

Thought-Changing Exercises

Social Media Bundles

We all find ourselves trapped in our own thoughts sometimes. Whether it's getting stuck worrying about the future, things going on right now, or staying safe. Thinking traps can happen to any and all of us!



Here are some common thinking traps we might find ourselves stuck in:

COMMON THINKING TRAPS

All or nothing thinking
Catastrophizing
Over-generalization
Mind reading
Negative filter

EXAMPLE

Everything is either going to be REALLY good or REALLY bad.
The pandemic is never going to end, ever!
I got a C- on my first test, I'm going to fail this whole course!
I know they're gossiping about me and that post I made on Instagram last night.
So what if I scored 2 goals, I also missed a penalty kick. We lost and it's all my fault.

We can practice how to identify these thinking traps and learn to think more helpfully.

Find out more at
jack.org/covid



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IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS

Reflect on your thought patterns over the past few days. Are there recurring unhelpful or anxious thoughts? Are you stuck on a particular thought that keeps coming back?

Try to identify what thoughts keep coming back. Every time this unhelpful thought pops back into your brain, replace it with a new and helpful thought.

Examples of unhelpful thoughts you can turn into helpful thoughts include:



UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS

I made a mistake. I'm a bad person.
I haven't gotten any homework done this whole week - I'm the worst!
I ignored my friend's message. She probably thinks I don't like her anymore.
We're all going to get sick. No one is safe.

HELPFUL THOUGHTS

I am a good person. No one is perfect. We all make mistakes.
It's normal to feel less productive during a pandemic.
She probably knows I care about her. These are weird times and we all need to be understanding.
We are learning more about the virus and ways to stay safe. When we follow public health guidelines, that keeps everyone more safe.

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REPLACING UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS

Sometimes it's hard to notice and challenge our unhelpful thinking. They are often **habits of thought** that can be persistent. Keep trying, it gets easier with practice!



If you're struggling to come up with helpful responses to your own unhelpful thoughts, it can help to put yourself in the mindset of a friend. **If your friend was having the same unhelpful thoughts**, how would you respond?



Identifying unhelpful thoughts and replacing them with helpful ones can make a big difference. In the left column, write out your unhelpful thoughts. In the right column, write out helpful thoughts to replace them with.

UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS

Ex: I made a mistake.
I'm a bad person.

HELPFUL THOUGHTS

I'm a good person. No one is perfect. We all make mistakes.

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STOP NEGATIVE SELF TALK

S

Stop! - When you have a negative thought, STOP and give yourself a moment to address the thought.

O

Observe - Reflect on what you're saying. Think about where your thoughts are coming from.

S

Shift - Replace the thought with something positive. Shift your thinking.

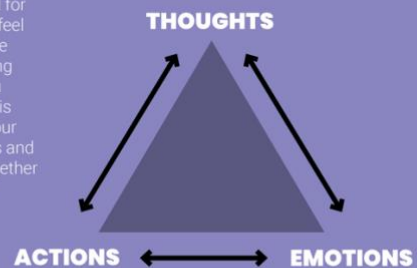
Repeat this every time you have a recurring negative thought.

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THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS, ACTIONS

Our thoughts, emotions and actions all influence one another which impacts the way we think feel and act every day. Sometimes they interact and influence in a good way, and sometimes in a not so good way.

For example, if you think you're not prepared for a final exam, you'll feel nervous, and maybe you'll act by studying a bit more than you normally would. This is great because your thoughts, emotions and actions worked together to make you more prepared for your exam.



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DON'T LET THINKING TRAPS WIN!

We all get caught in thinking traps sometimes, but with the rights tools, we can identify unhelpful thoughts and replace them with helpful ones. This can have a positive impact on our anxious feelings and our mental health.



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