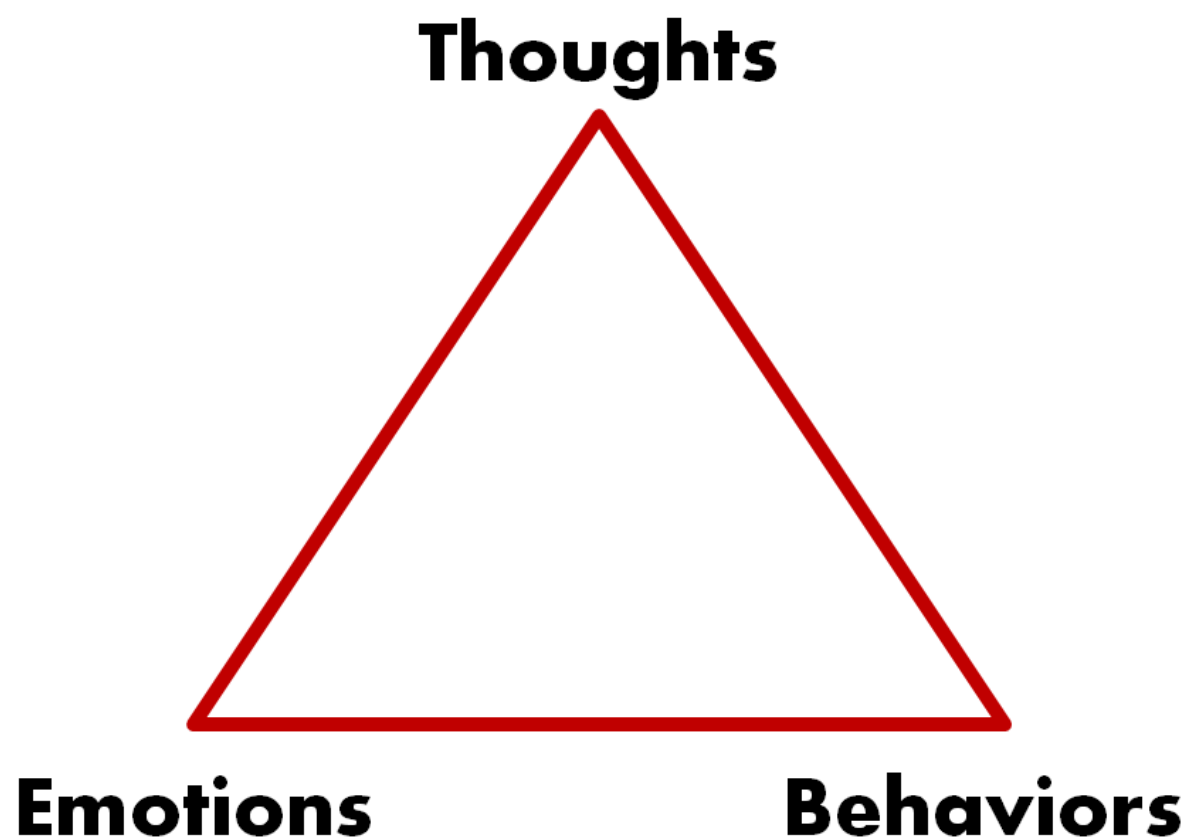


Introduction to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy



Material taken from the Changeways Core Program from UBC, GetSelfHelp.com, and self-help books like *When Panic Attacks* by Dr. David Burns and *Stress Less* by Thea Singer

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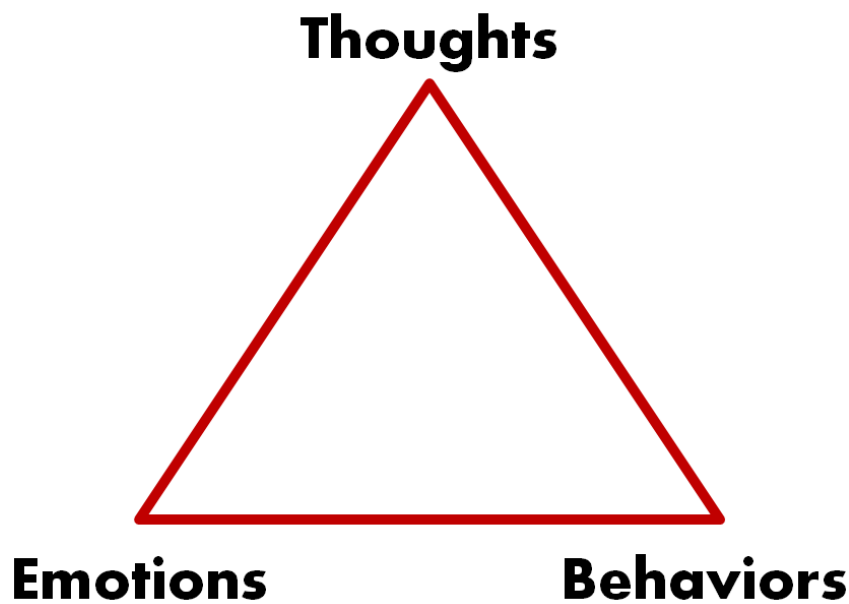
INTRODUCTION

The information in this course is based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) concepts and skills.

Over 40 years of research has suggested the principles of CBT can be used to help people make meaningful changes in their lives.

The first fundamental idea of CBT discussed in this course is the **CBT triangle**.

CBT is based on the idea that we can change how we **feel** by changing our **behavior** and/or our **thinking**.



So if we want to change how we feel (be less depressed, anxious, angry, etc.), then we can achieve this goal by changing what we think or what we do.

Example:

If we are constantly worrying about what could go wrong in our lives, we are going to feel anxious. Anxiety is the body's response to fear, so excessively worrying (thinking) about what could go wrong, is like watching a scary movie in your mind, except in this movie you're the main character, so you will feel anxious (emotion) and this may motivate you to avoid facing our fears (behavior).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy:

- Focuses on our current patterns of thinking and behaving
- Aims to provide people with the tools that allow them to deal with their problems independently – training people to be their own therapists
- Strongly encourages people to practice skills inside and outside of groups

Many great things may happen to you in your life. You might win the lottery and never have to worry about money again, you might make a great friend who provides amazing support, or someone could give you an amazing job offer. While it is possible these things might happen, in CBT we choose to focus on what we can control (what we think and what we do) to improve our lives. This can be frightening, because it might mean making difficult choices, but it can also be empowering.

CBT suggests that our moods and our feelings are created by what we think. When taken to its extreme, this means that no one else has the power to make you feel anything. Even when we are treated unfairly, it is the belief “I should never be treated unfairly” that creates our anger in this situation. This does not mean that we should accept being abused, instead it means that we can change how we feel by working to change our beliefs.



Different kinds thinking habits create different mood problems.

Depression

- Negative judgments about the self
- Negative thoughts about the world
- Negative predictions about the future

Anxiety

- Excessive worrying about what *could* happen
- Fears about being judged negatively of others

Anger

- Judgments about what is “fair” or “right”
- Judgments about what “should” happen or how others “should” behave

CAN CBT BE EFFECTIVE FOR ME?

Research suggests CBT has been effective for helping thousands of people with a wide variety of problems.

In a 2006 review of over 332 different studies, including 9995 participants, researchers concluded CBT was highly effective for depression, generalized anxiety, panic disorder, social phobia, and PTSD (Butler, Chapman, Forman, and Beck). They also found large improvements in bulimia nervosa, promising results for CBT combined with medications for schizophrenia, and moderate effect sizes on marital distress, anger, and chronic pain.

This review was followed by a 2012 review, reviewing roughly approximately 6 times more studies (Hoffman, Asnaani, Imke, Vonk, Sawyer, and Fang). This review concluded “In general, the evidence-base of CBT is very strong, and especially for treating anxiety disorders...it is clear the evidence-base of CBT is enormous.”

However, CBT does not help everyone and it doesn't help anyone who doesn't want to be helped. In order to make changes, a person must be ready, willing, and able to make changes. This is true with all forms of talk therapy. So despite overwhelming research in support of CBT, there is no guarantee that it will work for you. However, if we wait for a guarantee that something will work before trying it, this is a form of self-sabotage and we might be waiting indefinitely. Alternatively, if you give CBT a try, practice your skills, and engage with the material, you may be one of the many people CBT can help.

TO GET THE MOST FROM CBT

- Have an open mind – specifically, be open to the idea that not everything we think and believe is 100% true at all times
- Participate in class discussions and activities
- Practice skills between sessions
- Ask questions in class if you are confused
- Check-out CBT online, there are many great websites, videos on Youtube, and podcasts

Butler, A. C., Chapman, J. E., Forman, E. M., Beck, A. T., (2006). The empirical status of cognitive-behavioral therapy: A review of meta-analyses. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 26, 17-31.

Hofmann, S. G., Asnaani, A. Vonk, I., Sawyer, A. T., & Fang, A., (2012). The efficacy of cognitive behavioral therapy: A review of meta-analyses. *Cognit Ther Res*. 36(5), 427-440.

GETTING STUCK IN PROBLEMS

BENEFITS

People often struggle with making changes in their lives. Our attempts to cope with problems might actually be perpetuating our problems! Let's begin by looking at some examples:

Depression. People that struggle with depression may withdraw, isolate, eat comfort foods, use substances, and avoid situations which might challenge them. From the outside, it might be tempting to tell that person “just get out and do some fun things to cheer yourself up!” but things might not be that simple. There might be some actual benefits to these behaviors which may keep that person stuck. Leaving home would likely take some energy and so it might feel more comfortable to stay home, lay in bed, and watch TV. Taking a class, applying for a job, or joining a sports team might include the risk of failure or embarrassment, so it might seem safer to avoid these situations. So when you ask the depressed person, they might tell you that they are trying to make themselves feel better by isolating, avoiding, and resting.

Anxiety. When people struggle with anxiety they may excessively worry about things. People might tell them to “stop worrying so much” but again there are benefits to worrying that can keep a person stuck. Worrying about what could go wrong, might help someone anticipate problems in advance so they can create a plan to solve these problems should they happen. Anxiety might also keep us safe by motivating us to constantly be on guard and watch our surroundings. The anxious person might tell you they are trying to improve their problems by being responsible and trying to reduce the impact problems have on their lives.

Blame. Blame is one of the most common problems in relationships. It might be humbling, challenging, and take vulnerability to look at how we are contributing to the problems in our relationships. Meanwhile, blaming others can make us feel justified, maintain our self-esteem, and be used as a reason for not having to do the work of changing.

COSTS

While there are certainly many benefits to some problems, these **problems also have costs**. When we are depressed we are usually paying for our relief right now, with our long-term happiness and goals. This is like spending all of our money on one night of partying and not keeping enough to pay rent at the end of the month. When we are anxious we are paying for our future relief (should the things we worry about happen and our plan to solve those problems work) with our happiness right now. This is like hoarding all of our money and never doing anything fun just in-case we need that money for something later. When we are depressed and we avoid solving our problems, our problems tend to get worse. When we are anxious and we worry about everything that could go wrong, we feel miserable.

Excessive blame on the other hand usually results in us feeling angry and resentful. It also can keep us stuck in a pattern of bad relationships and feeling like a victim.

Something I do I want to change	Reasons not to change	Reasons to change (why I want to make this change)

Willingness to Change

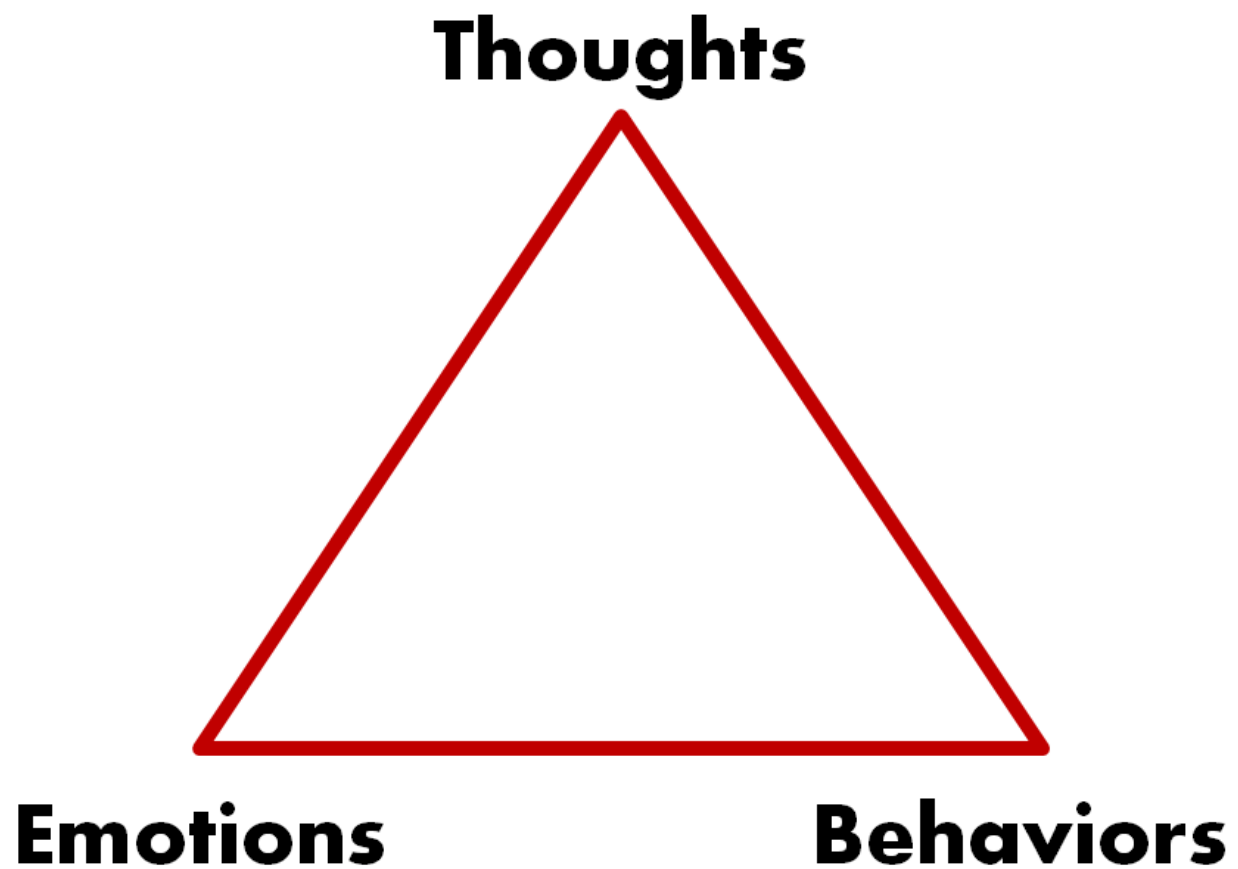
Instructions. Below you'll find a list of things people do to try to overcome feelings of depression and anxiety. Indicate whether you'd be willing to try each activity. Please answer all items.

	0 - Definitely not	1 - Slightly willing	2 - Moderately willing	3 - Very willing	4 - Extremely willing
In order to make improvements in my life, I'd be willing to...					
1. Try new ways of relating to other people					
2. Get started on a task I've been avoiding or putting off					
3. Make a plan for solving the problems in my life					
4. Face a problem I've been avoiding					
5. confront my fears, even if it makes me very anxious					

REASONS NOT TO DO THE WORK

		Entirely disagree	Mostly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Mostly agree	Entirely agree
#	Thought/Belief	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Being loved by others is the only real key to happiness and self-esteem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	If I can't do something perfectly, there is no point in doing it at all.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	I can't handle criticism.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	If I were to try something new and do poorly, that would be devastating.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	There is nothing I can do to make positive changes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	I don't like being told what to do, even if it might be helpful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7	My feelings are outside of my control.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8	My bad moods are because of other people and how they treat me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9	The only thing that can help is medication.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10	I'm going to be miserable no matter what.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11	My anger, depression, guilt, and anxiety keep me safe.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12	Asking for help is a sign of weakness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13	I'm only seeking help because someone else is insisting I do so.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14	Practicing self-help at home isn't necessary, if I go to individual therapy that should be enough.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15	I wouldn't know what to do if I was angry, worried, or sad.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16	Being depressed makes other people encourage and support me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17	Short-term treatment can't make lasting changes in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18	I deserve for things to be better, I shouldn't have to work so hard.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

THOUGHTS



TYPES OF THOUGHTS

Two types of thoughts that are particularly important in CBT are “core beliefs” and “automatic thoughts.”

Core Beliefs

Core beliefs are sometimes called “filters” or “schemas.” A core belief is an extremely stable and enduring pattern of thinking that often develops during childhood and is elaborated throughout an individual’s life.¹ Core beliefs are often about ourselves, other people, and the world. These beliefs are like “a mental filter that guides how people interpret events.”²

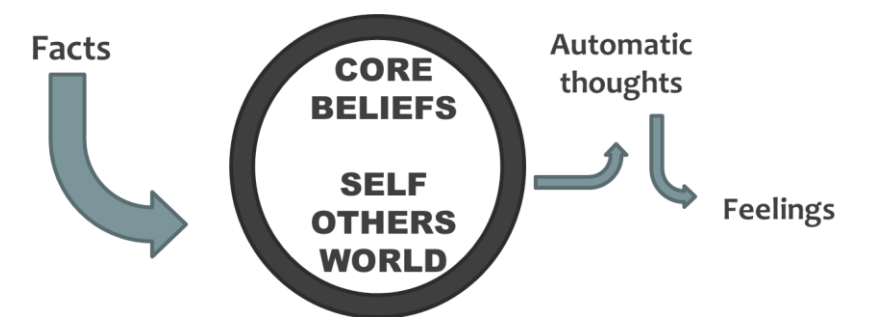
Simply put, we interpret the world through the lens of our core beliefs. While our core beliefs may make sense and seem logical in some situations, sometimes we carry these core beliefs into situations where they are no longer helpful for us.

Automatic Thoughts

Automatic thoughts are thoughts that we experience in the moment, that seemingly pop into our minds automatically. They can be either in the form of words or images. We often just accept our automatic thoughts, even when they are not realistic or factual. Extreme automatic thoughts are likely to cause extreme emotional responses.

Being aware of our automatic thoughts can help us understand and change our core beliefs.

For example, we can watch the news and hear about a car crash and if we have the core belief that the world is an extremely dangerous place, we may have the automatic thoughts “my son could have gotten in an accident today” or we could imagine our son being in an accident today, and this would likely cause anxiety.



¹ Adapted from Young, J. E. & Kolsco, J. S. (1993). *Reinventing Your Life*. Penguin Books.

² Rigenbach, J. (2013). *The CBT Toolbox: A workbook for clients and clinicians*. PESI Publishing and Media. Eau Claire: United States.

IDENTIFYING AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

Lots of people struggle with identifying their thinking. Some insist that they are “just anxious” and they have no worries creating this anxiety. While it may be the case that some health conditions can produce an anxiety like response, CBT suggests that the vast majority of the time there are thoughts or beliefs creating our emotions and there are some tools we can use to help identify them.

The “what am I feeling” technique

This is a fundamental technique in CBT. Our feelings are excellent clues into what we are thinking. Also, since we frequently misuse the word “feel” in English, sometimes our “feelings” are actually thoughts in disguise. For example, a client struggling with guilt about parenting insisted she couldn’t identify her thoughts when she felt guilty. When describing the situation in therapy she claimed “I just *feel* like a bad Mom.” This was immensely helpful because she had been confusing her feelings with her thoughts. She felt guilty and she thought “I’m a bad mom.”

Even when we are not confusing thoughts and feelings, our emotions give us hints about our thinking. As described above, when we are anxious we are usually worried about something, when we are depressed we are usually thinking negative thoughts about ourselves, the world, or our futures, and when we are angry we are usually thinking about what “should” happen or how someone “should” behave. Sadness tends to be about loss, guilt about judgments about our own behavior, and embarrassment tends to be created by assumptions about how others might judge us.

You can improve your skills of identifying your thoughts by checking-in with yourself next time you have a feeling. So next time you feel anxious ask yourself “what am I worrying about?”

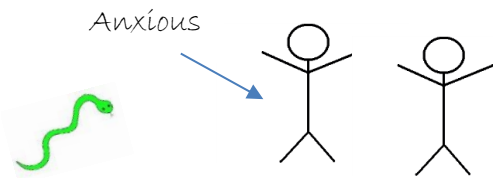
The pen and paper technique

The first technique is very simple, but usually can be effective for most people. This technique involves carrying a small notebook, a piece of paper, or a cue card with you (and a pen) and writing down any automatic thoughts you have when you feel anxious, depressed, angry, etc. You can also use worksheets to help with this process. Here are some hints for writing down automatic thoughts:

- Write your thoughts in short sentences like “I’m going to be late!” or “this person should learn to drive.” Do not write single word bullet points like “bad” or “guilty.”
- Do not write your thoughts in the form of a question try and turn them into statements. For example, turn “Why am I such an idiot?” into “I’m such an idiot.”

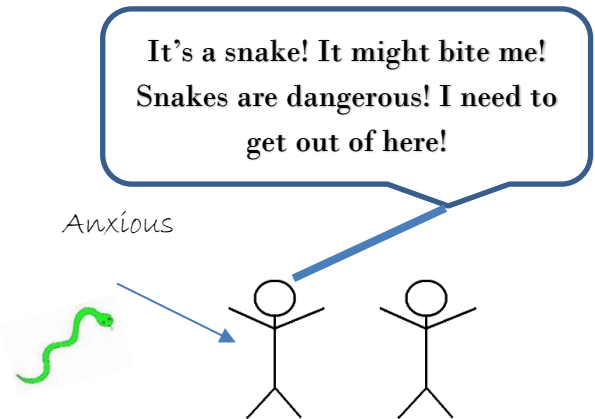
The stick person technique

Although this one can seem silly, it can be one of the most effective skills for identifying thinking. Simple think of a time when you were feeling depressed, anxious, angry, etc. Then draw a stick person in that situation. Here's an example of a stick-person getting anxious when they saw a snake when he was on a hike with his stick-girlfriend:



Then simply guess or imagine what the stick-person might have been telling himself in this situation to create his anxiety.

Usually, what we imagine the stick person might have been thinking is precisely what we were telling ourselves in this situation.



Meditation and free association

Other techniques to become more aware of our thinking include meditation and free association. These techniques encourage us to be mindful of our thoughts in the present moment.

ANALYSIS OF A DISTRESSING SITUATION

Describe the situation (Who, where, when, what happened)?

<i>What emotions did you feel?</i>	<i>How intense were these feelings (0-100)?</i>

Interpretations: If others were involved in this situation, what did you think they were trying to do?

Judgements: What negative thoughts did you have about yourself, your life, or others? ("I'm stupid", "he's a jerk", "my life is rotten", etc.)

Predictions: What did you worry might happen after this situation?

Images: Are you aware of any images, pictures, or fantasies that entered your mind?

Self-talk: What were you telling yourself in this situation?

Reminders: What memories, if any, did this situation trigger for you?

If at all, how have your interpretations, predictions, or assumptions changed since you were in this situation? Do you still see the situation in the same way?

If you were in this situation again, is there anything you would want to say to yourself?

<i>What did you do to cope with your feelings? (check all that apply)</i>	
<i>Helpful</i>	<i>Usually less helpful</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Took time to calm down before responding	<input type="checkbox"/> Immediately responded without forethought
<input type="checkbox"/> Breathing from the diaphragm several times	<input type="checkbox"/> Raised your voice or yell
<input type="checkbox"/> Engaged with meaningful or pleasurable activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Excessively Isolated self
<input type="checkbox"/> Splashed cold-water on face	<input type="checkbox"/> Behaved defensively (“attacked the attacker”)
<input type="checkbox"/> Put an ice bag on back of neck or forehead	<input type="checkbox"/> Excessive distraction (TV, computer, games, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Intense exercise	<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol
<input type="checkbox"/> Progressive muscle relaxation	<input type="checkbox"/> Substances (Pot, MDMA, amphetamines, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Sensory Grounding	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-harm (cutting, burning, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Meditation	<input type="checkbox"/> Binge eat, purge food, or restrict food
<input type="checkbox"/> Safe/calm place visualization	<input type="checkbox"/> Lash out violently, hit things, throw things
<input type="checkbox"/> Positive self-talk	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid things (stay home, stay quiet, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Journaling	<input type="checkbox"/> Make suicidal threats or gestures
<input type="checkbox"/> Clear, respectful, and assertive communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Be a martyr—try to make others feel bad/guilty
<input type="checkbox"/> Went for a walk	<input type="checkbox"/> Behave recklessly (spending, dangerous, or sexual)
<input type="checkbox"/> Spoke with a supportive person	<input type="checkbox"/> Called in sick to work/missed work
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintained positive self-care	<input type="checkbox"/> Behaved passive-aggressively (slam doors, silent treatment, etc.)
Other:	

<i>How do you feel about how you responded? (proud, disappointed, guilty, etc.?)</i>
<i>Is this how you frequently respond?</i>

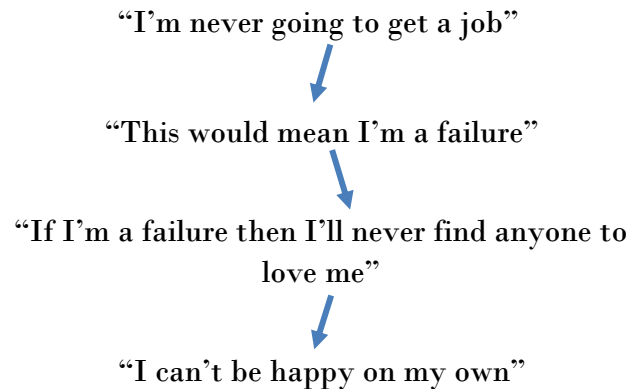
<i>How would you like to respond next time? (check all that apply)</i>	
<i>Helpful</i>	<i>Less helpful</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Took time to calm down before responding	<input type="checkbox"/> Immediately responded without forethought
<input type="checkbox"/> Breathing from the diaphragm several times	<input type="checkbox"/> Raised your voice or yell
<input type="checkbox"/> Engaged with meaningful or pleasurable activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Excessively Isolated self
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<input type="checkbox"/> Maintained positive self-care	<input type="checkbox"/> Behaved passive-aggressively (slam doors, silent treatment, etc.)
Other:	

IDENTIFYING OUR CORE BELIEFS

Once we are able to identify our automatic thoughts, we can begin trying to understand our core beliefs. Here are some tools we can use to help with that process:

The individual downward arrow technique

Begin by identifying an upsetting automatic thought. Follow the directions from above about putting it in the form of a short statement. Then draw a downward arrow and ask yourself “Why would it be upsetting to me if this were true? What would it mean about me or my life?” Then write your answer under the arrow in the form of a short statement. Repeat this process until we get to the underlying core belief. This skill can take practice but can be very powerful.

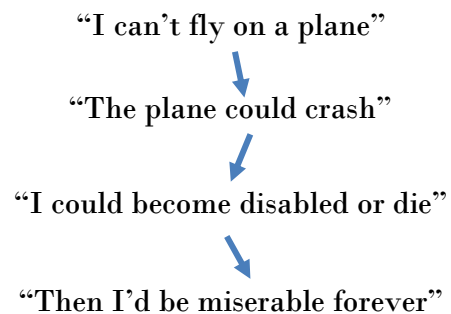


From the example to the right, we can see many assumptions the person is making. First, we see that they are assuming they will never get a job, people who don’t have jobs are “failures”, people who don’t have jobs can’t find love, and they can’t possibly be happy without a relationship.

The what-if technique

Similar to the downward arrow technique, the what-if technique involves asking “what if that were true? What’s the worst that could happen? And what do I fear the most?”

This tool is particularly useful for identifying underlying fears that create anxiety. In the example to the right we can see some assumptions: their plane may crash, plane crashes can result in disability or death, and being disabled means feeling miserable forever.



Identifying core beliefs about relationships

Other questions that might be helpful for identifying core beliefs include:

- If this were true, then what would this mean about the kind of person they are or I am?
- If this were true, then what would this mean about the type of relationship we have?

WHAT'S THE STORY IN MY HEAD???

Once we get good at identifying the story in our head, our beliefs/thoughts, we will be able to start challenging those thoughts. Initially it may sound strange, or too simplistic, but we don't need to make this harder than it is. The reality is that just because we think something doesn't make it true. Sometimes when we have had those habits of thought for a long time we don't ever stop to question them. We don't ever stop to ask ourselves is this a fact or is this an opinion?

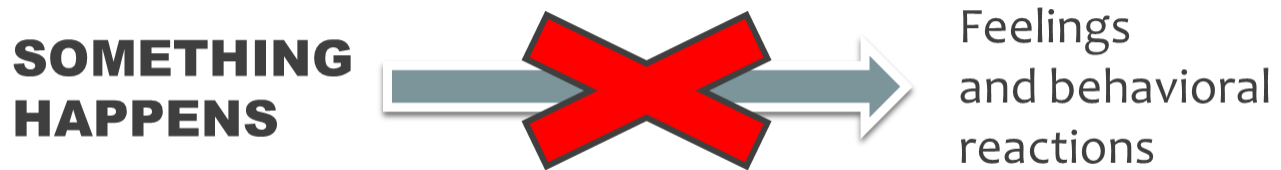
Many people report that once they start to notice and then check out those thoughts it can be quite an enlightening experience. Many people have reported surprise that they have been telling themselves stories for years that really are just stories, and have no scientific evidence to support them.

What can happen next is that people come to realize that if they have control over their thoughts, and thoughts determine feelings, then they also have control over how they feel! This can be both exciting and a little scary at the same time. This isn't about blame, this is just about noticing that we have the power to change what we think, which will change how we feel.



THE ABC MODEL

Many people believe that their emotions and/or behaviors are directly caused by the situations they are in, things that have happened to them, other people, etc. However, CBT challenges these beliefs.



Instead, CBT suggests it our thoughts that cause how we feel and what we do. It is our beliefs, interpretations, and assumptions about what has happened that cause us to feel and act in particular ways.



This is called the A-B-C model. “A” stands for “activating event” – an event that “activates” or triggers our thoughts. “B” stands for “beliefs” and it includes both core beliefs and automatic thoughts. “C” stands for “consequences” and typically refers to emotions or behaviors.



This means that we can change how we feel about things by changing how we think about them.

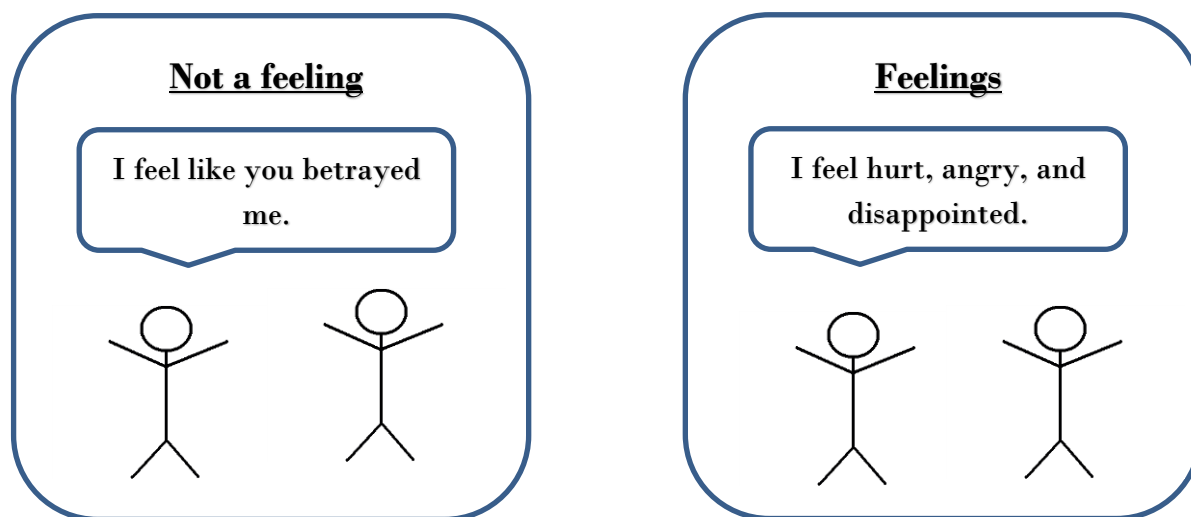
EMOTIONS

Emotions are a vital part of CBT. As described above, our emotions can give us hints about our inner thoughts and beliefs. Unfortunately, we can also confuse our emotions with our thoughts and beliefs. This might seem minor but it can be important when we want to use skills to change our thinking.

One very common mistake is confusing an emotion with what we believe someone else has done to us. Here are some examples of beliefs, people confuse for emotions:

<i>Beliefs</i>	<i>Emotions/Feelings</i>
Rejected	Hurt, embarrassed, sad, disappointed, etc.
Betrayed	Hurt, angry, disappointed, furious, etc.
Lied to	Sad, angry, embarrassed, hurt, etc.
Talked down to	Angry, frustrated, pissed-off, etc.
Inferior/Inadequate	Depressed, miserable, ashamed, guilty, etc.

One trick we can use to tell if we are describing a feeling or a thought, is asking “is this something I think someone else has done to me?” Also if we use the phrase “I feel like...” it’s usually not a feeling.



Intensity of Feelings	Happy	Sad	Angry	Afraid	Ashamed
Low	Glad Content Pleasant Mellow Pleased	Unhappy Dissatisfied Blue Upset Disappointed	Perturbed Annoyed Touchy Resistant Irritated	Cautious Nervous Worried Timid Uncomfortable	Bashful Bad Humbled Sheepish Silly
Medium	Cheerful Gratified Good Relieved Satisfied	Heartbroken Somber Lost Distressed Melancholy	Upset Mad Disgusted Frustrated Agitated	Apprehensive Frightened Intimidated Insecure Anxious	Guilty Regretful Embarrassed Repentent Contrite
High	Elated Excited Overjoyed Thrilled Exuberant Ecstatic	Depressed Agonized Alone Hurt Sorrowful Miserable	Furious Enraged Loathsome Boiling Irate Seething	Terrified Frantic Scared stiff Petrified Shocked Panicked	Sorrowful Remorseful Mortified Awful Ashamed Horrible

USING THE ABC MODEL

In order to best use the A-B-C model, we must be able to tell the difference between activating events, beliefs, and consequences. Activating events are the facts of the situation while opinions/interpretations are our “beliefs.”

Let’s consider some examples.

You go to bed and turn out the lights. Your mind wanders and you realize the end of the month is approaching. You then think “do I have enough money to pay rent?” Your stomach instantly gets tied in knots, you feel tightness in your chest, and your muscles tense. You grab your phone to check your account balance online.

What might be the activating event in this situation?

What are the beliefs (or thoughts, worries, assumptions, fears, etc.) that are triggered by the activating event?

What are the consequences (emotions and behaviors)?

You come home to find your partner is sitting on the couch watching television. There are several dirty dishes in the sink.

What might be the activating event in this situation?

What might be your beliefs or thoughts in this situation?

What might be the consequences (emotions and behaviors)?

You’re sitting in your room and have been on the computer for 6 hours. You have not left home in several days and have drank 5 beers so far this evening. You think “Life sucks. I should be out doing things but I can’t because I’m depressed.” You feel miserable and depressed.

What might be the activating event in this situation?

What might be your beliefs or thoughts in this situation?

PUTTING THE A-B-C MODEL TOGETHER

Activating Event	Beliefs	Consequences
Your partner calls you a “jerk”	“I should never be called a jerk”	Angry (emotion) Shout at them (behavior)
You lose your job	“I’m a failure”	Depressed (emotion) Withdraw/isolate (behavior)
You have a fight with a friend	“I might lose my friend”	Anxious (emotion) Apologize (behavior)
You have a panic attack	“I should never have panic attacks and they are very dangerous”	Intense anxiety/more panic (emotion) Accelerate breathing (behavior)

Can you think of some situations in which you had an emotional reaction? Can you break it down into its activating event, beliefs, and consequences?

Activating Event	Beliefs	Consequences

COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING

CHALLENGING UNHELPFUL THINKING

So if we accept that our thoughts cause our emotions, how do we make changes to our thoughts so they are more helpful for us?

There are several different things we can do to help improve our thinking patterns. One thing we can do is called “cognitive restructuring.” While there are several different ways to perform cognitive restructuring, these strategies typically include:

1. Identify – the thoughts and beliefs which may be contributing to the problem
2. Dispute – think critically about the thoughts/beliefs which may be contributing to the problem
3. Exchange – the unhelpful thinking with more helpful alternatives
4. Act – if possible, test out the new thinking/beliefs in the real world

Example:

John believes he can't be happy without a romantic relationship. He begins disputing this belief by asking questions like “are there any other people in the world who are happy despite not having a romantic relationship?” and “have I ever been happy at any point in my life without a romantic relationship?” He feels some hope when he does indeed think of some people who seem happy despite not being in a relationship, and remembering a few points in his life when he was happy without a romantic partner. He exchanges his original negative belief about the impossibility of him being happy without a relationship for “Maybe if I focus on interests and goals I find meaningful and pleasurable, I can be happy without a relationship.” He decides to test this new belief by joining an art class and volunteering to provide child care for his grandchildren during the week. To his surprise he learns that he does indeed feel happy while engaging with these activities. He then begins to notice some of the benefits of not being in a relationship, which further increases his satisfaction.

“Patients generally try to avoid situations that cause them uneasiness. Consequently, they do not develop the trial-and-error techniques that are prerequisite to solving many problems. Or by staying out of difficult situations, they do not learn how to rid themselves of their tendency to distort or exaggerate. A person who stays close to home because he fears strangers does not learn how to test the validity of his fears or to discriminate between “safe” strangers and “dangerous” strangers. Through therapy he can learn to “reality-test” not only these fears but other fears as well.” – Aaron Beck, *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders* (p. 232).

SOME COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING TECHNIQUES

Method	Description of This Method
Identify the distortions	Identify each distortion in the unhelpful thought (discussed below)
The straight forward approach	Substitute a more positive and realistic thought (discussed below)
The cost-benefit analysis	List the advantages and disadvantages of a negative feeling, thought, belief, or behavior.
Examine the evidence	Instead of assuming that a Negative Thought is true, examine the actual evidence for it.
The survey method	Do a survey to find out if your thoughts and attitudes are realistic.
The experimental method	Do an experiment to test the accuracy of your Negative Thought.
The Double-Standard Technique	Talk to yourself in the same compassionate way you might talk to a dear friend who was upset.
The pleasure-predicting method	Predict how satisfying activities will be, from 0% to 100%. Record how satisfying they turn out to be.
The vertical arrow technique	Draw a vertical arrow under your Negative Thought and ask why it would be upsetting if it were true.
Thinking in shades of grey	Instead of thinking about your problems in black-and-white terms, evaluate things in shades of grey.
Define terms	When you label yourself as "inferior" or "a loser", ask yourself what you mean by these labels.
Be specific	Stick with reality and avoid judgments - what are the facts?
The semantic method	Substitute language that is less emotionally loaded for "should" statements and labeling.
Reattribution	Instead of blaming yourself for a problem, think about all the factors that may have contributed to it.
The acceptance paradox	Instead of defending yourself against you own self-criticisms, find truth in them and accept them.

Core Belief Questionnaire

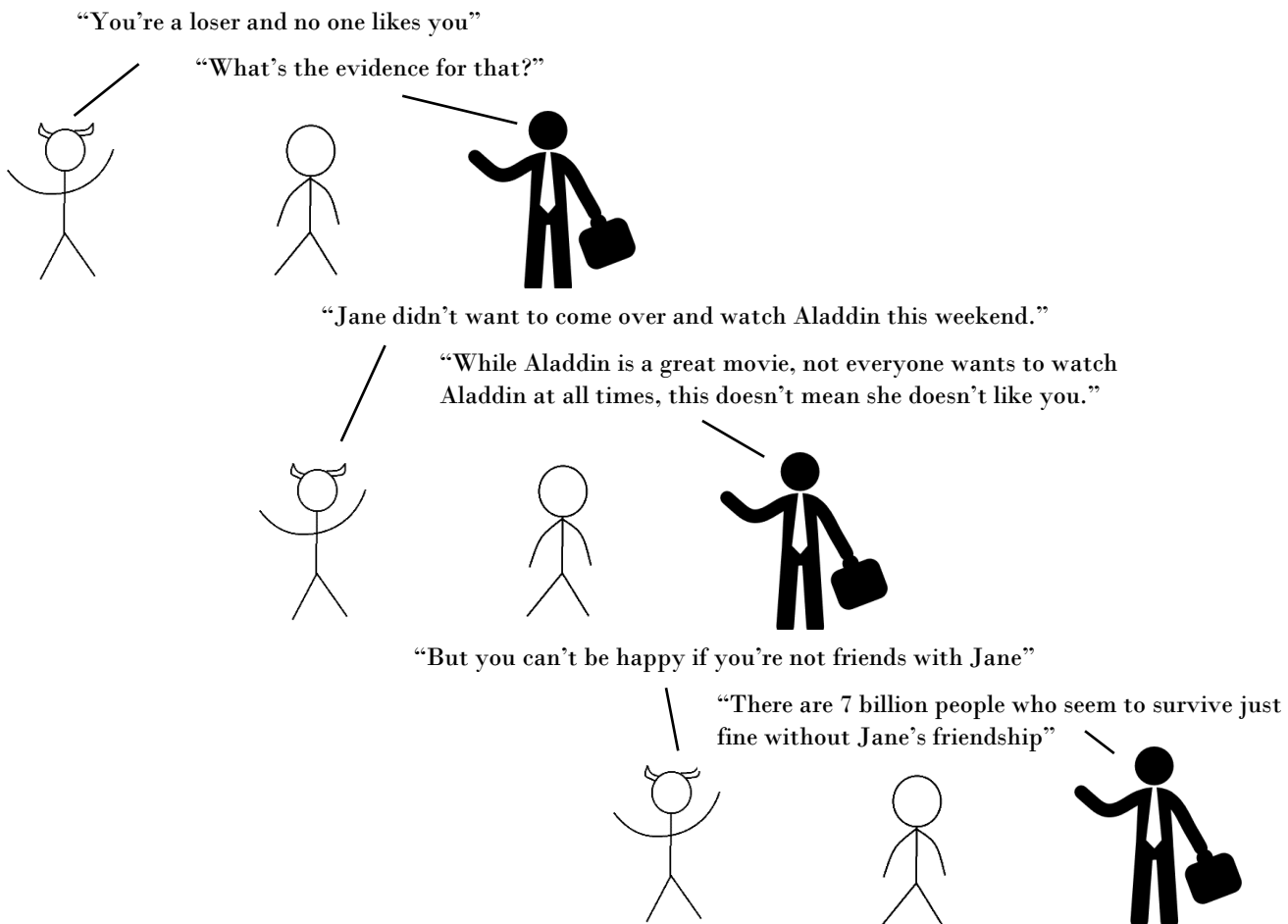
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I must never fail or make a mistake	1	2	3	4	5
2	People will not love me if I am flawed and vulnerable	1	2	3	4	5
3	My worthiness depends on my achievements, intelligence, talent, status, income, or looks	1	2	3	4	5
4	I need everyone's approval to be worthwhile	1	2	3	4	5
5	I can't feel happy and fulfilled without being loved	1	2	3	4	5
6	If I'm rejected, it proves there is something wrong with me	1	2	3	4	5
7	I should always try to please others, even if it makes me miserable in the process	1	2	3	4	5
8	People who love each other should never fight or argue	1	2	3	4	5
9	Problems in my relationships are my fault	1	2	3	4	5
10	Problems in my relationships are caused by the other people in my relationships	1	2	3	4	5
11	I should be treated the way I expect and want	1	2	3	4	5
12	The way I see things is right and other people are usually wrong	1	2	3	4	5
13	My problems could never be solved	1	2	3	4	5
14	I'm basically worthless, defective, and inferior	1	2	3	4	5
15	I should always feel happy, confident, and in control	1	2	3	4	5
16	Anger is dangerous and should be avoided at all costs	1	2	3	4	5
17	I should never upset anyone else	1	2	3	4	5
18	People in my life are demanding, manipulative, and have all the power	1	2	3	4	5
19	If one person looks down on me, word will spread and soon everyone will look down on me	1	2	3	4	5
20	If I don't impress people by being funny, witty, or interesting, people won't like me	1	2	3	4	5
21	If I worry enough I can prevent bad things from happening	1	2	3	4	5
22	I should never be frustrated. Life should be easy	1	2	3	4	5
23	I should always be strong and never weak	1	2	3	4	5

DISPUTING UNHELPFUL BELIEFS

It is important to remember you might have held this belief for a long time. People can sometimes develop a certain loyalty to their unhelpful beliefs and can be tempted to defend them. Sometimes we tell ourselves a story to protect our self-esteem (I can't do X because Y is true, it's not my fault my life is like this because X happened to me, etc.) and if we were to suggest this belief is inaccurate, we might threaten our self-esteem. This is not about suggesting you are lazy, cowardly, or inadequate. This is about trying to free yourself from unhelpful beliefs.

We will primarily dispute our unhelpful beliefs by keeping an open mind and asking some questions. Below are just some of the questions we can ask to dispute unhelpful thoughts. The more we practice identifying and disputing our thoughts, the easier it becomes. We train ourselves to be less reactive, exaggerated, and more balanced.

Generally, it's strongly recommended that you begin practicing your disputing skills on paper. It's much easier to think critically about our thoughts then they are outside of our minds. As you develop your skills you will notice that you are disputing more and more in your mind. It's like your training your mind to be a really great lawyer objecting and arguing with your negative thoughts.



Identify the belief you would like to dispute:	
On a scale of 0-100%, how much do you believe this belief?	
How do you feel when you believe this?	
What does this belief motivate you to do?	
Is this belief a fact or an opinion? If this belief is a fact, what can I do about it? Is there any possibility you're mistaken about it being a fact?	
Would everyone agree with this belief?	
Does this belief include any labels? (inadequate, bad, mean, lazy, unsuccessful, etc.) If it does include a judgment, how do I specifically define the labels?	
What is the evidence supporting this belief?	What is the evidence against this belief?
Are there other ways of looking at this situation? Would a more positive and balanced person see the situation in the same way?	
Are there alternative explanations, you might not have considered yet?	
If your belief is a prediction, how likely do you think this prediction will actually happen? (0-100%) What exactly will happen if this prediction comes true? What will happen in a week, in a month, in 6 months, 5 years?	
If your belief is an expectation, would you hold every person to this expectation? What would the world look like if everyone shared the same expectation?	
Does this belief include an overgeneralization? (Always, never, can't, etc.)	

Example:

Identify the belief you would like to dispute: <i>Saying “no” is selfish and being selfish is wrong.</i>	
On a scale of 0-100%, how much do you believe this belief? 100%	
How do you feel when you believe this? <i>I always feel guilty about not being able to do everything, overwhelmed about doing everything, and resentful towards the people in my life for taking advantage of me.</i>	
What does this belief motivate you to do? <i>It motivates me to constantly say “yes” to people, even when I don’t want to.</i>	
Is this belief a fact or an opinion? <i>Opinion.</i> If this belief is a fact, what can I do about it? Is there any possibility you’re mistaken about it being a fact?	
Would everyone agree with this belief? <i>Not at all.</i>	
Does this belief include any judgments (inadequate, bad, mean, lazy, unsuccessful, etc.)? If it does include a judgment, how do I specifically define (inadequate, bad, mean, lazy, etc.)? <i>“selfish” = never caring about other people and putting yourself first.</i>	
What is the evidence supporting this belief? <i>My parents always told me to do what I was told, or I’d be punished. They’d get mad or just make my life hell. Being loved was dependent on me being compliant. Also no one really likes selfish people.</i>	What is the evidence against this belief? <i>My parents were wrong about tons of stuff! Maybe they’re wrong about this too. I see some people able to say “no” to some things and they seem perfectly happy with people who love them.</i>
Are there other ways of looking at this situation? Would a more positive and balanced person see the situation in the same way? <i>Well, maybe never helping anyone could be “selfish” but there might be some middle ground where I could have boundaries but still be helpful when it works for me.</i>	
Are there alternative explanations, you might not have considered yet? <i>Maybe my parents just wanted things their way and me asserting what I wanted was threatening to them. Maybe they trained me to be passive because it was what they wanted, not because it was actually good for me.</i>	
If your belief is an expectation, would you hold every person to this expectation? What would the world look like if everyone shared the same expectation? <i>Absolutely not, the world would be a mess if everyone agreed to do everything they were asked to do. It couldn’t possibly work, no one would set boundaries with their kids, their kids would run the show, and they would turn into entitled and delusional adults.</i>	
Does this belief include an overgeneralization? (Always, never, can’t, etc.) <i>Yes, this belief suggests I can’t ever say “no” without being selfish. Not all “no”s are equal, sometimes it’s okay to say no. If my kid asks to do something dangerous, I’m actually helping them by saying “no.”</i>	

USING THE A-B-C MODEL

We can use the A-B-C model described above to practice cognitive restructuring. We begin by creating our A-B-C model as we normally would – identifying the challenging situation (activating event), our self-talk (beliefs), and the emotional and behavioral consequences of that self-talk (consequences).

Then if we decide we would like to change how we feel or behave in that situation, we “dispute” our original self-talk, and exchange it with more helpful self-talk. This new self-talk will then lead to new emotional and behavioral responses which will hopefully be more desirable.

Activating Event (A)	Beliefs (B)	Consequences (C)
Describe the facts of the situation	What are you telling yourself in this situation? What is your self-talk? What are your interpretations, assumptions, beliefs, etc?	Describe how you felt (emotions) and how you behaved
Dispute (D)		
We cannot dispute the facts of the situation.	If you consequences (c) listed above are unhelpful, irrational, or exaggerated, then we dispute the original self-talk listed in (b) above to create more helpful emotions and behaviors	List the emotions and behaviors that would likely result from the new, more helpful, self-talk
Activating Event (A)	Beliefs (B)	Consequences (C)
Your friend does not text you back when you are in the middle of a difficult conversation	“I’ve done something wrong” “They are mad at me” “They should text me back” “I’m going to lose my friend”	<u>Emotions:</u> anxiety, panic, anger, frustration, hurt, sadness, etc. <u>Behavior:</u> demand they respond, complain to someone else, try to think about all the things that could go wrong and plan accordingly (worry)
Dispute (D)		
We cannot dispute the facts of the situation	“Maybe their phone died” “Maybe they are thinking about what to say” “I cannot control when or if they respond, all I can do is focus on my own behavior”	<u>Emotions:</u> more composed <u>Behavior:</u> continue on with your day and respond accordingly if and when your friend texts you back

Now you try:

Activating Event (A)	Beliefs (B)	Consequences (C)
Dispute (D)		

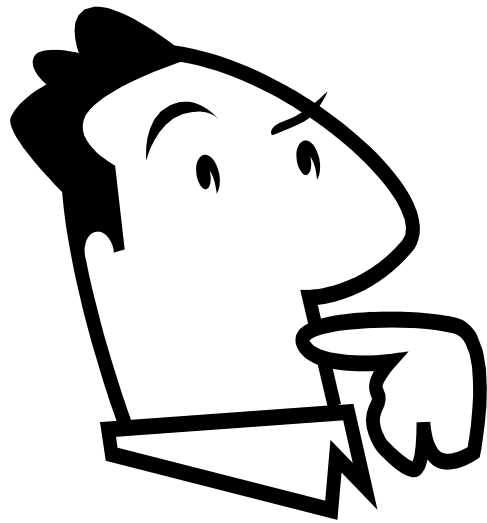
Activating Event (A)	Beliefs (B)	Consequences (C)
Dispute (D)		

HABITS OF THOUGHT

So now that we've spent some time looking at beliefs and "the story in our heads" we are going to spend some time looking at what we call habits of thought, or styles of distorted thinking. As we now know, our beliefs and behaviors influence our emotions. This is an internal process; our feelings are not done to us from someone or something else.

Sometimes we can get in the habit of interpreting things a certain way and we use inaccurate assumptions. If we start with the wrong assumption, we will end up with inaccurate information or interpretation of whatever is going on. It is also possible to interpret events or situations in a biased way. That is we may not see things for the way they really are if our interpretation is biased to begin with.

These biases or habits of thinking often start when we are young. Through modeling and our experiences as children we can develop patterns of thought that may have been useful to us then, but might be getting in our way now. Habits of thought that we might have developed as children may have been there for good reason - often safety is a factor - but now that we're adults these habits of thought might be getting in the way of forming healthy relationships, or skewing our coping skills. In particular, we may have developed some ideas about ourselves that are keeping us stuck now.



Over the next few pages we are going to explore some common habits of thought, and offer some alternate thoughts to help challenge these old ways of thinking. You may be surprised to see how many of your own habits of thought are common for other people! It might be that you thought you were the only person who ever thought this way. You might also have thought that because you think it, it must be true. **The good news is we get to decide how and what we think!** And the following information is intended to help you do that.

UNHELPFUL THINKING HABITS

- **Control fallacies.** When people over estimate or underestimate how much control they have in their lives. Sometimes people believe they are controlled by others, their situations, genetics, etc. This kind of thinking disempowers people and maintains a victim mentality.
- **Jumping to conclusions.** There are two main types of jumping to conclusions:
 - **Mind-reading.** This is when we assume we know what another person is thinking or what they will think. We never really know with certainty what someone else thinks.
 - **Catastrophizing.** This is when we predict a catastrophe will happen.
- **Compare and despair.** This is when we compare ourselves unfavorably to others.
- **Blame.** Focusing on assigning blame as opposed to solving problems.
- **Shoulds/musts.** Criticizing ourselves, others, and/or the world because they don't conform to our ideas about what "should", "must", or "ought to" happen.
- **Filtering.** This is when we filter out positive things and come to the conclusion that our entire life has been filled with negative experiences.
- **Overgeneralizing.** Taking a small number of negative events and turning them into a much larger pattern. This is like assuming you will never find love because you went through a break-up or you will always fail your driver's exam because you failed one time.
- **All or nothing thinking.** This is when we see things in polar opposites. We must be perfect or we are a failure, people are trustworthy or untrustworthy, the world is either perfectly safe or entirely dangerous.
- **Labelling.** Making a judgment about a person (including yourself) based on a behavior. I'm a "bad" person for doing a bad thing, someone else is "an idiot" for making a mistake, etc.
- **Emotional reasoning.** Basing our beliefs based on feelings, not facts. Feeling anxious is taken as evidence something bad will happen. This is common when people assume they are having a heart attack when they feel a tightness in their chest.
- **Magnification and minimization.** When we exaggerate the risk of danger or the negatives about ourselves or our lives, and then minimize (or worse yet ignore!) the positives.

Control Fallacies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's nothing I can do to change • My mood, thoughts, and behaviors are outside of my control • Someone else is to blame for my misery
Mind-Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one likes me • If I say no to my mom she will think I'm selfish • Everyone thinks I'm ugly
Catastrophizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I get fired, I won't be able to find another job, then I'll end-up homeless • If I drive on the highway, I'll get in an accident, then I'll become disabled • My partner will leave me, I'll never find anyone as good, and I'll be miserable forever
Compare and Despair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm not as pretty, smart, or talented as other people and that's not okay • My life is not as good as other peoples' • Other people have _____ and I don't so that means I'm not as good
Blame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This problem is all of your fault • It's all my fault, I made her feel upset • I shouldn't have to do anything different, I'm not responsible for this problem
Shoulds/Musts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I should always be treated the way I want • You must never upset me • I should never have to feel uncomfortable when working to what I want
Filtering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing good lasts very long • The world is a dangerous place • My job is awful
Overgeneralizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You never listen to me • This always happens to me • I never get what I want
All or nothing thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I must be perfect or I am a failure • People are untrustworthy if they do something I don't like • This is the worst day ever
Labelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm an idiot • You're a jerk • Deep down I'm a bad person
Emotional Reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel like I'm having a heart attack, therefore I know I'm having a heart attack • I don't feel safe, so something bad is about to happen • I feel guilty, therefore I must have done something wrong
Magnification/Minimization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My successes were simply luck • That task was so easy, anyone could have done it • That was the worst thing you could have done to me

THOUGHT DIARIES

Thought diaries are an immensely useful tool in Cognitive-Behavioral. They can be immensely helpful for developing your skills for identifying, disputing, and exchanging unhelpful beliefs and thoughts.

You can use the thought diary below to help you identify, dispute, and replace your unhelpful thoughts and beliefs (Blank forms are found at the back of this booklet). Here's how to use it:

1. Begin by identifying a distressing situation. Keep to the **facts**.

Distressing Situation: *My brother said I drink "too much."*

2. Then identify how you feel about that distressing situation by circling all the feelings you notice.
3. In the "Now (1-100)" column, rate how intensely you feel each of these feelings. For example:

Feelings	Now (1-100)
Angry (mad, annoyed, <u>frustrated</u> , pissed-off, furious)	80
Sad (down, <u>hurt</u> , miserable, depressed)	100
Anxious (nervous, worried, <u>afraid</u> , terrified)	75

4. Then in the "Negative Thoughts" column, write down all of the negative thoughts you had in the distressing situation. Instead of asking questions (like "what's wrong with me?"), write your thoughts down in short statements (like "there's something wrong with me").

Negative Thoughts	How much do you believe this negative thought? (0-100)	
	Now	After
He should mind his own business!	100	
He thinks he's better than me.	90	

5. In the next column (the "Now" column), rate how much you currently believe the negative thoughts (from 1-100). Ignore the "After" column for now.
6. Circle all of the unhelpful thinking habits you can identify (see the next page for descriptions).

Negative Thoughts	How much to do you believe this negative thought? (0-100)		Unhelpful thinking habits		
	Now	After			
He should mind his own business!	100		A/N Over Fil	Jump Mag/Min ER	Should Label Blame
He thinks he's better than me.	90		A/N Over Fil	Jump Mag/Min ER	Should Label Blame

7. Then, we try and come up with more rational and helpful thoughts in the “Balanced thoughts” section. Some tips about balanced thoughts:
- You must believe the new balanced thoughts close to 100% for them to make an emotional change for you, so no lying to yourself!
 - Try and consider how you might gently disagree with someone you love if they were to say your negative thoughts to you.
 - You can include some of the negative thought to keep it realistic.
 - No clichés! That means no “there’s of plenty of fish in the sea” or “everything’s going to be alright.”

Balanced thoughts	How much do you believe the balanced thought? (0-100)
While I would prefer if he wouldn't criticize my drinking, maybe he's only trying to help because he actually cares about me. Maybe I should consider cutting back.	100
He might think he is better than I am, but he is allowed to like himself more than he likes me. He actually is better at some things than I am, just like I'm better than him at some things.	95

- Then we rate how much we believe our balanced thoughts in the column furthest to the right.
- Finally, we go back and re-rate how much we believe in the original negative thought in the “After” column and we re-rate how intensely we feel each of our feelings.

Distressing Situation:

Feelings	Now (1-100)	After (1-100)	Feelings	Now (1-100)	After (1-100)
Angry (mad, annoyed, frustrated, pissed-off, furious)			Guilty (bad, remorseful, ashamed)		
Sad (down, hurt, miserable, depressed)			Embarrassed (silly, ridiculous, humiliated)		
Anxious (nervous, worried, afraid, terrified)			Hopeless (disappointed, discouraged, pessimistic)		

Negative Thoughts	How much to do you believe this negative thought? (0-100)		Unhelpful thinking habits			Balanced thoughts	How much do you believe the balanced thought? (0-100)
	Now	After	A/N	Jump	Should		
			Over	Mag/Min	Label		
			Fil	ER	Blame		
			A/N	Jump	Should		
			Over	Mag/Min	Label		
			Fil	ER	Blame		
			A/N	Jump	Should		
			Over	Mag/Min	Label		
			Fil	ER	Blame		
			A/N	Jump	Should		
			Over	Mag/Min	Label		
			Fil	ER	Blame		

Negative Thoughts

How much do you
believe this negative
thought? (0-100)

Now
After

Unhelpful thinking habits

Balanced thoughts

How much
do you
believe the
balanced
thought? (0-100)

A/N Jump Should
Over Mag/Min Label
Fil ER Blame

A/N Jump Should
Over Mag/Min Label
Fil ER Blame

Unhelpful thinking habits

All-or-nothing thinking (A/N): When you look at things in all-or-nothing ways. “I must be perfect or I’m a failure”, “you’re a bad person”, and “The world is dangerous.”

Jumping to conclusions (Jump): when we make assumptions or predictions that are not supported by facts.
Mindreading: assuming you know what other people think or feel.
Catastrophizing: Predicting something bad will happen.

Should and Musts (Should): an unreasonable expectation about what should, must, or ought to happen. “I should be able to do this!”, “You have to respect me”, “and “Things ought to be easier!”

Overgeneralizations (Over): When you exaggerate a negative event or behavior, suggesting it always or never happens. “I always mess up”, “you never listen”, “this kind of thing always happens to me.”

Magnification and minimization (Mag/Min): Blow things out of proportion or minimize good things.

Labelling (Label): Making a judgment about a person (including yourself) based on behavior. “I’m a failure”, “you’re a jerk”, “You’re inconsiderate.”

Filtering (Fil): When we only focus on bad things or things that confirm our negative beliefs.

Emotional reasoning (ER): when we make conclusions based on how we feel. “This is making me anxious so it must be bad!”, “I feel embarrassed so I’m an idiot!”

Blame (Blame): focusing on assigning blame as opposed to solving problems. Blame can be directed at yourself or others.

USING CBT TO IMPROVE EMOTIONAL CONTROL

CBT suggests that we can greatly influence our emotions by making changes to what we think and how we behave. Also, it is the story in our head (our beliefs) which cause our emotional reactions, and not other people or situations. CBT recognizes that people can quickly become emotional and believe they are not in control of their emotions, but with practice we can develop greater emotional control. Often, a good first step is identifying your triggers in advance so you are more prepared should they occur.

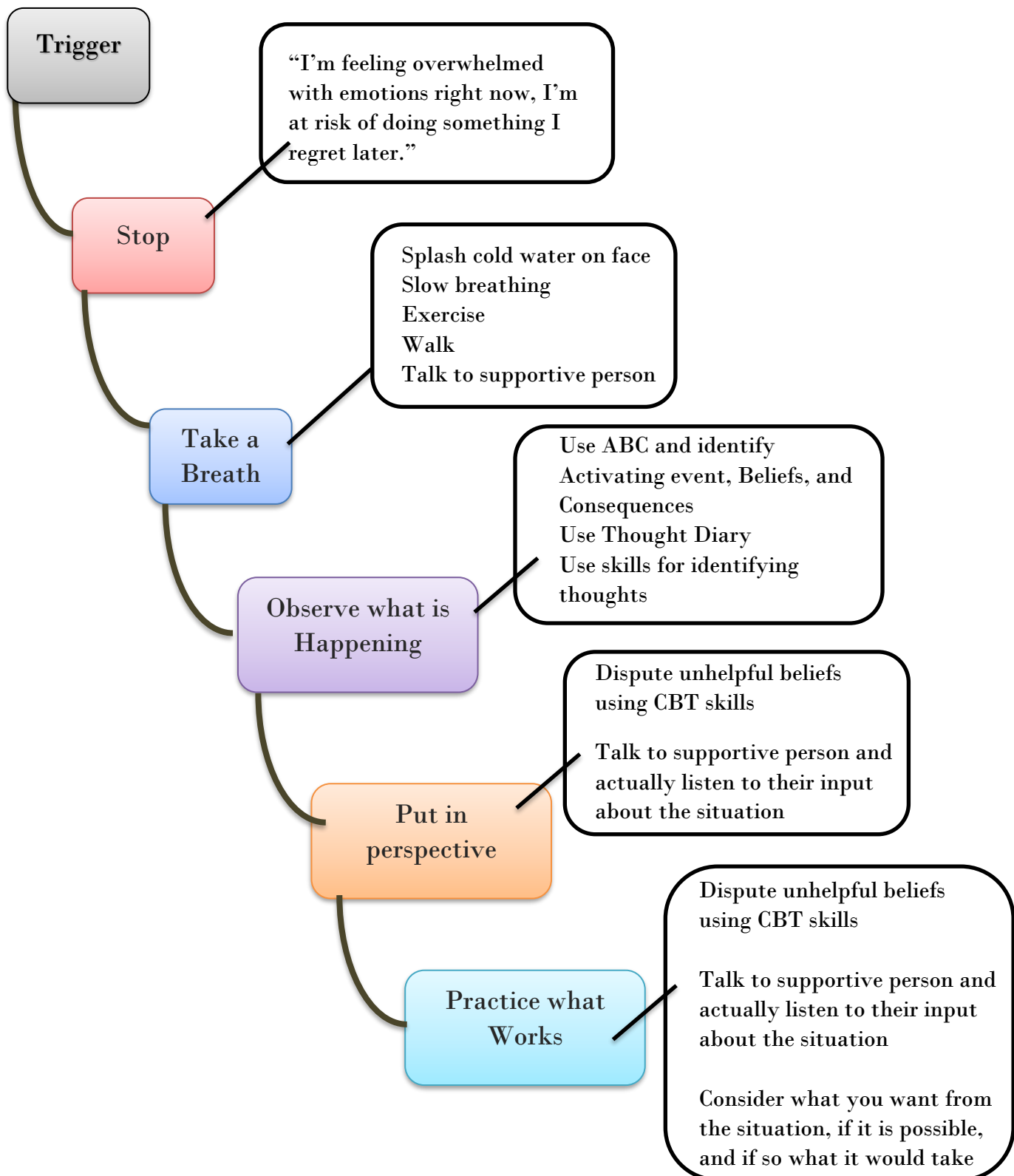
Take a moment and list some things that might trigger you to become more emotional than you believe might be helpful for you. Some common triggers include: criticism, authority/“being talked down to”, bad drivers, failure, rejection, abandonment, loss, etc. If you are unsure what your triggers might be, that is okay you can return to this section in the future when you notice yourself being triggered.

STOPP

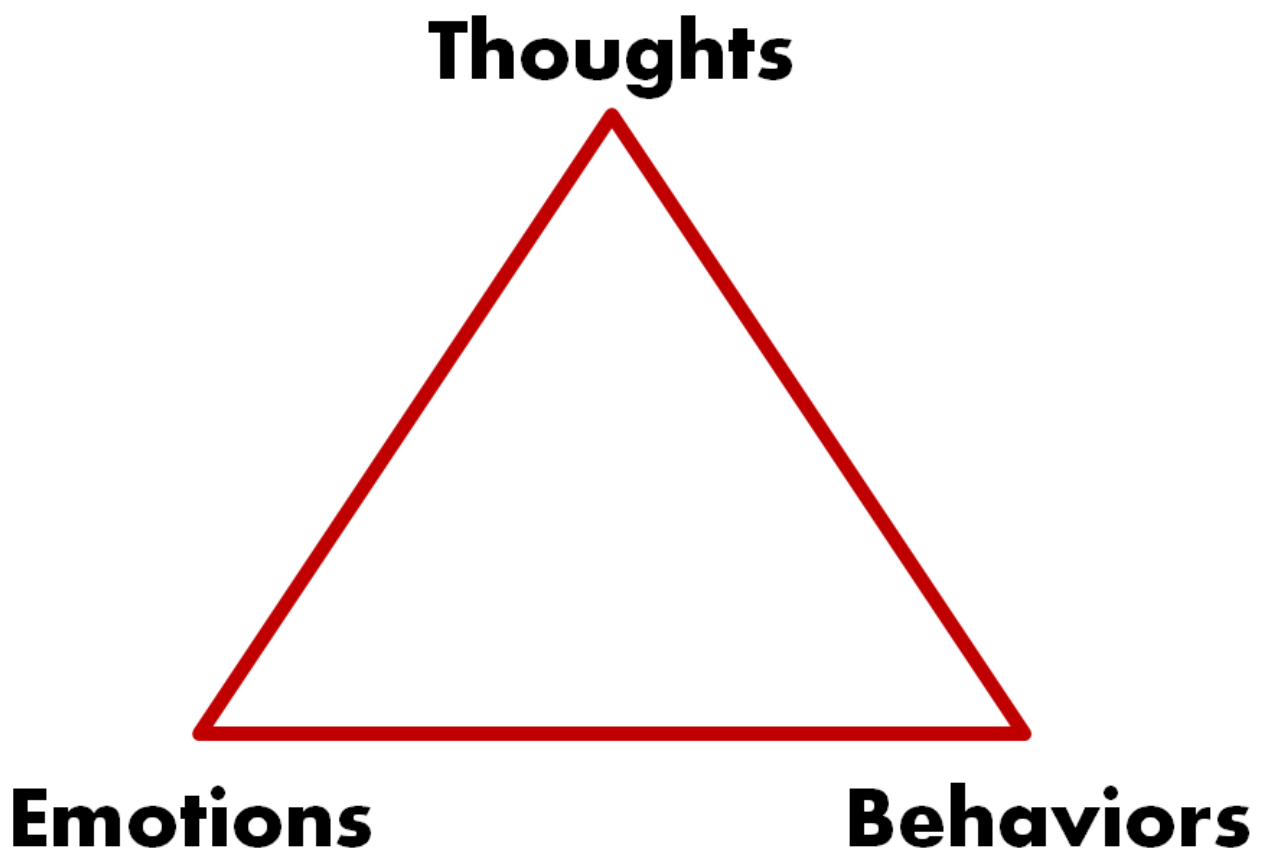
Once we can anticipate your triggers, there are some strategies we can use to handle intense emotions when we are triggered. For example, **one exercise we can use to improve emotional control is STOPP.**

S	Stop	Avoid simply reacting without thinking things through in emotionally charged situations
T	Take a breath (Calm down) Remember TIP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperature – cool down • Intense exercise • Progressive muscle relaxation 	After stopping our automatic response, we need to calm down the nervous system and brain. This step encourages us to slow down our breathing, splash cold water on your face, tense and release muscles, or do some exercise – all of these things have been shown to calm down the nervous system in many studies.
O	Observe what is happening	What is going on in the situation, what is going on in your mind, and what are you feeling emotionally?
P	Put it in perspective	Challenge unhelpful beliefs which may be distorted. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the evidence that your beliefs are true? • What's another way of looking at the situation? • Are there any cognitive distortions taking place?
P	Practice what works	Respond to the situation in a strategic manner. What do you want to happen in this situation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you want to be connected with someone? • Do you want to punish? • Do you want to learn from this situation? • Do you want to demonstrate your resilience/maturity? How can you act in a way consistent with this hope?

If you have some unhelpful predictions about the STOPP exercise not working for you, it might be useful to run some behavioral experiments in which you practice this skill and test the accuracy of your assumptions. What have you got to lose?



BEHAVIOR

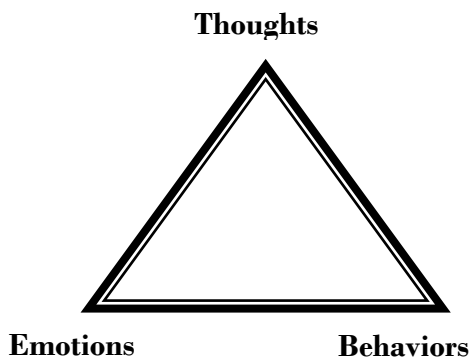


If you are trying to improve your mood, making some healthy changes to your behavior may be a good place to start.

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Definition of a healthy lifestyle: **Any behavior that has a positive effect on a person's health and well-being. The absence of these behaviors can have a negative impact on physical and mental health.**

When we look at the connection between thoughts, behaviors and emotions we can see that our **emotions are driven by what we think and what we do**. So say, for example, you've developed a habit of staying in bed until noon. Likely once you get up you're not thinking to yourself "I feel great". It's more likely that you're feeling less energized, and almost overtired. Maybe you decide you'd like to try an experiment where you set the alarm and get up at an earlier time. Maybe after doing that for a couple of weeks you notice that you're sleeping better at night, getting more accomplished during the day, and going to bed more tired than you were before.



Other areas of our lives where we can experiment with making changes in our behavior are things like nutrition, exercise, social life and having fun. **All of these are important areas of our behavior that have been shown to have a significant impact on our emotional life.** The good news is that these are all areas we have control over and can change if we choose to.

So what is a sustaining lifestyle? Imagine you have a bank account for your energy, interest and motivation in your life.

Or you can think of it as a gas tank for your car. We "spend" our energy, or use our "fuel" in a variety of ways. Maybe we have responsibilities like partners, children, jobs, extended families, bills to pay, homes to care for etc. Some people have more responsibilities than others, but we all have some. Each of our responsibilities requires some time and energy from us.

Or maybe we have stress in our lives. Maybe we struggle with a chronic physical illness, financial hardship, or dealing with negative or positive life changes. We need to use our energy to cope. Creating change in our lives, or working toward our goals requires energy and that uses our "fuel".

So how do we fill up the "fuel" tank or make a deposit to the "bank account"? To be emotionally healthy we need to put as much fuel into the tank as we hope to get out of it, or have enough in reserve to spend if we need it.

Key Points:

- What we do influences how we feel and what we think
- Healthy living habits serve as the foundation upon which we build wellness
- Self-care (sleep, diet, exercise, socializing, having fun, etc.) is important for living a satisfied life

SLEEP

Sleep problems can contribute to a wide range of mental and physical health problems. While research suggests different people require different amounts of sleep, most people require between 7 and 8 hours of sleep per night. Less than 6 hours of sleep is considered sleep deprivation. Sleep deprivation is associated with increased depression, memory problems, higher anxiety, increased risk of stroke, increased risk for diabetes, increased risk of breast cancer, increased risk of heart disease, and weight gain.

- For starters, start thinking about sleep as important, not something we do here and there when we simply can't go on any longer. Think of the amount of sleep you need as nonnegotiable.
- Consider your lifestyle. Exercise not only helps us fall asleep faster, it also promotes deep, slow wave sleep and helps to keep you asleep during the night. Be sure to end your exercise long before bedtime or you may experience difficulty in falling asleep.
- Consider your eating patterns. Anything more than a light snack a couple of hours before bedtime is potentially a problem for sleep. Digestion is hard work and could keep you awake.
- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. In order to have our bodies working well and to maintain a healthy circadian rhythm (a 24-hour cycle) we need to have a pattern of sleep that our bodies recognize. In order to do this, we need to develop a routine around sleep.
- Limit napping. There is no right or wrong on the subject of napping. However, if you have developed a habit of sleeping for hours during the day, and notice that you're struggling to get a good night's sleep you may want to have a look at this.
- Have a look at your caffeine intake. Caffeine blocks the neurotransmitter adenosine which promotes sleep. If you are a heavy caffeine user, cut back slowly.
- Alcohol and tobacco. Alcohol can seem to soothe you to sleep, but it fragments sleep once it starts to wear off. Alcohol reduces both NREM and REM sleep, which is what we need in order to feel well rested. Smoking anywhere close to bedtime is like taking a stimulant and then trying to relax. Nicotine is a central nervous system stimulant, so it works directly against your cardiovascular, neurological and other systems when your intent is to wind down.
- Relaxing before bed. Seems taking a bath before bed has some scientific evidence to back it up. Our bodies need to be relatively cool for us to get high quality slow wave sleep. Soaking in a bath elevates your body temperature, and when you get out of the tub thermoregulation kicks in and your temperature drops rapidly. It's that drop that not only helps you fall asleep but to move quickly into slow wave sleep.
- And finally, is your bedroom a restful place? Does your bedroom or sleep place look calm and inviting, or is your bed stacked with laundry to be folded, is there a computer running in the corner and is there a TV on blaring the news of the day at you? If so, you may want to consider making your sleep place a little more of an oasis from your busy day.

Sleep Statistics - Canadians aged 18 to 64 (n = 8,914, 2007-2013):

- 64.8% got the recommended 7-9 hours of sleep
- 31.9% got fewer than 7 hours
- And 3.3% got more than 9 hours

Beliefs that get in the Way

- Sleep is not as important as the other things I need to do
- There is no point in trying to improve my sleep, because I've already tried everything
- Sleeping should be easier, I shouldn't have to try and make improvements

“Although scientists are still trying to tease apart all the mechanisms, they've discovered that sleep disruption — which affects levels of neurotransmitters and stress hormones, among other things — wreaks havoc in the brain, impairing thinking and emotional regulation. In this way, insomnia may amplify the effects of psychiatric disorders, and vice versa.” – The Harvard Medical School – Harvard Mental Health Letter (June 2018)

https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/sleep-and-mental-health

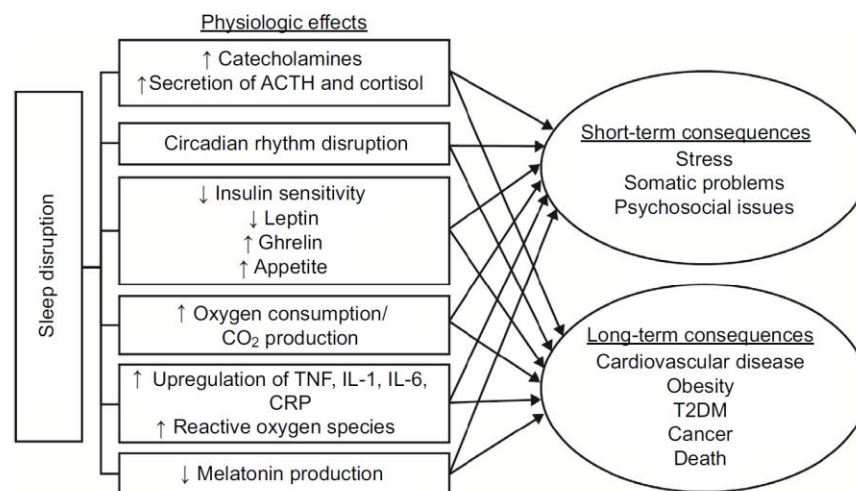


Figure 1 Proposed mechanisms by which sleep disruption is thought to exert its detrimental short- and long-term effects.

Notes: ↑, increase; ↓, decrease. Data from the following references.^{9,12,41-45}

Abbreviations: ACTH, adrenocorticotrophic hormone; CO₂, carbon dioxide; TNF, tumor necrosis factor; IL, interleukin; CRP, C-reactive protein; T2DM, type 2 diabetes mellitus.

From: Medic G., Wille M., & Hemels, M. E., (2017). Short-and long-term health consequences of sleep disruption. *Nature and Science of Sleep*, 9, 151-161.

EXERCISE

Just increasing our activity and exercise levels we can make an enormous impact on our energy level and mood by:

- ✓ Helping us feel better about ourselves
- ✓ Helping us feel less tired
- ✓ Increasing our motivation to do more
- ✓ Improving our ability to think more clearly
- ✓ Helping us think about/focus on something other than unhelpful thoughts
- ✓ Using the adrenaline resources created by anxiety and anger
- ✓ Building on a sense of achievement
- ✓ Increasing enjoyment
- ✓ Being with other people
- ✓ Stimulating the body to produce natural anti-depressants
- ✓ Helping us to be generally healthier (blood pressure, cardiovascular, weight control, etc)
- ✓ Contributing to healthy digestion

Beliefs that get in the Way

- Exercise isn't important, lots of people don't exercise and they're fine
- Exercising costs too much money, I can't afford to do the kind of exercising I want
- Only vigorous exercise counts and I have too much pain or discomfort for that

Exercise is one of those things on the behavior side of the triangle that we have control over and can contribute to refueling our energy resources. Exercise can have a huge impact on our mood in a relatively short period of time.

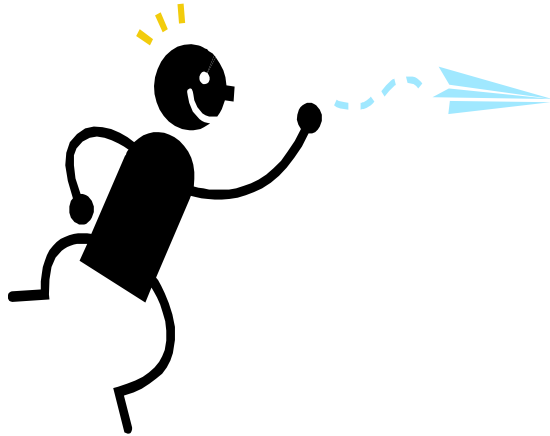
Some things we can do to exercise include

- Try a new activity (yoga, jazzercise, Tai Chi, etc.)
- Join a sports team (bowling, softball, rowing, etc.)
- Combine exercise with an activity you would normally enjoy (watching television, listening to music, spending time of social media, etc.)
- Arrange to meet a friend at the same time each week to do something physical (tennis, go for a walk, go hiking, etc.)
- Give yourself a reward each time you exercise (walk while having your morning coffee, a small piece of chocolate, listen to a good audiobook while exercising, etc.)

Statistics about Exercise: *A 2018 study of 122 007 people suggested, low cardiorespiratory fitness (low fitness due to minimal exercise) was found to be more associated with death than smoking, diabetes, and coronary artery disease.*

HAVING FUN!

We just can't emphasize enough the importance of having fun! When people become anxious, stressed, depressed or caught in a pattern of dysfunctional coping skills they sometimes stop doing the things they would normally enjoy. They often feel like they have less energy and as a result might save their energy for the things they are obligated to do. Fun can become something that is seen as time consuming or a frill they can't afford. This is problematic for a number of reasons.



Having fun gives us more energy than it takes. If you have been having mood problems your energy reserves may be low. Removing the things you normally enjoy can feel like a way to conserve energy for more important tasks. In reality, removing the things you enjoy actually reduces your energy in the long run.

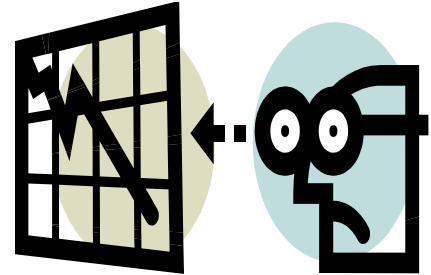
If we asked a non-depressed person to do as little as many depressed people do - so to have as few social contacts as possible, to go out as little as possible, and to give up the activities they enjoy – you would soon have a person who is starting to look depressed.

It might be that in the past your socializing included using alcohol or drugs. For some people learning to have fun without these substances can seem a daunting task. If your connection with people was always at the local pub you may think to yourself “what do I do now”? While it can be difficult to find and make new connections, it is not impossible. It may mean that you need to be a bit creative or willing to try something new and perhaps out of your comfort zone. You might consider joining an adult volleyball team, or trying a weekend hiking group. You could look into volunteering. You could check out the local paper under community events and see what's happening. Just because you're now choosing to do things in a different way does not mean that you have to live in isolation. Many people socialize and have fun without using alcohol and/or drugs.

So remember, having fun is one of those pieces of your life that falls on the behavior side of the triangle. It is completely in your control. From phoning a friend and going for coffee or playing cards to joining a group or volunteering. The possibilities are endless. If you haven't had fun for a long time keep in mind that the first few attempts might feel awkward. Don't give up! Remind yourself that you are just getting used to the new activity, and be patient with yourself. It's worth it!

GOAL SETTING

Now that we've spent some time looking at the behavior side of the triangle, let's take a look at setting and attaining achievable goals. **It's important to set goals that are achievable.** One of the easiest places to start is to set a goal around one of the healthy lifestyle pieces we've been discussing. Let's say we decide that we might want to do some exercise. It's not a good plan to set a goal that by the end of the first week we plan to run a marathon. **We want to set goals that are realistic.** We also **want to set goals that are measurable, so we'll know when we are making progress.** If our goals are vague, like "I plan to increase my fitness level" we may have trouble measuring our success. If our goals are unrealistic, we may inadvertently set ourselves up to fail.



When setting goals we need to think in terms of a combination of small steps. We get to where we're going one step at a time. Ideally we will be able to measure the steps along the way which helps us to see our progress and can bolster our resolve. No step is too small. If you've developed a habit of saying "ya, but" you might be inclined to "ya, but" your success away if you see the progress as too slow or the step too small. There are no steps that are too small if they are moving you in the right direction! Phoning the rec centre to find out what time the pool is open for public swim is a step in the right direction. Maybe your goal is to be swimming three times per week for 30 minutes each time by 3 months from today. Once you've called the pool, don't say to yourself "ya, but anybody can make a phone call and I'm still not in the water". Rather notice that you've taken one more step toward where you want to be.

If you're setting a goal around the behavior side of the triangle think about ways to set goals that don't involve other people. Let's say your goal is to go for a daily walk to the mailbox. If that goal depends on finding someone to watch your kids you may notice that you need more than resolve to achieve your goal – you now need someone else to be ready willing and able to help you. You might want to consider setting a goal that you can achieve independent of other people. You may decide to walk while your kids are at school, or if you have younger kids to walk with them in a stroller. That way your success isn't tied to someone else's schedule or willingness.

The important thing to remember is that our ability to make changes in our lives is up to us. If we set goals that are attainable, measurable, realistic and not dependent on others we will have control over our success. We can change our goals as we go along, or we can add new ones. And remember, long-term goals are made up of many, many short-term goals. We get where we want to go one step at a time! All those little steps can add up to be big life changing shifts.

SMART GOALS

Specific – What exactly do you want to do?

Measurable – How will your goal be measured? (yes/no, pounds, time, ect.)

Actionable – What are the steps for you to achieve your goal? Do you anticipate any obstacles that could happen, and if so how will you cope with those obstacles.

Relevant – Why do you want to achieve this goal? Why is it important to you?

Time Bound – When do you want to start your goal? When do you want to end it?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-SvuFIQjK8>

Example

Specific – What exactly do you want to do?

Walk everyday this week

Measurable – How will your goal be measured? (yes/no, pounds, time, ect.)

At least 20 minutes

Actionable – What are the steps for you to achieve your goal? Do you anticipate any obstacles that could happen, and if so how will you cope with those obstacles.

I'll set an alarm for 7:30 then when it goes off, I'll grab my umbrella if it is raining, and go.

Relevant – Why do you want to achieve this goal? Why is it important to you?

It will probably help me sleep, it will make me proud of making progress, it will help my health, it might be fun

Time Bound – When do you want to start your goal? When do you want to end it?

I'm going to start tonight and do it for a week.

“Being Happy”

When we are setting goals, we want to focus on things that we can control – such as our own behaviors. Many people want to set the goal to “be happy.” However, being happy is not something you can simply choose to do. We will likely fail if we set the goal to “be happy for 20 minutes every day.” However, we can set goals to do things that will likely lead to use feeling happy. These are the activities that we can create goals to engage in. For example, we often feel more satisfied in life when we have good relationships, engage with pleasurable activities, do things we find meaningful/purposeful, and when our bodies are healthy.

Being happy is an outcome, not a process

Some things I could try changing to improve my life and/or health might be...

ACTIVITY SCHEDULING

Activity scheduling can be a very useful tool for encouraging health and well-being. Before we get to the scheduling, take a moment and list some activities you could engage in, to have more balance in your life.

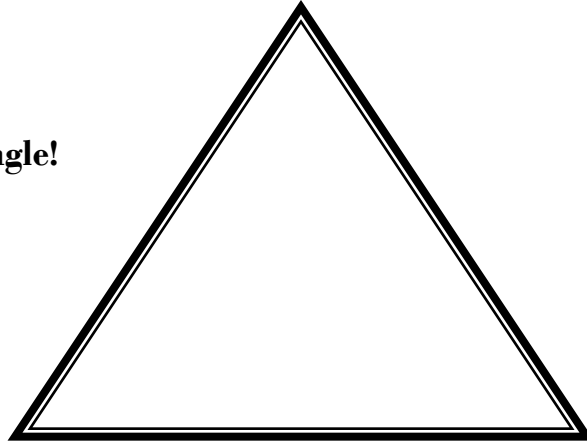
Now take some time to schedule some healthy living activities. Try and include exercise, sleep, grocery shopping, cooking, socializing, and having fun. When we are scheduling activities, try to make the plans specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and time bound.

Include all the activities you in the section prior to improve your exercise, sleep, diet, socializing, and fun.

SO NOW WHAT?

Often after completing a program like this people report a dip in their mood. This is **NOT** an indication of illness; rather it is a normal human response to a significant change in someone's weekly schedule.

Remember the triangle!



The drop in mood can be addressed by practicing the skills learned.

There is no way to create a stress free life but we can learn to look after ourselves in a way that increases our ability to deal with stress when it comes along. When stress in our lives goes up, we tend to reduce our self-care (“I’m too tired to go to the gym” or “I’m too stressed out to go out with my friends”) and the opposite (increase in self-care) is what we need.

Is there a particular healthy activity that you find helpful when your stress increases? **Don’t** give up the things that keep you going when you most need them! Manage your lifestyle – maintain the activities designed to have a healthy, balanced impact on your mood

Remember: situation ➡ thinking ➡ emotion + behavior

When you get home after completing the day program, keep that material where you can see it and use it. The more you use the skills you have learned, the more effective and healthy you become.

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF CBT

1. Feelings are not externally caused.

- Our emotions and moods are caused by our thinking, not what happens to us, what others say, or our environment. We interpret the things that happen to us, and our emotions are caused by these interpretations. This is important because you can learn to control what you think and when you can do this, you can control how you feel.

2. Recognize preferences are not demands.

- While it is normal to have preferences, emotional disturbances occur when we demand to have our preferences met.

3. Distinguish appropriate and inappropriate feelings.

- Intense emotions often get in the way of working towards our goals. It is normal to get frustrated, annoyed, disappointed, apprehensive, and sad but it is often unhelpful to become enraged, devastated, panicked, ashamed, and depressed.

4. Put yourself first and others in a close second without shame or guilt.

- This promotes happiness and joy, which can make you more fun to be around.

5. Avoid evaluating humans.

- Humans are too complex and ever-changing to judge or score. Neither you nor other people are simply “good” or “bad.”

6. All rejection is self-rejection and is self-inflicted.

- People may evaluate you and choose to not associate with you, but your feelings of embarrassment, shame, anxiety, and sadness are caused by your thoughts like “because this person does not want to associate with me, this means I’m no good!”

7. Attempt to get better, rather than merely feeling better.

- What feels good isn’t always good for us. For example, expressing intense unwanted emotions, like anger, might feel good at the time, but it might move us away from our life goals.

8. Abandon absolute thinking.

- Identify, challenge, and uproot these three core irrational ideas:
 1. “I must do perfectly well or I’m completely worthless,”
 2. “You must treat me perfectly, with no lapses in kindness and consideration, or you are completely worthless.”
 3. “Life must make it easy on me to reach my goals and accomplishments.”

SUMMARY CHECKLIST

<u>DO</u>	<u>DON'T</u>
Continue to set achievable goals	Don't wait for things to happen or change
Reward yourself for your achievements	Don't focus on disappointments
Simplify or change goals that are not working for you	Don't get stuck continuing with goals you find frustrating
Make plans for your free time	Don't sit around with nothing to do
Make contact with friends at least once a week (and preferably more!)	Don't isolate yourself when feeling down
Make a plan for meeting new friends	Don't wait for people to approach you
Be consistent with your daily schedule (regular bedtimes and rising times)	Don't just float through your day letting your mood dictate your schedule
Seek out and initiate pleasant activities and events	Don't get stuck in a routine that does not allow you the opportunity to enjoy life
Stay aware of automatic thoughts you have that affect your mood	Don't let negative automatic thoughts go unchallenged
Notice, notice, notice! And reframe, reframe, reframe!	Don't catastrophize, and don't focus entirely on the negative!

The list of Do's and Don'ts might seem overwhelming. Remember to use what works for you and what you feel comfortable with. Think of these as part of an action plan of skills you want to develop further.



List of pleasurable activities

Talk to a friend on the telephone

Go out and visit a friend

Invite a friend to come to your home

Text message your friends

Organize a party

Exercise

Lift weights

Do yoga, or take a class to learn

Stretch your muscles

Go for a long walk in a park

Go outside and watch the clouds

Go jogging

Ride your bike

Go for a swim

Go hiking

Do something exciting like rock climbing, skiing, or kayaking, or learn how to do something exciting

Go to the local playground and join a game or watch a game

Go play something by yourself if no one else is around, like basketball or bowling

Hit a tennis ball against the wall

Get a massage

Get out of your house even if you just sit outside

Go for a drive in your car or on public transit

Plan a trip to a place you've never been before

Eat chocolate or something else you really like

Eat your favorite ice cream

Cook your favorite dish or meal

Cook a recipe you've never tried before

Take a cooking class

Go out for something to eat

Go outside and play with your pet

Borrow a friend's dog and take it for a walk

Give your pet a bath

Go outside and watch the birds or other animals

Find something funny to do – read the comics

Watch a funny movie (start a collection of funny movies to watch when you need a laugh)

Go to the movie theatre and watch whatever's playing

Listen to the radio

Go to a sporting event

Play a game with a friend

Play solitaire

Play video games

Go online to chat

Visit your favorite web sites

Visit crazy websites and start a list of them

Create your own web site

Create your own online blog

Sell something you don't want anymore

Do a puzzle with lots of pieces

Go shopping

Get a haircut

Go to a spa

Go to a library

Go to a bookstore and read

Go to your favorite café for coffee or tea

Visit a museum or local art gallery

Go people watching at the mall or park

Call a family member you haven't spoken to in a while

Learn a new language

Sing or learn how to sing

Play a musical instrument or learn to play one

Write a song

Listen to some upbeat happy music, start a collection for when you need them

Turn on some loud music and dance

Memorize lines from your favorite movie, play or song

Make a movie or video with your camcorder

Take photographs

Join a public speaking group and write a speech

Participate in a local theatre group

Sing in a local choir

Join a club

Plant a garden

Work outside

Knit, crochet or sew – or learn how

Make a scrapbook with pictures

Paint your nails

Change your hair color

Take a bubble bath or shower

Work on your car, truck, motorcycle or bike

Sign up for a class at your local college

Read your favorite book, magazine or poem

Read a trashy celebrity magazine

Write a letter to a friend

Write down things you like about yourself

Write a poem, movie or play about your life or someone else's

Write in your journal or diary

Write a loving letter to yourself and keep it to read when you need it

Make a list of 10 things you're good at

Draw a picture

Paint a picture with your fingers

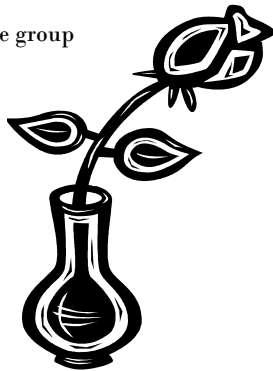
Make a list of people you admire

Make a list of 10 things you would like to do in the next 10 years

Make a list of 10 celebrities you would like to be friends with and why

Write a letter to someone who made your life better and tell them why (don't have to send it)

Create your own list of pleasurable activities



Distressing Situation:

Feelings	Now (1-100)	After (1-100)	Feelings	Now (1-100)	After (1-100)
Angry (mad, annoyed, frustrated, pissed-off, furious)			Guilty (bad, remorseful, ashamed)		
Sad (down, hurt, miserable, depressed)			Embarrassed (silly, ridiculous, humiliated)		
Anxious (nervous, worried, afraid, terrified)			Hopeless (disappointed, discouraged, pessimistic)		

Negative Thoughts	How much to do you believe this negative thought? (0-100)		Unhelpful thinking habits			Balanced thoughts	How much do you believe the balanced thought? (0-100)
	Now	After	A/N	Jump	Should		
			Over	Mag/Min	Label		
			Fil	ER	Blame		
			A/N	Jump	Should		
			Over	Mag/Min	Label		
			Fil	ER	Blame		
			A/N	Jump	Should		
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			Over	Mag/Min	Label		
			Fil	ER	Blame		

Negative Thoughts	How much to do you believe this negative thought? (0-100)		Unhelpful thinking habits			Balanced thoughts	How much do you believe the balanced thought? (0-100)
	Now	After	A/N	Jump	Should		
			Over	Mag/Min	Label		
			Fil	ER	Blame		
			A/N	Jump	Should		
			Over	Mag/Min	Label		
			Fil	ER	Blame		

Unhelpful thinking habits

All-or-nothing thinking (A/N): When you look at things in all-or-nothing ways. “I must be perfect or I’m a failure”, “you’re a bad person”, and “The world is dangerous.”	Jumping to conclusions (Jump): when we make assumptions or predictions that are not supported by facts. Mindreading: assuming you know what other people think or feel. Fortune-telling: Predicting something bad will happen.	Should and Musts (Should): an unreasonable expectation about what should, must, or ought to happen. “I should be able to do this!”, “You have to respect me”, “and “Things ought to be easier!”
Overgeneralizations (Over): When you exaggerate a negative event or behavior, suggesting it always or never happens. “I always mess up”, “you never listen”, “this kind of thing always happens to me.”	Magnification and minimization (Mag/Min): Blow things out of proportion or minimize good things.	Labelling (Label): Making a judgment about a person (including yourself) based on behavior. “I’m a failure”, “you’re a jerk”, “You’re inconsiderate.”
Filtering (Fil): When we only focus on bad things or things that confirm our negative beliefs.	Emotional reasoning (ER): when we make conclusions based on how we feel. “This is making me anxious so it must be bad!”, “I feel embarrassed so I’m an idiot!”	Blame (Blame): focusing on assigning blame as opposed to solving problems. Blame can be directed at yourself or others.

USING THE ABC MODEL – EXAMPLE ANSWERS

Specific answers depend on who you are as an individual person, but some suggestions or example answers are listed below.

You go to bed and turn out the lights. Your mind wanders and you realize the end of the month is approaching. You then think “do I have enough money to pay rent?” Your stomach instantly gets tied in knots, you feel tightness in your chest, and your muscles tense. You grab your phone to check your account balance online.

What might be the activating event in this situation? – *lying in bed without distractions.*

What are the beliefs (or thoughts, worries, assumptions, fears, etc.) that are triggered by the activating event? – *Likely something like “I might not have enough money to pay rent” and “It would be awful if I didn’t have enough money to pay rent.”*

What are the consequences (emotions and behaviors)? – *emotionally you likely feel anxious/panicked, physically you feel your stomach instantly getting tied in knots, you feel tightness in your chest, and your muscles tense, and behaviorally you check your account balance online.*

You come home to find your partner is sitting on the couch watching television. There are several dirty dishes in the sink.

What might be the activating event in this situation? – *seeing your partner on the couch and dishes in the sink.*

What might be your beliefs or thoughts in this situation? – *perhaps something like “my partner is lazy”, “they always leave messes for me to clean-up” and/or “they should have done the dishes.”*

What might be the consequences (emotions and behaviors)? - *You might feel angry, upset, and frustrated. How you behave will depend greatly on how you approach situations as an individual but many people may be tempted to criticize their partners or behave passive-aggressively.*

You’re sitting in your room and have been on the computer for 6 hours. You have not left home in several days and have drank 5 beers so far this evening. You think “Life sucks. I should be out doing things but I can’t because I’m depressed.” You feel miserable and depressed.

What might be the activating event in this situation? *This depends on the person, but for some people it might be not leaving their rooms and drinking.*

What might be your beliefs or thoughts in this situation? *The beliefs might be something like “I can’t do anything about my depression”, “I’ll do change my behavior when my mood changes”, or “I should feel happier.”*

