

NO HARD FEELINGS – FEEL IT, FACE IT, THRIVE!

SESSION 5 WORKBOOK



WELCOME BACK TO SESSION 5



So last session we covered:

- ✓ The importance of observing our emotions in a non-judgemental and present focused way.
- ✓ We noticed that judging our emotional experiences usually makes them worse.
- ✓ We noticed how our emotions are often rooted in past experiences or what could happen in the future.
- ✓ We practiced Mindful Emotion Awareness and how we could use music to bring on strong emotions in a controlled way, before using Anchoring in the Present skills for real world application.

How did you get on with the home tasks?

Any questions before we move on?

Did anyone make toast?

Do you remember our discussion around building a new house? We are going to continue to work on the third floor of the house. This floor is divided into 3 rooms and the room we will look at today is Cognitive Flexibility.

GOALS FOR TODAY

- ✓ To understand how your thoughts influence how you feel.
- ✓ To identify patterns of negative thinking.
- ✓ To learn how to be more flexible in your thinking.



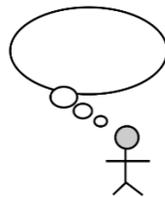
SO FAR

- ✓ We have learned to carefully track the interactions between our thoughts, physical sensations and behaviours.
- ✓ We have learned a skill called Mindful Emotion Awareness and practised paying attention to the parts of our emotional response in non-judgemental and present focused way.

Now we are moving to the third floor of the house in which each room provides a coping skill that corresponds to each of the three components – thoughts, physical sensations and behaviours.

These form the three rooms in the third floor of the house.

Today we will zoom in on one specific and very important component of every emotional experience - our thoughts.



But first a mindfulness of taste practice

Follow the script and notice how you feel.

Now let's become aware of our thoughts . . .

Firstly we will talk about how our thoughts influence how we feel.

Then we will look at identifying when we may be automatically looking at emotional situations in a negative or unhelpful way.

Lastly we will learn how to be more flexible in our thinking – we call this cognitive flexibility.

This skills involves coming up with other ways of viewing situations that may be more helpful for us.

Cognitive flexibility helps us to respond in helpful, adaptive ways to emotion-provoking situations.

While focusing on what we think, try to use Mindful Emotion Awareness to observe our thoughts without judgement - this helps us get more out of the skill discussed in this session.

WHY ARE THOUGHTS IMPORTANT?

Thoughts are an important part of every emotional experience.

The way we think about our world really influences how we feel.

Most situation in our lives can be interpreted in more than one way.

For example, imagine you are texting back and forward over the day with someone new you are dating and now you haven't heard back from them for a few hours.

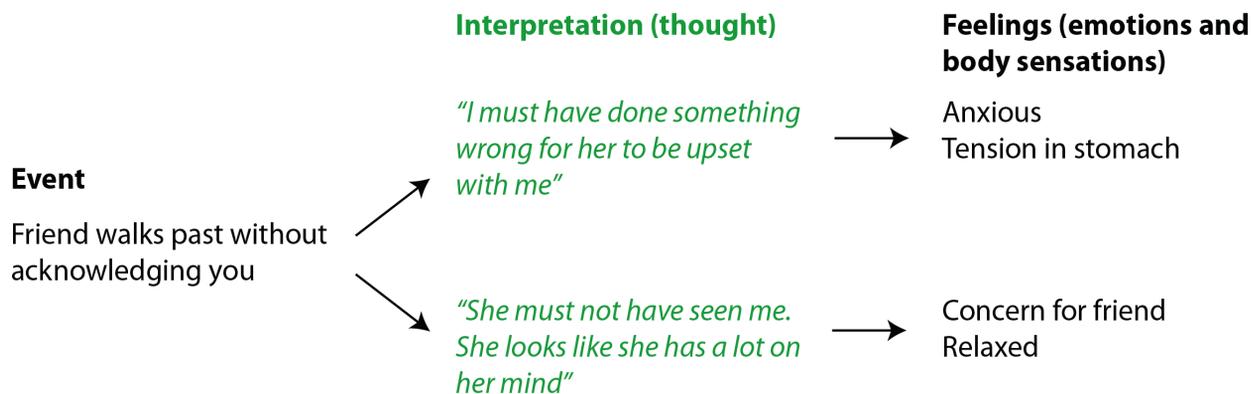
How would you feel if you thought?

"They are not interested anymore". You might feel sad, ashamed or angry

But what if you thought?

"They are probably distracted by work" You might then feel neutral or excited to hear what they have been doing.

How we interpret situations (e.g., not hearing back from the person) really affects how we feel.

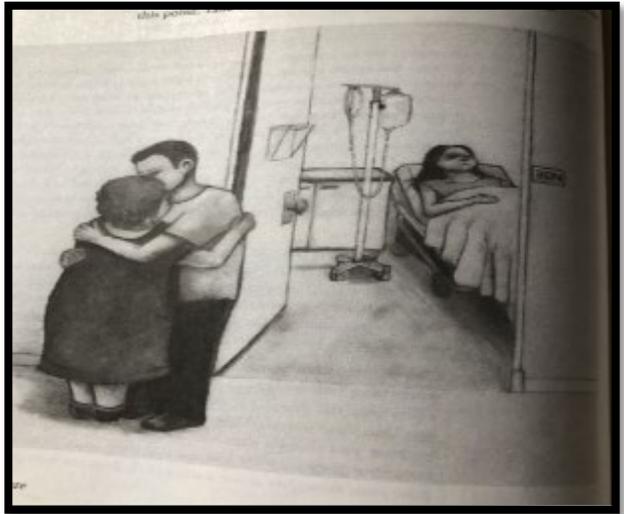


INTERPRETATIONS

1. What was your first interpretation about what is happening?

Record the first thing that jumped into your mind.

2. What might have led you to your first interpretation? *Did you focus on specific parts of the picture like an object or the expression on someone's face? Did a specific memory or past experience influence your first interpretation?*



3. Try to come up with at least 3 other interpretations of what might be happening in the picture. *If your first interpretation was negative see if you can come up with a more positive one. If your first interpretation was positive, see if you can come up with something more negative. Its ok if these don't seem as believable as your first interpretation*

Just note down what comes to mind.

Notes

REFLECTIONS

During the exercise you might have noticed that your first interpretation came very quickly – maybe in a few seconds.

One you landed on that interpretation it was hard to come up with other possibilities? You may have focused on key parts of the picture, making it difficult to see other important details.

We all tend to interpret situations quickly and automatically.

Sometimes these *automatic thoughts* are helpful. Such as a situation where there is immediate danger (like a car speeding down the road toward you). You would probably focus on only a couple of key pieces of information – how fast the car is going and how far away it is. You may not notice the colour or model.

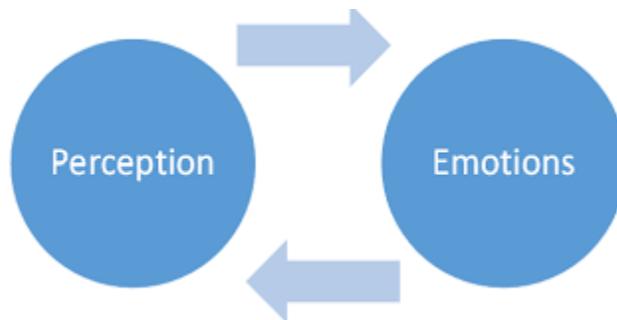
In this situation focusing on only a couple of things is helpful – it allows you to respond quickly by jumping out of the way!

However!

When we tend to always focus only on the negative parts of certain situations it's not so helpful.

Getting stuck in patterns where our automatic thoughts are usually negative is common for people with emotional disorders.

Because the way we *think* affects the way we *feel* it's important to notice when we are getting stuck in negative thinking patterns.



MINDS AND WINDOWS

Self-awareness can be hard. Your mind is not always to be trusted. It sometimes lies, or plays tricks, and doesn't give you the full picture. It can convince you that you are terrible.

A mind is real as a *mind* in the same way a window is real as a *window*. But that doesn't mean the view you see through the window is the full view. Sometimes the glass is dirty, or clouded, or rain-specked, and sometimes the view is obscured by a big lorry that has parked right in front of it. **The window could also be entirely misleading.**

For instance, if your only view was through a red stained-glass window you might perceive the world to be as red and forbidding as a Martian desert. Even if there was nothing out there but lush green fields.

THINKING TRAPS

On the next page is thinking styles. *Can you identify what ones you do?*

People with emotional disorders tend to experience 2 types of thinking traps:

Jumping to conclusions

This trap occurs when you jump to conclusions that your automatic negative thought is true.

Can you think of a time when you have done this? Take a minute and write down what happened and what was the outcome.

Thinking the worst

This trap occurs when you automatically predict that the worse possible scenario is going to happen. You also think that when it does you won't be able to cope with it. Again let's think of a time when you predicted the worst – what happened?

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"



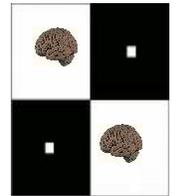
Overgeneralising

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"



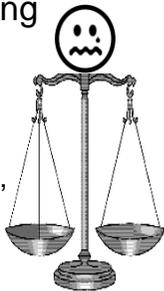
Labelling

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"



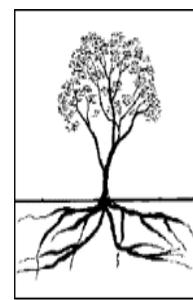
What if?

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"



IDENTIFYING THINKING TRAPS

The problem with thinking traps is that they make our thinking less flexible.

By only seeing the negative side of a situation we are more likely to respond in unhelpful ways – like doing something to avoid or push our feelings away.

We then get stuck in negative cycles.

So let's talk about changing the pattern!

The first step is to notice when you might be falling into a thinking trap in your daily life.

Have a look at the hot cross bun forms you completed previously and examine these to see if you can identify whether any of them are falling into these traps.

Keep in mind that negative automatic thoughts can often fall into both traps at the same time

- Both jumping to conclusions and thinking the worse. Don't worry about working that out – just notice when you are doing it.

This can prompt you to question your initial gut interpretations.

HOW DO WE BECOME MORE FLEXIBLE WITH OUR THINKING?

One way out of the thinking traps is to consider your negative automatic thoughts as not "truths" but as one possible interpretation.

Cognitive flexibility involves coming up with other interpretations of these situations.

Learning to be more flexible in your thinking can help you respond in more helpful ways to strong emotions.

When you find yourself falling into a thinking trap ask yourself the following questions to generate other ways of thinking about emotional situations.

QUESTIONS WE CAN ASK OURSELVES

Do I know for certain that _____ will happen or is it true?

What evidence do I have for and against this thought or belief?

Could there be any other explanation?

How much does it *feel* like _____ is true? What is a more *realistic* chance that _____ is true?

Is my negative automatic thought driven by the intense emotion I am experiencing?

If _____ were true, could I cope with it? How would I handle it?

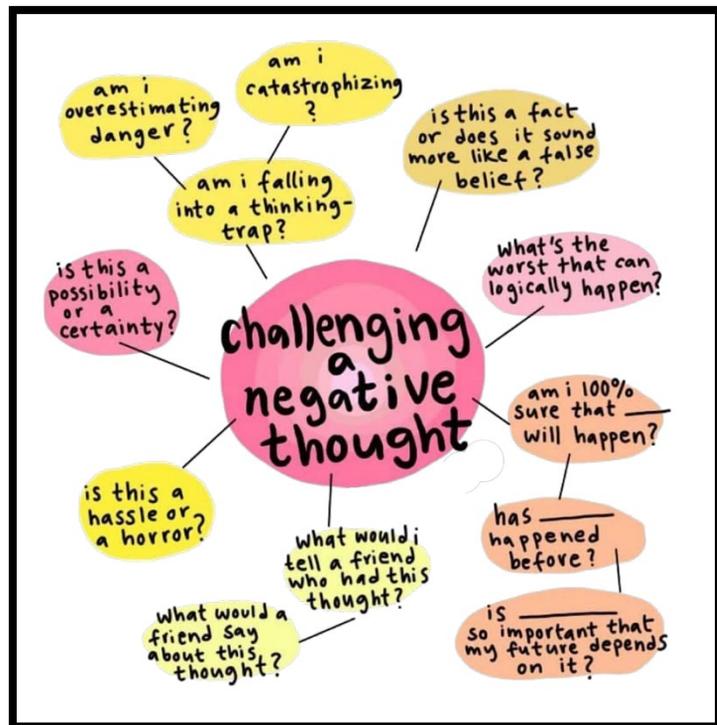
Even if _____ were true, could I live with it?

CHALLENGING THOUGHTS

If we are able to ask ourselves these questions then we can come up with other interpretations of the emotion-producing situations we face.

These other interpretations may then help us to plan ways to manage and not avoid situations.

Remember – the goal is not to get rid of your negative automatic thoughts. The aim is to allow many possible interpretations to exist.



THOUGHT RECORDS

In your workbooks and on the website you will find thoughts records. We used them in earlier sessions. Begin to write down your thoughts and label them to identify if you were fortune telling or catastrophising. Then you can begin to challenge them.

Situation	Where were you / what were you doing / who were you with?
Emotion or feeling (Rate intensity 0-100%)	Record emotions and physical sensations?
Automatic thought	What thoughts, images, or memories were in your mind / if an image or memory, what did it mean to you?
Evidence that supports the thought	What facts support how true the thought was?
Evidence that does not support the thought	What experiences tell you this thought is not entirely true all of the time / are there any experiences which contradict the thought?
Alternative (balanced) thought (Rate degree of belief 0-100%)	Think of a new thought now you have the evidence for and against the original thought...
Emotion or feeling (Rate intensity 0-100%)	How do you feel about the situation now?

THOUGHTS ABOUT EMOTIONS

It is also important to try to be flexible in how you think about emotions.

For example, people with emotional disorders often have negative automatic thoughts about the *experience of emotion*.

You might think “I shouldn't feel anxious” or “I hate being sad”.

What might be more helpful things to think and tell yourself?

SUMMARY

- ✓ Today we looked more closely at one part of our emotional experiences – thoughts.
- ✓ We saw how our thoughts influence how we feel.
- ✓ We discussed how thoughts can become automatic and lead to thinking traps.
- ✓ Lastly we learned how to question our thinking traps to come up with other ways of thinking about emotional situations.



Let's do our weekly quiz to summarise if we have understood.

1. Thoughts affect how we feel but our emotions don't affect how we interpret situations.
2. We always have complete and conscious control over our automatic thoughts.
3. In this treatment it is not as important to figure out which of the two thinking traps (jumping to conclusions and thinking the worst) you are falling into.
4. In this treatment the goal of cognitive flexibility is to eliminate all incorrect ways of thinking.

HOMEWORK

- ✓ Use the practising cognitive flexibility form to record when you might be falling into a thinking trap and come up with other interpretations of emotional situations.



Remember that the Questions for negative automatic thoughts can be helpful and try this at least once a day.

- ✓ Practice your Mindful Emotional Awareness.

Thank you for attending week 5.

See you next week for week 6

MY NOTES



Form 7.1: Mindful Emotion Awareness

Use this form to record your experience following completion of the *Mindful Emotion Awareness Meditation*, *Mindful Mood Induction*, or *Anchoring in the Present*.

- Mindful Emotion Awareness Meditation:** Listen to the five-minute audio recording available at <http://www.oup.com/us/ttw> and record your experience.
- Mindful Mood Induction:** Choose a song that you know will bring up emotions for you and practice observing your experience in the present moment nonjudgmentally. Record your experience.
- Anchoring in the Present:** When you notice that an emotional response is building, complete the following four steps: (1) use your cue (e.g., breath) to ground yourself in the present moment, (2) do a three-point check (thoughts, physical sensations, behaviors), (3) ask yourself if your response is consistent with what's going on right now, and (4) bring your response in line with the demands of the present moment.

Date	Practice Meditation, Mood Induction, or Anchoring?	What did you notice?			How effective were you at not judging your experience?	How effective were you at anchoring yourself in the present?
		Thoughts	Physical Sensations	Behaviors	0 - 10 (not at all) (extremely)	0 - 10 (not at all) (extremely)

7-Column Thought Record

This download is a fillable worksheet which allows the option to type directly into the document. A PDF reader (Adobe, Foxit, etc.) is required in order to use fillable features. Worksheets can be saved on the device or sent electronically without the need to print.

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