

Unhelpful Thought Patterns Workbook

A thought can be changed

Our thoughts have a lot of power.

Our thoughts shape our beliefs and our perceptions of the world, they influence how we feel and how we behave.

So, when our thoughts follow unhelpful patterns, we can find ourselves stuck in negative cycles of emotion, expecting the worst from life and basing our view of reality on inaccurate information.

We can step outside of our thoughts in order to examine them and identify inaccuracies. This allows us to work on finding a more accurate and helpful perspective on things which leads to freeing ourselves from the negative cycles.

All human psychological struggles have a cognitive component to them. Therefore identifying thoughts, analysing them and choosing a more helpful thought is useful in managing any psychological distress as well as building resilience and improving your experience of day to day life.

There are 9 main unhelpful thought patterns we are covering in this workbook. (The video discusses these in more detail).

- **Black and White Thinking** - Viewing the world in extremes without acknowledging the grey area in-between.
- **Labelling / Generalisation** - Making general assumptions and assigning labels to yourself or other people based on a small amount of information
- **Catastrophising** - Blowing things out of proportion and expecting the worst case scenario to happen
- **Emotional Reasoning** - Basing your perceptions about the world or a situation on your feelings at the time.
- **Mental Filter** - Only acknowledging some of the evidence based on what you expect. Like having tunnel vision where you see only the negatives and ignore the positives.
- **Should / Must** - Having strict rules for yourself and other people about what should or must happen.
- **Mind Reading** - Imagining we know what other people are thinking
- **Fortune Telling** - Imagining we know what is going to happen in the future based on our previous experiences
- **Personalisation** - Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for things unnecessarily

'There is nothing in this world that can trouble you as much as your own thoughts'

You might notice that you have thoughts that fall into almost all of the different unhelpful thinking patterns. This is nothing to worry about, we are human and we are prone to these types of thoughts.

I suggest you pick on for two of these styles to work on to begin with. You can always tackle others once you have made progress

Think about which situation in your life or which thought pattern is causing you the most distress or upset and aim to work on that first.

The unhelpful thought pattern I will prioritise changing is:

The other thought patterns I know I would benefit from changing are:

Black and White Thinking

In what situations do I do this?

What thoughts do I have?

What feelings does this leave me with?

The specific thought I will work on is:

What is helpful/ unhelpful about this thought?

Is this thought realistic?

What evidence am I basing this thought on?

What evidence am I ignoring?

Where does this situation fit on the spectrum between black and white?

What situations have there been in the past that have not fitted on one extreme or the other?

What other ways are there of looking at this?

My new more helpful and balanced thought is:

Labelling / Generalisation

In what situations do I do this?

What thoughts do I have?

What feelings does this leave me with?

The specific thought I will work on is:

What is helpful/ unhelpful about this thought?

Is this a fair representation?

What evidence am I basing this label/generalisation on?

What evidence am I ignoring? What are the other possibilities?

Am I labelling the person or the behaviour?

Is this label or generalisation accurate in all situations?

What other ways are there of looking at this?

My new more helpful and balanced thought is:

Catastrophising

In what situations do I do this?

What thoughts do I have?

What feelings does this leave me with?

The specific thought I will work on is:

What is helpful/ unhelpful about this thought?

Is this thought realistic?

How likely is it that this will happen?

What is more likely to happen?

What is the current reality?

Is there any action to take to protect against the worst case scenario??

How would someone else interpret this situation?

My new more helpful and balanced though is:

Emotional Reasoning

In what situations do I do this?

What thoughts do I have?

What feelings does this leave me with?

The specific thought I will work on is:

What is helpful/ unhelpful about this thought?

Is this thought accurate?

What evidence am I basing this on?

What evidence have I been ignoring?

Am I interpreting my emotions or the facts?

When have my emotions been inaccurate in the past?

How would someone else interpret this situation?

My new more helpful and balanced thought is:

Mental Filter

In what situations do I do this?

What thoughts do I have?

What feelings does this leave me with?

The specific thought I will work on is:

What is helpful/ unhelpful about this thought?

Is this thought accurate?

What information am I letting through the filter?

What information have I been filtering out?

What is a more balanced way to look at things?

If I change my filter to look for positives, what would I see?

How would someone else interpret this situation?

My new more helpful and balanced thought is:

Should / Must

In what situations do I do this?

What thoughts do I have?

What feelings does this leave me with?

The specific thought I will work on is:

What is helpful/ unhelpful about this thought?

What am I basing this thought on?

Is this a realistic expectation to have?

What would be more realistic to expect of myself/other people?

How does it feel to put 'I could' or 'I choose to' in from of this thought?

Would I like to do something different?

What would someone else say about this?

My new more helpful and balanced though is:

Mind Reading

In what situations do I do this?

What thoughts do I have?

What feelings does this leave me with?

The specific thought I will work on is:

What is helpful/ unhelpful about this thought?

What evidence am I basing this thought on?

Whats the worst that would happen if this were true?

What other possibilities are there?

What insecurities is this thought based on?

Have there been times in the past when I have been wrong about what someone is thinking?

What would someone else say about this?

My new more helpful and balanced though is:

Fortune Telling

In what situations do I do this?

What thoughts do I have?

What feelings does this leave me with?

The specific thought I will work on is:

What is helpful/ unhelpful about this thought?

What evidence am I basing this on?

What evidence am I overlooking?

How likely is it that this will happen?

What else could happen?

Have my predictions for the future ever been wrong in the past?

What would someone else say about this?

My new more helpful and balanced thought is:

Personalisation

In what situations do I do this?

What thoughts do I have?

What feelings does this leave me with?

The specific thought I will work on is:

What is helpful/ unhelpful about this thought?

What evidence am I basing this thought on?

Is it realistic to blame myself for this?


Would i blame someone else in the same position for this?

What things contributed to this situation?

What were my intentions?

What if no one is to blame?

My new more helpful and balanced though is:



‘You need to learn
how to select your
thoughts just the same
way you select your
clothes every day’

- Elizabeth Gilbert