

THOUGHTS 3 -- DECREASING AND TALKING BACK TO YOUR NEGATIVE THOUGHTS TO IMPROVE YOUR MOOD

SESSION OUTLINE

- I. Agenda and Announcements
- II. Review
- III. Personal Project Review
- IV. New Material: Disputing Harmful Thoughts
- V. Take Home Message
- VI. Personal Project

The purpose of today's meeting:

- To begin talking about ways to decrease and talk back to harmful thoughts.
- To try and begin talking back to your harmful thoughts.

REVIEW: CATEGORIES OF HARMFUL THOUGHTS

- What do you remember most from the last session?
- What do you remember about the categories of harmful thoughts?
- What can you do to take a break from harmful thoughts?

PERSONAL PROJECT REVIEW

1. Review your quick mood scale.
2. Which categories of harmful thoughts do you think affect your mood most?
3. Have you found healthy ways to think that improve your mood?

HARMFUL THOUGHTS I HAVE

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

WAYS TO DECREASE OR TALK BACK TO HARMFUL THOUGHTS THAT MAKE US FEEL BAD

Option 1: Examine the Evidence

The next time you have a thought that brings your mood down or causes a strong negative feeling, try following these 3 steps.

STEP 1: Mostly True, Mostly False or Neither?

- What is the evidence that my thought is 100% true?
- What is the evidence that my thought is 100% false?
- How much of it do I think is true (percentagewise) and how much of it do I think is false (percentagewise)?

STEP 2: Talk with another person, someone whose opinion you trust

- Often we think differently when we say our thoughts out loud to others.
- Different people have different points of view, what is this person's point of view?
- If your friend has this thought or problem, what would you tell him or her? Should you maybe use your own advice?

STEP 3: So what?

- What if my thought is 100% true, or mostly true, what can I do about it?

Note: This exercise was adapted from the manual "Cognitive Behavioral Therapy of Depression by Kaiser Medical Center, Department of Psychiatry, San Francisco, January 1999.

WAYS TO DECREASE OR TALK BACK TO
HARMFUL THOUGHTS
THAT MAKE US FEEL BAD
(Continued)

OPTION 3: Find the Antidote to My Pattern of Thinking

Follow these 3 steps.

STEP 1: Identify my thought pattern

- Does my harmful thought fit a pattern?
- Which pattern? (See page 29-31)

STEP 2: Identify the antidote to the pattern

- What is the antidote to the pattern? (see pages 29-31)
- What does it mean to me?
- How can I apply it to my specific thought or my specific situation?

STEP 3: Apply the antidote

- When I apply the antidote how does my thinking change?
- When my thinking changes does my feeling change?

Notes:

My thought:

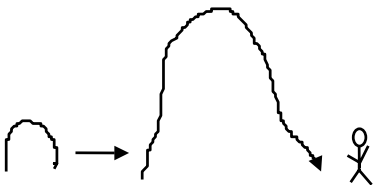
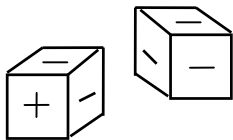
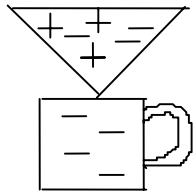
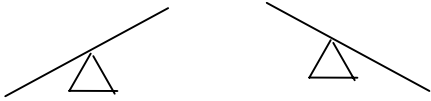
Category of harmful thinking that my thought fits:

The antidote:

How I feel after using the antidote:

CATEGORIES OF UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS AND THEIR ANTIDOTES

Symbol



Unhelpful Thought Pattern

All or Nothing Thinking

Thinking in extremes (can only be at one end of the scale, top or bottom). Not balanced.
All good or all bad. The best or worst. Perfect or a failure.

Negative Filter (Ignoring the Positive)

Only remember negative events. Filter out positive events. Your cup of life ends up very bitter and negative.

Pessimism

Believing negative things are more likely to happen and positive things are never or hardly ever going to happen

Exaggerating

Exaggerating problems and the possible harm they could cause, and underestimating your ability to deal with them.

“Mountain out of a mole hill”

Antidote

Try to engage in more balanced thinking.
Are there shades of gray?

Try to catch the positive.
For every negative thing you think of, try to also focus on a positive thing.
Write down positive things on a card. Carry them with you on cards and look at them throughout the day.

Am I ignoring positive things?
Am I really giving positive and negative things an equal chance?

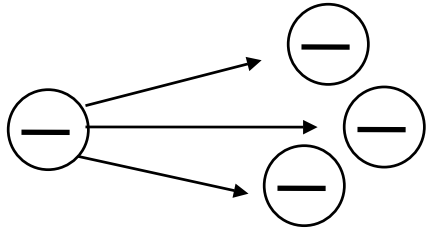
How big is this problem really?
Where is it likely to really lead?
How might I deal with this problem?

**CATEGORIES OF UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS
 AND THEIR ANTIDOTES (continued)**

Symbol

Unhelpful Thought Pattern

Antidote



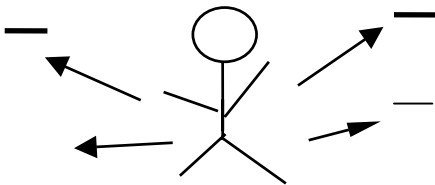
Overgeneralization
 Taking one negative characteristic or event and seeing it as a never-ending pattern.
 He/She doesn't like me --> no one likes me.
 I couldn't do this one thing. --> I can't do anything.

Am I assuming that every situation and every person are the same?
 This is just one situation, one person.
 Can I remember other situations and people that are different?



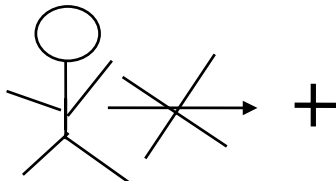
Labeling (either yourself or others)
 Attaching a negative label, instead of seeing an error or problem. Labels can become self-fulfilling prophecies.
 Stupid vs. not good at math.
 Clumsy vs. drops things occasionally.

What is it specifically that I can't do or that I am upset about. What did I do vs. who am I?



Blaming Oneself
 Thinking negative things happen and are always entirely your fault.

Am I to blame for everything always?
 Do only bad things happen to me?
 Remember the good that has happened to me and that I have created.



Not Giving Oneself Credit
 Thinking positive things that happen are either just luck or somebody else's doing and never the results of one's effort.

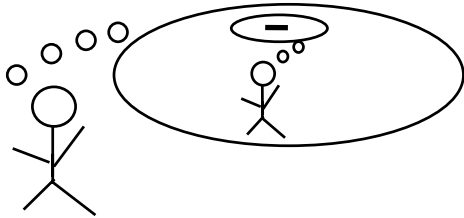
Am I overlooking my strengths and accomplishments?
 It would be good to pat myself on the back for what just happened.

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I contributed in some way.

CATEGORIES OF UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS AND THEIR ANTIDOTES (continued)

Symbol



Unhelpful Thought Pattern

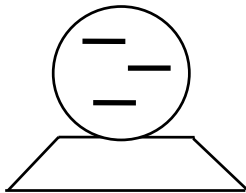
Mind Reading

Thinking that you know what others are thinking, and they are thinking negatively about you.

Antidote

Can we really know what others are thinking?
What are possible alternatives to why they might be behaving the way they are behaving?

Most people are probably more focused on their own problems than on me.



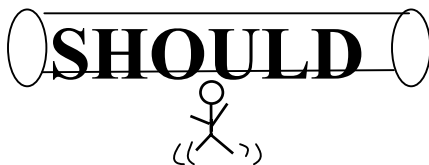
Negative Fortune Telling

Thinking that you can see how things will be in the future and it is bad.

Can I really predict the future?

What would it be like to find out how it really is rather than just imagine it?

Things may have changed from how they used to be.



“Should”ing yourself

Telling yourself you should, ought, and must do something. Makes you feel forced to do things, controlled, and resentful. Weighing yourself down with “shoulds.”

I do not have to do anything and things do not have to turn out the way I want.

It would be preferable, it would be nice, but it is not necessary.

Note: These categories are based on David Burn's book Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy. Morrow, 1980.

HOW ABOUT JUST STOPPING HARMFUL THOUGHTS?

WORRY TIME

It's sometimes necessary to have thoughts that produce negative mood states, as long as they don't occur all the time. Avoiding harmful thoughts totally is not realistic. But limiting how often you focus on them is quite possible. Schedule five or ten minutes a day where you can focus on these thoughts when it is necessary to do so. For example, if you find a lump in your breast, you need to decide what to do. Think about the problem and decide what to do. Denying the problem can be dangerous.

We call this "worry time." When the time is over, move on with the rest of the day. Try not to focus anymore on the negative thoughts and proceed to working on solutions or other pleasant thoughts and activities.

I need to think about this problem on : _____(day).

My worry time will be at: _____ o'clock.

I will worry for _____ minutes.

STOPPING HARMFUL THOUGHTS (Thought Stopping)

When a thought is ruining your mood:

- a. Identify it.
- b. Tell yourself "this thought is ruining my mood."
- c. Stop yourself in one of the following ways
 - 1) Tell yourself to "stop" and refocus your thoughts.
 - 2) Practice a relaxation technique (like the mindfulness technique with the orange to focus your thoughts on the here and now.
 - 3) Think of another thought. Use your card of positive thoughts to help you "replace" a harmful thought.
 - 4) Take mental inventory of all major muscle groups, focus on breathing peacefully and relax. (Wave image: imagine an ocean with large strong waves. As you relax allow the waves to become smaller. Continue relaxing until the surface is completely calm.

Notes:

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BALANCING YOUR THOUGHTS

Adding “Yes, But” to Thoughts

When people are depressed, they often have many harmful thoughts and have problems thinking positive things about themselves or their situation. One way to fight back against this pattern is to try and balance this out and add a “yes, but” to your thoughts. In this method you don’t have to ignore or deny your problems to decrease harmful thinking. You can balance thoughts about a difficult situation by adding a more positive or hopeful statement to them.

Example of negative thought.

Antidote: Add the YES, BUT statement

“I feel nervous a lot.”

“Yes, I feel nervous a lot, but I am still relatively healthy.”

“I am always depressed.”

“Yes, I may be depressed right now, but I am taking this class to help me change my mood.”

My examples:

Notes:

Thought:

Antidote: yes,

but,

Thought:

Antidote: yes,

but,

(Note: This exercise was developed by Kurt Organista, Ph.D. at the SFGH Depression clinic.)

Take Home Message:

You can learn ways to decrease and talk back to harmful thoughts and improve your mood.

PERSONAL PROJECT

QUICK MOOD SCALE

DAY _____

BEST MOOD	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
OK/AVERAGE	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
WORST MOOD	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
# harmful thoughts	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
# helpful thoughts	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

WEEKLY PROJECT

- 1) Continue tracking mood using the mood scale (see page 17 for more details).
- 2) Track significant positive and negative thoughts you have each day.

OPTIONAL PROJECT (select one of the following activities if you want)

- 1) Read through all the ways to decrease harmful thoughts.
- 2) Select two options and try them out.

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