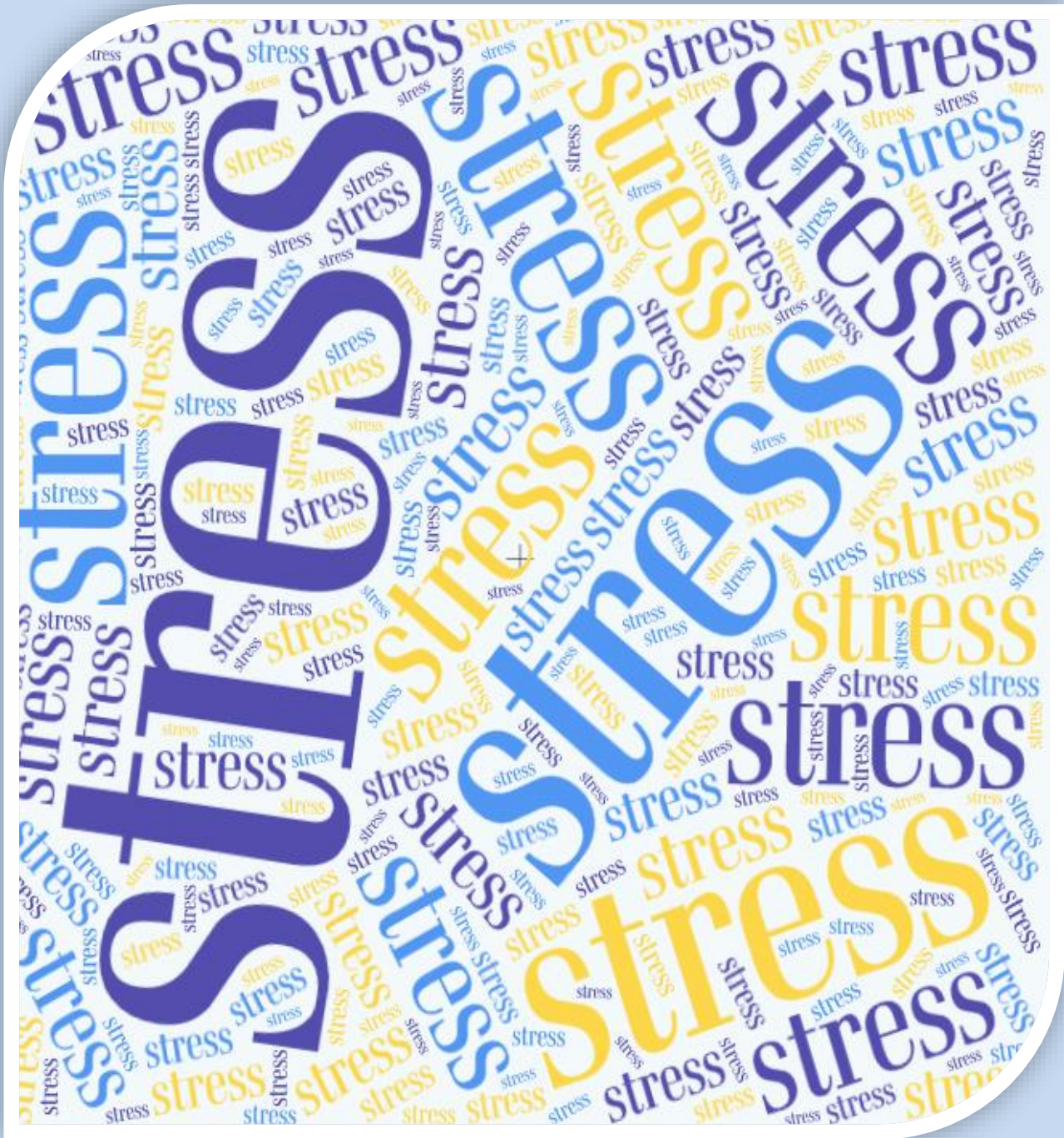


Stress Management Workbook 3



Thought Patterns and Stress

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THOUGHT PATTERNS AND STRESS

The aim of these Wellbeing Workbooks is to help you learn more about stress and the things you can do to help reduce your stress when you feel very worried or anxious.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- There are four workbooks altogether and they should each take around 2 hours to complete
- The workbooks should supplement the information you are learning about mental health in your school classes
- Each workbook has information, exercises and games to help you learn about wellbeing
- The exercises in the workbooks are simply there to aid your learning. You do not have to share any of your answers to the exercises; you can keep them as private as you would like to
- If you are feeling really stressed and think you would like to talk to someone about this, there are phone numbers and websites at the back of this book which might be useful

IN SESSION 2 WE LOOKED AT:

- How stress affects our behavior
 - Avoidance
 - Under-activity
 - Over-activity
- How stress can affect our thought process
- How to work on avoidance and under-activity
- Things to help when you do too much

IN SESSION 3 WE WILL LOOK AT:

- How stress affects our thinking
- How to identify unhelpful thoughts and negative styles of thinking
- How our thinking affects our feelings
- How to challenge unhelpful thoughts



EXERCISE 2: WHAT MAKES A 'GOOD LIFE'?



On the scale below, mark where you think you would need to score in order to feel you had a 'good life'

0 _____ 10

As **bad** as it could possibly be

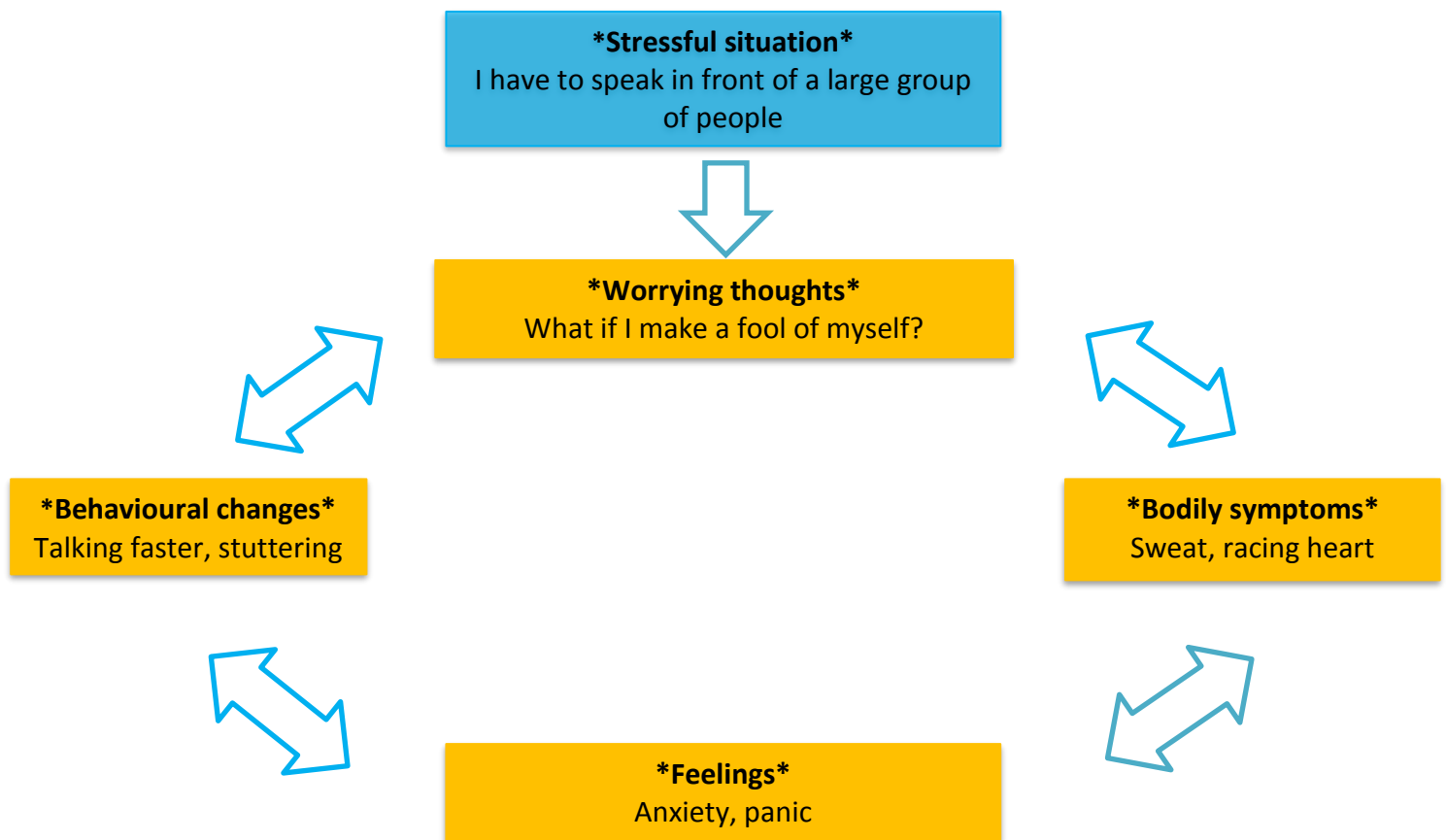
As **good** as it could possibly be

How would you know you had reached this point where you had a good quality life? What would you be doing differently?

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WHAT KEEPS IT GOING? THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF STRESS

Let's revisit the Cycle of Stress that we've seen over the last couple of weeks. This time let's think about the thoughts section of the cycle.



Our *feelings* are determined by our *thoughts*,
so the way we think will have a big impact
on how we feel



HOW NEGATIVE THOUGHTS CAN SNOWBALL...

Here is an example of how each worrying thought feeds into the next. As our thoughts become more and more extreme our level of stress increases.



- Typical - It wasn't raining till I got here!
- The bus is ALWAYS late
- I'll be late for work
- They will all be talking about me when I get in
- The boss won't be happy
- I'll get into trouble
- I'll get pulled into the office
- I'll get fired!

Recognising what we say to ourselves and changing it to more positive self-talk can be very powerful and significantly improve how we feel.

EXERCISE 3

Now you try: think of a situation you have been in where your thoughts have snowballed, and write down the sequence of thoughts that you had.

1.
2.
3.
4.

HOW DOES STRESS AFFECT YOUR THINKING?

Here are some examples of the **common thoughts** people have when they feel **under stress**. Unfortunately, these same thoughts **INCREASE** how stressed we feel:

- I can't cope
- I'm useless
- They will all think I am stupid
- What's the point in trying
- Things never go right for me
- There must be something wrong with me
- I just want to get out of here
- They are all looking at me
- They all know I can't cope



What unhelpful things do you say to yourself when you are stressed?

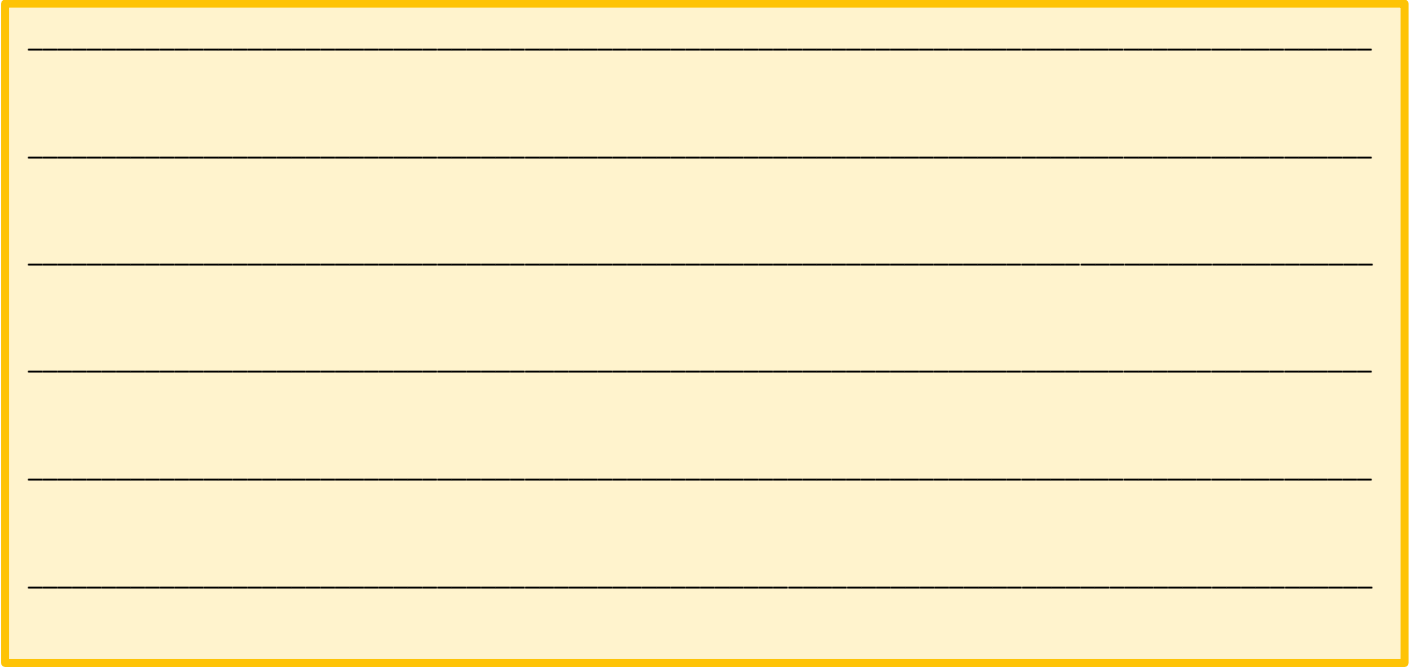
EXERCISE 4

Have a think about the last
time you felt **worried**,
stressed or **low**.

SITUATION – Where were you, who were you with, what were you doing?

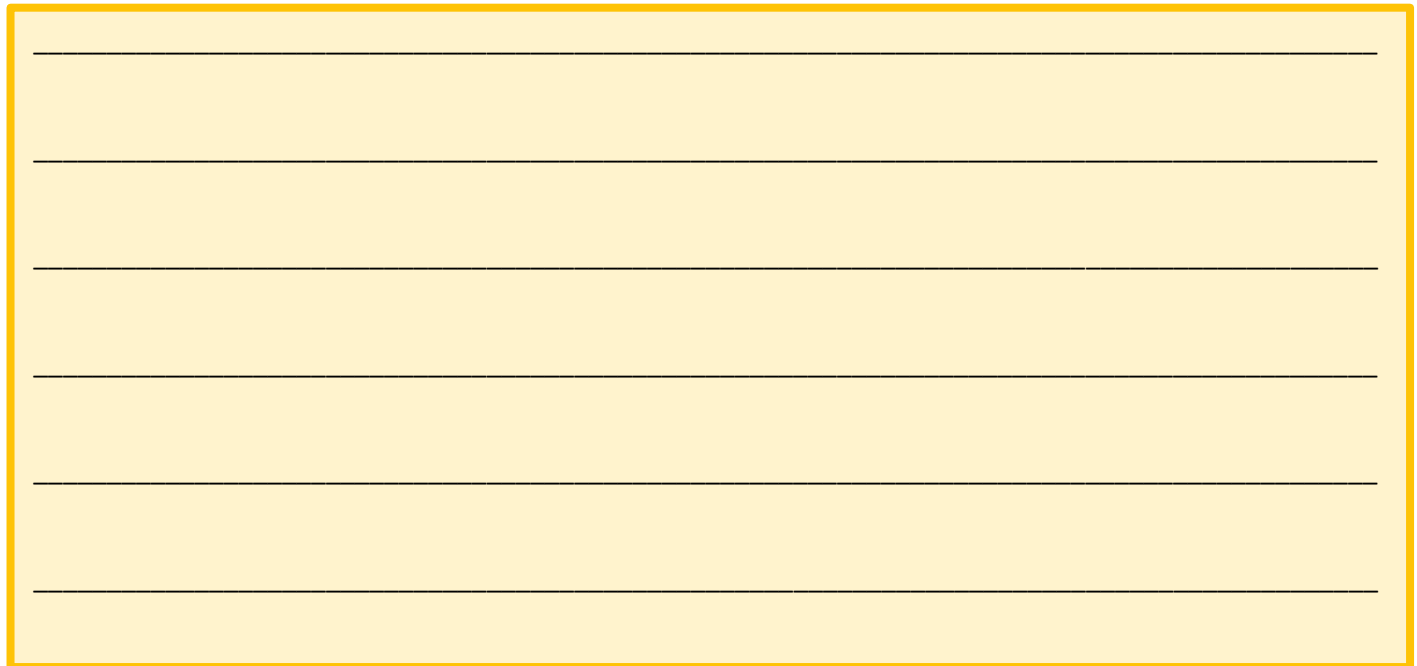
THOUGHTS - what were you saying to yourself at the time?

How did these thoughts make you feel?



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How helpful were these thoughts?



A large yellow rectangular box with a thick yellow border, containing seven horizontal black lines for writing.

UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS

Unhelpful thoughts are:

- Automatic
- Seem to come from nowhere – but are actually based on our beliefs
- Seem reasonable, so we tend not to question them

Unhelpful thoughts can:

- Happen when our emotions change e.g. when we get stressed
- Create more stress
- Become a habit and get much worse if they aren't tackled

These thoughts can take many different forms:

1. Words and sentences:

- I will collapse if I have to wait in a big queue at the shop
- No-one will talk to me if I go into the staff room
- I can't do this job anymore, it's too much for me and everyone knows that I can't cope

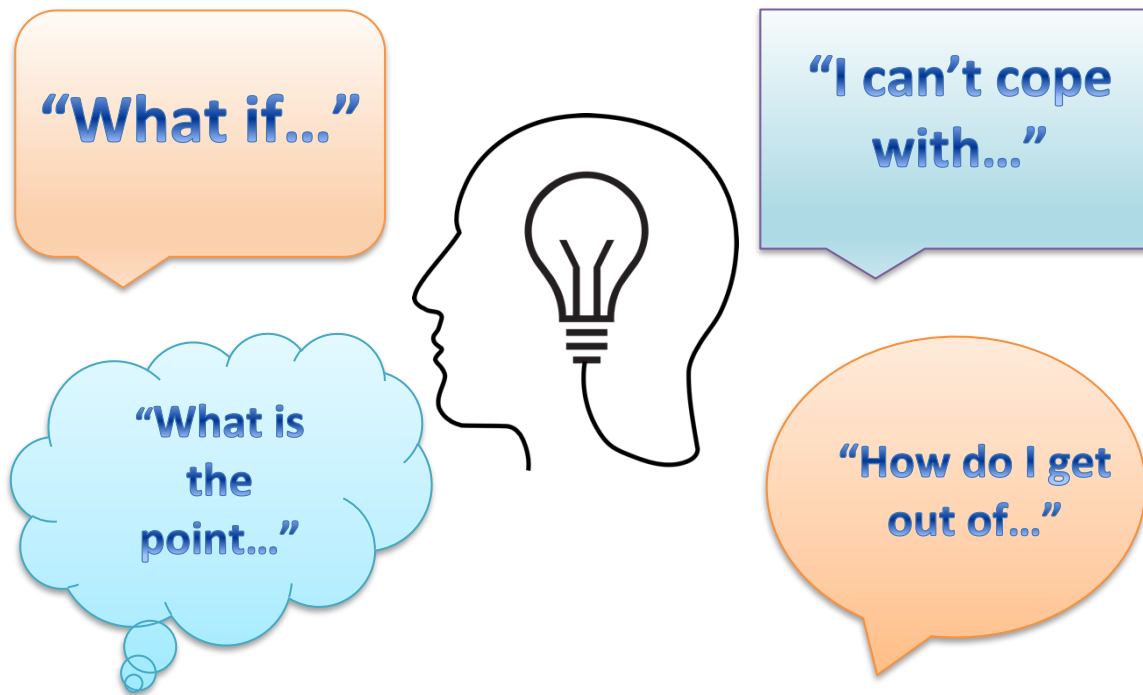
2. Images:

- Seeing yourself lying on the shop floor, ambulance outside
- Seeing yourself making a fool of yourself or imagining everyone talking about you when you leave

3. Memories:

- Seeing someone else who had collapsed in a shop in the past
- Remembering the last time you felt low or the last time you didn't do so well at work or did something wrong

TYPES OF UNHELPFUL SELF-TALK



EXERCISE 5

Look back at your answers for Exercise 4. In any of your thoughts, do you notice:



- "What if ..." thoughts?
Yes No
- "I can't cope with ..." thoughts
Yes No
- "What is the point ..." thoughts
Yes No
- "How do I get out of ..." thoughts
Yes No

COMMON UNHELPFUL WAYS OF THINKING

Taking on responsibility

"I take on responsibility particularly for things going wrong even when a situation has nothing to do with me"

Mind reading

"I tend to assume other people don't like me / think badly of me"

Jumping to conclusions

"I tend to assume that the worst will happen"

Over personalising

"I focus on or blow small slights out of proportion"

Looking on the negative side

"I tend to focus on the black side of things"

Being too hard on yourself

"Overlooking my strengths and focusing on my weak points"

Gloomy view of the future

"I overestimate the chances of bad things happening"

Making extreme statements / rules

"I often say I "must", "should", or "have to" I want things to be just right / perfect"

EXERCISE 6:



Complete the **word search puzzle** to identify different types of unhelpful thinking!

P X M D J J Z J Q S W V U Q M Q A M N G
T A J N H B O D U N S K M O J U G N C N
V K A W E A K A X O E B Z L U N Y M P I
K F Q O B M I Q B I Y G A R I B B E O D
M R A I P E T Z A S Z E C S U M J P I A
C E M U I W I R A U V H I X U D P N R E
W V X Q X Z O N L L F L H K X H U Y O R
Q Y G P V U U X G C A E D S O P E B J D
P B W W H A R D O N Y O U R S E L F G N
S C T J Z Z G M O O E V F L O D Z H L I
S P C Z A E H S T C R G C T T Y X V O M
J U P D J E R M T O D J A T S A P U O X
S E L U R E M E R T X E B T Y H W B M P
Y H N Z P J K L S G Y T T G I H D J Y C
W D K R H T I O Y N S E Z B O V C Y F Y
S S E K G A E C Y I V H M Z J D E R U L
H V R L C L A A W P C J K V C W P I T O
O A T G R C O Y S M Z Y T N E D L W U X
S N N X G S C Z T U B O D X A S U A R U
B E U Y V K O J K J F S L V I P I P E Y

BEINGNEGATIVE
EXTREMERULES
GLOOMYFUTURE
HARDONYOURSELF
JUMPINGTOCONCLUSIONS
MINDREADING
OVERPERSONALISING



➤ Look again at the thoughts you wrote down earlier.

Use the following pages to help you identify some of your unhelpful ways of thinking about **yourself**, **others** and the **future**

Being hard on yourself

Yes No



Handwriting practice area with five horizontal lines.

Looking on the negative side

Yes No



Handwriting practice area with five horizontal lines.

Gloomy view of the future

Yes No



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Jumping to conclusions

Yes No



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Mind reading

Yes No



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Taking on responsibility unnecessarily

Yes No



Over-personalising

Yes No



Making extreme statements/rules

Yes No



POSITIVE THINKING

You can **learn** to think more positively in the same way that you learned to think negatively but you have to **practice**.

Here are some **positive statements** to practice saying to yourself **daily**:



MEMORY POINTS


- The way we **think** affects the way we **feel** and **act**
- Stress is associated with certain unhelpful ways of
- These ways of thinking become a **habit**



It should be easy? To stop the unhelpful thoughts we should **simply stop thinking them**...but unfortunately, **it's not always that easy.**

Pink Elephants

1. In your mind, picture a pink elephant.
2. Now, stop thinking about the pink elephant.
3. Are you still thinking about it?



Often when we try
NOT to think about
something, we
actually think about
it **MORE**

So the question is, what **CAN** we do to tackle
unhelpful thinking?

TACKLING UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS

Here are some questions you can ask yourself that may help in tackling unhelpful thoughts:

- Firstly, **do not judge yourself** for having negative types of thinking.
- Secondly, ask yourself, **what is the evidence to support this thought?** Is the thought actually true?
- What **alternative views** are there? What would other people say?
- **Does this thought help me?** Does this way of thinking hold me back? How?
- What unhelpful thinking styles have I noticed (see p10)? What was the **result of those unhelpful thoughts?**
- **What can I do** to change the situation?



EXAMPLE SCENARIO

What typical thoughts would you think if someone you knew walked past you on the street without acknowledging you or saying hello? Might they be something like this...



I **must** have done something to upset her and she is ignoring me.

How dare they walk by me like that!

They do **not** like me and don't want to talk to me.

The following examples show how you can take an **unhelpful thought** and **change** it to a more **positive thought**.

“I’ll look like an idiot.
People will be
looking at me”

Alternative Positive Coping Thought:

- People have their own lives to think about, why would they look at me?
- There are plenty of people not looking at me
- Even if they do look, why does it matter? What makes me think their opinions are so valuable?
- The last time I had to do this it turned out to be completely fine

Can you think of another positive coping thought to balance the unhelpful thought “I’ll look like an idiot”? You can write it in the box below:

“My heart is beating so fast
I am going to have a heart
attack”

Alternative Positive Coping Thought:

- This has happened before and I've been OK
- This is just my body's reaction to fear
- I can manage this
- I cannot die from a panic attack

Can you think of another positive coping thought? You can write it in the box below:

“I am useless”

Alternative Positive Coping Thought:

- I might not feel good about myself right now but I have done things that are worthwhile
- Everyone has bad days
- That didn't go as well as I had hoped but that doesn't mean I am useless

Can you think of a different positive coping thought? You can write it in the box below:

EXERCISE 8



In this exercise, think back to some of your unhelpful thoughts and then try to come up with a more balanced alternative thought



UNHELPFUL THOUGHT	BALANCED POINT OF VIEW

MEMORY POINTS

- Notice the unhelpful thoughts you are saying to yourself
- Challenge these thoughts and come up with more balanced alternatives



AND FINALLY

Over the next week, **notice** what goes through your mind when you feel stressed or low.

Try to **tackle any unhelpful thoughts** by using the techniques from the exercises you have done in this workbook.

If you identify any unhelpful thinking, try to **ask yourself**:

What is your evidence for this thought?

What alternative views might there be?

Notice if you **feel differently** once you have asked yourself these questions and have challenged your way of thinking

EXERCISE 9

Now try to solve the cryptogram below to reveal an important message from this workbook. Some of the letters have been solved for you to start you off.



A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	
20					10					15										6			22			

T																									
6	14	24																							

W A																									
22	20	13																							

W																									
22	24																								

T																									
6	14	21	12	15																					

K																									
20	10	10	24	25	6	5																			

A F F																									
20	10	10	24	25	6	5																			

T																									
6	14	24																							

T																									
6	14	24																							

W A																									
22	20	13																							

W																									
22	24																								

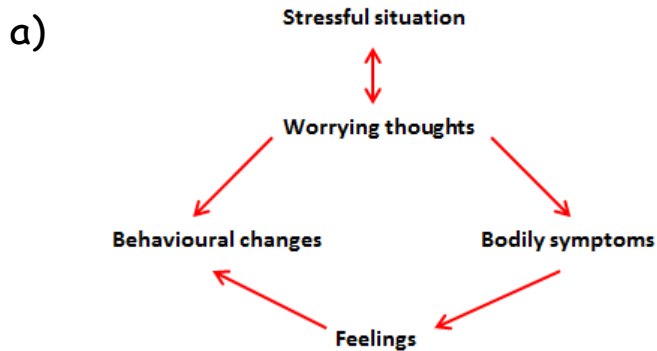
F																									
10	24	24	1																						

A																									
20	12	4																							

A T																									
20	25	6																							

SUMMARY QUIZ

1. Which of the following diagrams represents the *vicious cycle of stress*?



2. Our feelings are primarily determined by our _____

- a) Intelligence
- b) Personality
- c) Thoughts

3. What do we mean when we say "negative thoughts can snowball"?

- a) When one negative thought takes over your mind
- b) When one negative thought leads to another negative thought and so on, with each thought becoming more and more serious
- c) When you have several negative thoughts about different things in your mind at once

4. Unhelpful thoughts are _____ and _____

- a) Voluntary and based on beliefs
- b) Automatic and come from nowhere
- c) Automatic and based on beliefs
- d) Voluntary and come from nowhere

5. Common unhelpful ways of thinking include...

- a) Taking on responsibility, mind reading, jumping to conclusions
- b) Under personalizing, mind reading, making extreme statements
- c) Having a gloomy view of the future, not taking on responsibility, jumping to conclusions

6. Ways to tackle unhelpful thoughts include...

- a) Not judging yourself for having the thought, ignoring evidence which suggests the thought may not be true, questioning how helpful the thought is
- b) Judging yourself for thinking so negatively, questioning if there is any evidence to support the thought, questioning how helpful the thought is
- c) Not judging yourself for having the thought, questioning if there is any evidence to support the thought, questioning how helpful the thought is

USEFUL CONTACTS

- Childline
 - Phone: 0800 1111 (free 24 hour)
 - www.childline.org.uk
- Mental Health Foundation
 - Information and support for anyone with mental health problems or learning disabilities
 - www.mentalhealth.org.uk
- Mind
 - Promotes views and needs of people with mental health problems
 - Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm)
 - Website: www.mind.org.uk
- NHS
 - NHS 24: phone 111
 - www.nhs.org.uk
- PAPYRUS
 - Young suicide prevention
 - Phone: 0800 068 4141 (Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm & 7-10pm. Weekends 2-5pm).
 - www.papyrus-uk.org
- Rethink Mental Illness
 - Support and advice for people living with mental illness
 - Phone: 0800 5000 927 (Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm)
 - www.rethink.org
- SafeSpot
 - An app and website designed for young people to improve coping skills and access information about mental health
 - Website: www.safespot.org.uk
 - App: available on Google play/Apple store for free
- Samaritans
 - Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair
 - Phone: 116 123 (free, 24hour)
 - www.samaritans.org.uk