

PANIC & ANXIETY

SESSION 3 COURSE WORKBOOK

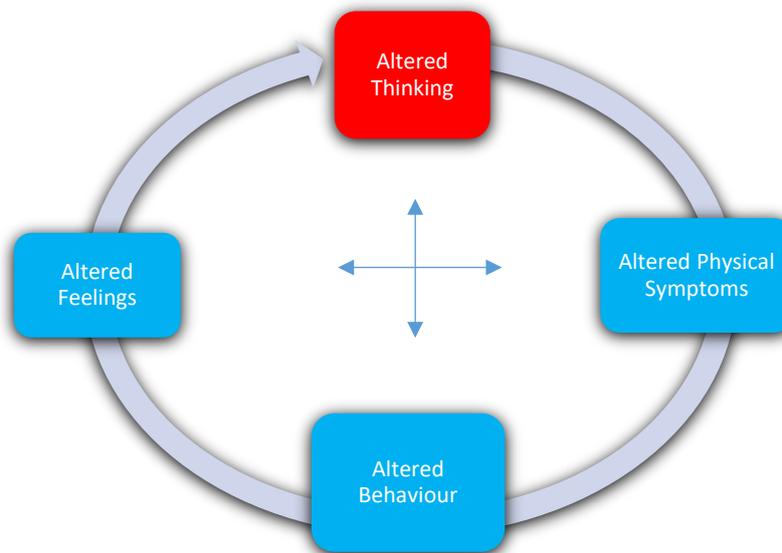




PANIC AND ANXIETY COURSE

THOUGHTS

In today's session we discussed the role of our thoughts in feeding panic & anxiety, and keeping the 'vicious circle' going. We also learned what we can do to identify and challenge anxious and unhelpful thoughts.



Our thoughts or the way we think about things can play a major role in increasing or reducing our panic & anxiety levels. Many of our thoughts occur outside of our control, and can be negative or unhelpful...

NEGATIVE AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

- ✓ They are automatic – and seem to come out of nowhere
- ✓ They seem reasonable at the time and we often accept them without questions
- ✓ They are hard to stop
- ✓ They are the kind of thoughts that if they were true, would make most people feel anxious

THOUGHT DIARIES

When you feel panic and anxiety it can be hard to remember what was going through our mind at the time. You can train yourself to notice your thoughts using a thought diary. Thought diaries can provide a way of recording your thoughts, identifying unhelpful thoughts, and becoming more aware of them. When learning a new skill, it's useful to go back to basics. Writing it down helps! (Handout)

TYPES OF NEGATIVE AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

- ✓ What you say to yourself - 'I will collapse if I have to wait in a big queue at the shop'
- ✓ Images in your head - 'Seeing yourself lying on the shop floor'
- ✓ Memories - Remembering an image of someone who had collapsed in a shop

PATTERNS OF UNHELPFUL THINKING

Being aware of the common patterns that unhelpful thoughts follow can help you to recognise when you have them. Some of the common patterns that our unhelpful thoughts follow are in this handout.

CHALLENGING AUTOMATIC NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

It is important to remember that it is not the situation itself that makes us feel anxious; it is our perception of that situation. Changing the way we think about situations and seeing different perspectives can help us to feel less anxious.

- ✓ When you are anxious, you look for (and find) threats that keep you feeling anxious.
- ✓ You zoom in on 'threats'
- ✓ You find 'evidence' for your fears
- ✓ You ignore 'evidence' against your fears

Once you have identified an unhelpful thought, the next step is to challenge that thought. You can think of it like a jury in a court case. To know the truth you need to piece together the evidence.

What is the evidence FOR your thoughts? – refers to information that you feel backs up your thought. It may be how you feel or previous experiences.

What is the evidence AGAINST your thoughts? – refers to all the information that contradicts your thought such as remembering the worst hasn't happened and how you coped before.

When you have weighed the **evidence for and against your thoughts**, try to come to a **more realistic, balanced perspective**. Sometimes it can help to ask your partner or a friend to help you with this task.

Other questions to help you tackle your thinking can be found in the attached handout.

The goal of this task is to teach you to recognise, unwind, and tackle thoughts which make you anxious. It is hoped that in time you will become an expert in identifying and challenging your own unhelpful thoughts. It is a new skill and will not happen overnight; it will take time and practise!

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is an alternative way of disengaging from or letting go of negative thinking. The aim of mindfulness is to increase awareness so we can react with greater choice. Mindfulness is not about being able to keep your attention in the present moment It's about 'waking up' when we have lost our attention and practicing coming back.

For more information on mindfulness contact Lifelink on 0141 552 4434 or info@lifelink.co.uk.

See handout on how to practise this technique.

HOMEWORK

- Over the next week, practice thought challenging using the 7 column thought diary – look at evidence for and against your negative automatic thoughts, to come up with a more balanced, realistic thought.
- Try practicing mindfulness.

SITUATION	EMOTION OR FEELING (RATE INTENSITY 0-100%)	AUTOMATIC THOUGHT	EVIDENCE THAT SUPPORTS THE THOUGHT	EVIDENCE THAT DOES NOT SUPPORT THE THOUGHT	ALTERNATIVE (BALANCED) THOUGHT (RATE DEGREE OF BELIEF 0-100%)	EMOTION OR FEELING (RATE INTENSITY 0-100%)
Where were you? What were you doing? Who were you with?	Record emotions and physical sensations...	What thoughts, images, or memories were in your mind? If an image or memory, what did it mean to you?	What facts support how true the thought was?	What experiences tell you this thought is not entirely true all of the time? Are there any experiences which contradict the thought?	Think of a new thought taking into account the evidence for and against the original thought	How do you feel about the situation now?