

# CBTm

COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY WITH MINDFULNESS  
THÉRAPIE COGNITIVO-COMPORTEMENTALE DE LA PLEINE CONSCIENCE

## Class 1 Handouts

Mindfulness Exercise - *Mindful Breathing*

Testing Your Thoughts

Healthy Thinking Introduction

Thinking Traps

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# MINDFUL BREATHING

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Find a comfortable sitting posture. Put your feet flat on the ground and try to straighten your back. Gently close your eyes. Let your shoulders drop down and away from your ears. Pay attention to your breathing and just allow yourself to continue to breathe naturally.

Now, rest your hands gently on your belly with the fingertips of each hand lightly touching in the middle. Breathe in smoothly through your nose and exhale slowly through your mouth. Continue to take slow, smooth breaths. When you breathe in, notice your belly push your hands gently apart, as you fill your lower lungs with air. When you breathe out, notice your belly sink back towards your spine as you release your breath.

You can imagine that your belly is a balloon. Fill it with air and then watch it deflate. Now continue to focus on the gentle inhalation and exhalation of your breath. In... and out... If any other thoughts or images come into your mind during this exercise, just notice them, and gently bring your attention back to your breath.

You may also become aware of physical sensations or feelings in your body. Simply notice them, and then again, bring your mind back to your breath. You don't need to analyze or give these thoughts or feelings any meaning in this moment. Simply acknowledge them without judgment and bring your mind back to your breath. It's normal for your mind to wander. Simply notice that your mind has wandered and gently bring your attention back to your breath.

Continue to focus on your breathing and stay in this relaxed state for as long as you like. When you are ready, slowly open your eyes and bring your attention back to your surroundings.

# TESTING YOUR THOUGHTS

(Example)

What is the situation? Joanne yelled at me.

What am I thinking or imagining? She'll never call me again.

How much do I believe it?  a little  medium  a lot (or rate 0-100) 85

How does it make me feel?  angry  sad  nervous other \_\_\_\_\_

How strong is the feeling?  mild  moderate  very strong (or rate 0-100) 90

What makes me think the thought is true?

She seems pretty mad.

What makes me think the thought is not true or not completely true?

She's gotten mad at me before but she seems to get over it.

What's another way to look at this?

She's got a real temper but she doesn't stay mad.

What's the worst that could happen? Would I still live through it?

I'd lose my best friend.

What's the best that could happen?

She'll call back right away and apologize.

What will probably happen?

She'll act cold for a few days and then I'll call her.

What will happen if I keep telling myself the same thought?

I'll keep feeling upset.

What could happen if I changed my thinking?

I could feel better, maybe call her sooner.

What would I tell my friend if this happened to them?

Don't worry, just wait two days and call.

What should I do now?

Call a different friend.

How much do I believe the negative thought now?

a little  medium  a lot (or rate 0-100) 20

How strong is my negative feeling now?

mild  moderate  very strong (or rate 0-100) 45

# TESTING YOUR THOUGHTS

What is the situation? \_\_\_\_\_

What am I thinking or imagining? \_\_\_\_\_

How much do I believe it?     a little     medium     a lot    (or rate 0-100) \_\_\_\_\_

How does it make me feel?     angry     sad     nervous    other \_\_\_\_\_

How strong is the feeling?     mild     moderate     very strong    (or rate 0-100) \_\_\_\_\_

What makes me think the thought is true?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What makes me think the thought is not true or not completely true?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What's another way to look at this?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What's the worst that could happen? Would I still live through it?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What's the best that could happen?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What will probably happen?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What will happen if I keep telling myself the same thought?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What could happen if I changed my thinking?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What would I tell my friend if this happened to them?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What should I do now?  
\_\_\_\_\_

How much do I believe the negative thought now?  
 a little     medium     a lot    (or rate 0-100) \_\_\_\_\_

How strong is my negative feeling now?  
 mild     moderate     very strong    (or rate 0-100) \_\_\_\_\_

# WHAT IS HEALTHY THINKING?

People often see their feelings as being determined by events, situations, or other people. This belief is reflected in statements such as "You make me so angry," "Public speaking makes me nervous," or "Not being in a relationship makes me depressed". These types of statements suggest that external factors are directly and entirely responsible for how we feel. However, what we think about these situations or what they mean to us will affect whether a situation will lead to anxiety, anger, or joy.

For example, you are walking down the street and see a friend who does not wave or say hi to you. How would you feel if you thought, "How rude, she can not even take the time to acknowledge me!"? What if you thought, "She must not want to be friends anymore; I'm too boring to be part of that group."? How about if you thought, "She must be in a rush and didn't see me."? You would probably feel very different with these different views on why a friend did not acknowledge you. Our thoughts affect how we feel and how we respond to situations.



## Automatic Thoughts

Thoughts can become a habit or automatic, just like biting our nails or eating while watching TV. These thoughts can occur so quickly that we may not even realize that the thought has occurred. When automatic thoughts tend to be mostly negative (e.g., I made a mistake – I'm so stupid), they can cause emotional distress.

## What is Healthy Thinking?

Healthy thinking is not just positive thinking. There are often negative situations that occur. It would not be helpful to see only the good in every situation, such as losing your job or failing a test. It is normal and healthy to be upset and to have some negative thoughts when these types of situations happen. Healthy thinking is about seeing the entire situation - the good, the bad, and the neutral - and using all of this information to decide what to do. Healthy thinking is about seeing life in a balanced and complete way, rather than only focusing on the negative or positive parts.

## Thinking Traps

Everyone falls into thinking traps sometimes. It's most likely to happen when you feel sad, anxious or angry. Thinking traps are also more likely to happen when you're under stress or not taking good care of yourself, e.g. not enough sleep. Individuals with anxiety and depression tend to fall into thinking traps more often, which can trigger and maintain anxiety and depression.



## Thinking Traps

## Examples

### Overgeneralizing

Thinking that a difficult situation is part of a constant cycle of bad things that happen. People who overgeneralize often use words like "always" or "never".

I wanted to go to the beach, but now it's raining. This always happens to me! I never get to do fun things!

### All or Nothing Thinking

Seeing things as only right or wrong, good or bad, perfect or terrible. People who think in all or nothing terms see a small mistake as a total failure.

I wanted to eat less sugar, but I just had a piece of cake. This plan is a total failure! I might as well eat the whole cake!

### Fortune Telling

Predicting that something bad will happen, without any evidence.

I've been studying hard, but I know that I'm going to fail my test tomorrow.

### Emotional Reasoning

Believing that bad feelings or emotions reflect the truth of a situation.

I feel anxious when I fly, so airplanes must not be safe.

### Labeling

Saying only critical things about yourself or other people.

I made a mistake at work. I'm a failure! My boss told me that I made a mistake. My boss is a total jerk!

## Thinking Traps

## Examples

### 'Should' Statements

Telling yourself how you "should" or "must" act. "Should" statements about ourselves lead to guilt. "Should" statements about others lead to anger and resentment.

I should be able to handle this without getting upset and crying!

### Mind Reading

Jumping to conclusions about what others are thinking, without any evidence.

My friend didn't stop to say hello. She must not like me very much.

### Mental Filter

Focusing only on the challenging parts of a situation and ignoring everything else.

I met a lot of great people at the party, but one guy didn't talk to me. There must be something wrong with me.

### Catastrophic Thinking

Exaggerating the importance of distressing things, believing the worst-case scenario, or thinking something is unbearable or impossible when it isn't.

I stumbled over my words during this presentation at work, so I'll probably lose my job, and lose my house.

### Personalization

You see yourself as the cause of some upsetting external event for which, in fact, you were not primarily responsible.

My spouse looks irritable today. I must have done something to upset them.



# GETTING UNSTUCK FROM A THINKING TRAP

Below are some strategies to help deal with common thinking traps. It is not usually helpful to tell yourself to stop thinking that way. Often, when we push away thoughts, they are more likely to pop up again (e.g., try not to think about a pink elephant for 30 seconds). It's more helpful to carefully examine a thought to see if it is accurate, or if there is a more balanced way to think about the situation.

## 1. Feeling or Thought?

It can be easy to confuse thoughts and feelings. In every day conversations we often use the terms interchangeably. For example, we might say "I think I am anxious" or "I feel like everyone is laughing at me." When we are challenging our thinking traps, it's helpful to very clearly separate our thoughts and our feelings.

To do this you can ask yourself:

- What is the situation? What are the "facts" that everyone would agree on if they saw a videotape of the event?
- What are your thoughts? What are you telling yourself about the meaning of the situation?
- What are your emotions? How do you feel (typically one word)?
- What are your behaviours? How are you reacting and what are you doing to cope?

## 2. Find any 'Thinking Traps'

Examine your different thoughts and compare them to the list of thinking traps. It is common to fall into more than one trap. Find any that might apply to you.

### 3. Challenge the thinking traps

Start to examine your thoughts like a scientist or a detective looking for hard evidence. What are the facts?

- **Examine the evidence:** Is there evidence for or against your thought? Make sure you look at evidence on both sides.
- **Double-standard:** Ask yourself what you would think if someone else was in this situation.
- **Survey method:** Ask other people that you trust if they agree with your thoughts. For example, if you think you are a bad parent because your child is acting up, you could ask other parents if they have ever had a similar problem.
- **Conduct an experiment:** Test your beliefs to collect more real-world evidence that could support or refute your thought. For example, if you think your friends don't want to spend time with you, call a few friends to make plans and see if they all say no.

