An Unhelpful Thought?

Unhelpful thoughts usually...

- automatic.
- come out of nowhere but are actually based on our beliefs.
- seem reasonable and we tend not to question them.



If the thoughts were true they would make most people feel depressed!

There are many unhelpful thinking styles in depression. Have a look through the handout. Do you identify with any of the thinking styles?

A New Perspective...

Sometimes it can be useful to look at things from different perspectives and to look at the whole picture.

- What we are aiming to do is come to a more ***realistic balanced perspective*** about the situation based on the factual evidence that we have.

Here are some questions which can be useful to ask yourself...

- What evidence do I have for/against this thought?
- Is there any other way of looking at this situation?
- How would someone else think about this situation?
- Am I setting myself an unrealistic or unobtainable standard?
- Am I forgetting relevant facts or over-focusing on irrelevant facts?
- Am I jumping to conclusions?
- Am I thinking in “all or nothing” terms?
- Am I over-estimating how much control I have over how things work out?
- Am I confusing a thought with a fact?

- How will I think about this in three months?
- Am I concentrating on my weakness and forgetting my strengths?
- Am I blaming myself for something that is not my fault?
- Am I taking things personally which have little or nothing to do with me?
- Am I exaggerating the importance of events?

Compassionate to Self

When you feel low, you might be very critical of yourself. You might talk to yourself in an angry, dismissive, nasty or defeated way.

- *If you noticed someone you care about feeling depressed, you wouldn't talk to them in that way.*
- *If someone you cared about saw you feeling down, they wouldn't talk to you that way. They would talk to you in a compassionate way*

Be **wise, courageous, kind** and **non-judgemental**
Show yourself that same compassion



Mindfulness

Mindfulness is another way of disengaging from or letting go of negative thinking. Notice when you are automatically drifting into negative thinking then redirect your attention back to the present – ‘the here and now’. Take notice of your thoughts, feelings and body sensations and become aware of the sounds, smells and noises around you. This can be practiced while paying attention to your breathing or a “mundane task” such as doing the dishes.



Homework

- Practice challenging a thought
- Try a mindfulness exercise
- Try writing a compassionate letter to yourself



Task 1: Thought Diary

Situation	Emotions	Thought	Thinking Style

Task 2: Coming to A Balanced Perspective

Situation	Emotion	Thought	Evidence For	Evidence Against	Balanced Thought

Unhelpful Thinking Styles

Mind Reading

Assuming you know what others are thinking e.g. "He thinks I'm a loser"



Fortune Telling

Predicting the future negatively e.g. "I'll fail that exam"



Catastrophising

Believing that what has happened or will happen will be so awful e.g. "It would be terrible if I fail"



Low frustration tolerance

Getting worked up over small issues and then giving up e.g. "It's just too hard, what's the point"



Discounting positives

Thinking that the positive things you or others do are trivial e.g. "That was easy, so it doesn't matter"



Regret orientation

Focussing on the idea that you could have done better in the past, rather on what you can do better now e.g. "I shouldn't have said that"



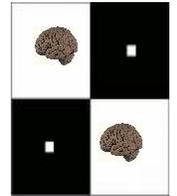
Overgeneralising

Perceiving a global pattern of negatives on the basis of a single incident e.g. "This generally happens to me"



Black or white thinking

Viewing events or people in all or nothing terms e.g. "I'm rejected by everyone"



Demands

Interpreting events in terms of how things should be or must be e.g. "I must do well; life should be fair"



Unfair Comparisons

Having unrealistic standards and comparing yourself to others e.g. "She's more successful than me"



Blaming vs personalising

Taking no responsibility and blaming others OR completely blaming yourself e.g. "The marriage ended because I failed"



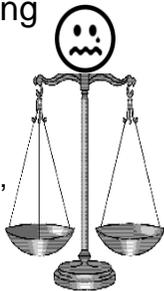
Labelling

Assigning global negative labels to yourself and others e.g. "I'm unlovable"



Emotional reasoning

Letting your feelings guide your interpretation of reality e.g. "I feel bad, therefore, my relationship isn't working out"



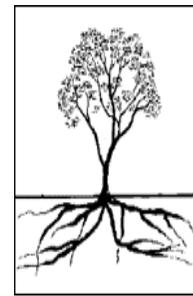
What if?

Asking a series of questions about 'what if' something happens and you fail to be satisfied with any of the answers e.g. "What if I get anxious"



Inability to disconfirm

Rejecting any evidence as irrelevant that might contradict your negative thought e.g. "That's not the real issue, there are deeper problems"



Mental filtering

Focussing on the negatives and rarely noticing the positives e.g. "Look at all the people who don't like me"



Mindfulness during Covid-19 Pandemic

Here at Wellbeing we understand that as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic we may experience more worry and anxiety than we usually do. This is a completely understandable and normal reaction to a very stressful and unusual situation. We might find that we are worried about loved ones, jobs and are worrying about the future, struggling to stay in the present moment. Mindfulness can help with that.



What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is an ancient eastern practice. It means to pay attention in a specific way; on purpose, in the present moment, and without judgement. Mindfulness does not conflict with any religious or cultural beliefs or traditions. It is a practical way to notice your thoughts, physical sensations, sights, sounds and smells. It is simply noticing things that we don't normally pay attention to, because our heads might be preoccupied by the past or the future. Mindfulness can help us to focus and choose where we focus our attention.



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We can sometimes go about our day to day activities on "automatic pilot", not being fully aware of what we're doing and not present

moment by moment. We can often do daily tasks being miles away without realising it. In this state, we're more likely to have our "buttons pressed" as our environment may trigger old, unhelpful thinking patterns. By becoming more aware of our thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations, we give ourselves more opportunity to challenge and change our old thoughts and habits that might cause us problems.



Mindfulness can:

- » Help reduce stress and anxiety and conflict
- » Increase resilience and emotional intelligence
- » Improve communication



Mindful Activity

One way of increasing mindfulness is through day to day activities. This can include eating, tidying, cleaning and walking. When we go for our daily walks or cleaning the dishes, we might be ruminating over things in the past, or worrying about the future. If you find yourself doing this, gently nudge yourself back to the present. If you're going for a walk, notice the temperature of the air on your skin, you might notice the smell of the grass or flowers, take notice of the nature around you. Can you hear birds singing or cars driving past? What noise do your shoes make when they hit the ground? Can you hear other people talking? Try paying attention to specific tasks and activities to increase mindful thinking.



Breathing Meditation 1 (Kabat-Zinn 1996)

Assume a comfortable posture lying on your back or sitting. If you are sitting, keep the spine straight and let your shoulders drop. Close your eyes if it feels comfortable.

Bring your attention to your belly, feeling it rise or expand gently on the in-breath and fall on the out-breath.

Keep your focus on the breathing, being with each in-breath for its full duration and with each out-breath for its full duration, as if you were riding the waves of your own breathing.

Every time you notice that your mind has wandered off the breath, notice what it was that took you away and then gently bring your attention back to your belly and the feeling of the breath coming in and out.

If your mind wanders away from the breath a thousand times, then your job is simply to bring it back to the breath every time.

Practice this exercise for fifteen minutes every day, whether you feel like it or not, for one week and see how it feels to add this to your daily life. Be aware of how it feels to spend some time each day just being with your breath without having to *do* anything.

You can watch this short [mindful breathing exercise video on YouTube](#) from Every Mind Matters.

NHS Mindfulness App

If you are interested in developing your mindfulness skills further NHS GG&C have developed a mindfulness app, which can be downloaded for free from the App/Google Play store (just search NHSGGC mindfulness-based approaches). There are lots of good resources on there, including a link to a free 8-week mindfulness-based stress reduction course.

Having suicidal thoughts? Discuss with a loved one, call Samaritans on **116 123** or access your **G.P.** or **Crisis Service** via **NHS** on **111**.

