

**THOUGHTS 2 --IDENTIFYING HELPFUL/POSITIVE AND
HARMFUL/NEGATIVE PATTERNS OF THINKING**

GOALS FOR LEADERS

- Ensure that participants understand the connection between thoughts and mood.
- Teach participants about common patterns of harmful and helpful thinking.
- Teach participants categories of unhelpful/harmful thinking.
- Help participants begin to identify their own thought patterns.
- Help participants begin to see that it is possible to change the way we think, which may motivate them to want to change.

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR THIS SESSION

- 1) Pens
- 2) Dry erase board, chalkboard or large sheets of paper to present material to group
- 3) Oranges and paper towels (for optional relaxation exercise)

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PART II: Lecture Notes for Instructors: Thoughts 2
Version 2000: May, 2000

SAMPLE SESSION OUTLINE

- I. Agenda and Announcements
- II. Review
- III. Personal Project Review
- IV. New Material: Identifying Categories of Harmful Thoughts
- V. Mindfulness Exercise
- VI. Take Home Message
- VII. Personal Project
- VIII. Preview and Feedback

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I. AGENDA AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Go over the agenda and ask participants whether they have any topics they would like to add to the agenda. Make any announcements.

II. REVIEW

Review the material covered in Thoughts 1. Use the review to check on how much participants remember from the last session, reinforce what they have learned, and educate group members who were absent last session.

[sample review statement]

Last week we welcomed new group members, we introduced ourselves, and we began talking about the cognitive behavioral treatment model. We also began talking about how our thoughts can affect how we feel. What are some of the things that you remember most from last week?

Elicit responses from the participants.

Make sure that you review the reciprocal relationship between depression thoughts. If necessary, ask participants how depression affects the way they think and then ask how harmful negative thoughts affect their mood. Go over the diagram found on the top of page 19 of their books and have a group member read the statement shown on the top of that page.

Depression affects the way we think; we have more harmful thoughts. Having more harmful thoughts can also lead you to feel more depressed.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY – THE CHAINING ACTIVITY

One way to review the connection between thoughts and mood is by doing an activity that we call the chaining activity. This activity allows group members to see the connection between thoughts and mood and to also see that they can make choices about the way they think. Many participants have shared with us how doing this exercise affected the way they thought and the choices they made. They would say things like “I was going to go down and have a pity party, but I remembered that I could go up too.” This activity is repeated in the activities, people, and health module. In this module the focus is on thoughts.

[sample introduction to the activity]

I would like to do a group activity that we call the “Chaining Activity.” The purpose of this activity is to help us really see how our thoughts can affect how we feel. First let's take a neutral statement, a statement of fact.

You may need to educate group members as to what a statement of fact is. It can be the statement at the top of a depressive spiral. Some examples are: 1) it is raining; 2) I have diabetes; 3) I have no energy.

Quickly draw the mood scale on the board. Explain the mood scale or have a veteran explain the mood scale to new members. Write the statement of fact on the line next to the 5. We often brainstorm statements of fact with group members, writing them all down on the line representing a mood of 5 and then we have the group pick one statement of fact for the exercise.

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Instruct group members that you now want them to think of thoughts they may have, given the statement of fact, that would make them spiral down. Ask them to spiral down in stages. So first, you would like someone to suggest some thought that would lead them to a mood of about a 4 and then a 3 and then a 2 and then a 1.

So now what I'd like you to do is to think about something you might say to yourself that would bring you down to a mood of a 4. What would bring you down just one step?

Elicit answers from the group. If the answer seems too drastic, ask group members whether they would rate that as a 4 or perhaps lower. Then place the item where the group feels it belongs. If someone in the group gives you a behavior, write it down and then ask how they might be thinking if they acted like that. Write down the thought next to the behavior.

Now what would be a thought that would bring us down to a 3.
Repeat for moods of 2 and 1.

Once participants have done this, ask them how they are feeling after doing this part of the exercise. Process what it is like for them to see how your thoughts can affect your mood. Process how their mood may have changed by just doing the exercise.

Next, have the participants go back to the statement of fact and now think of thoughts that would lead them to spiral up, one step at a time.

Now, let's return to the statement of fact (repeat statement). What's a thought that might make our mood become a 6?

Repeat the process for moods up to 9. It is important to tell them that when we are spiraling up, we may never really get to a 9 but that we are trying to think of thoughts that will make us progressively feel better. After they are done, again process their thoughts about how the way they think can make them feel better and how their mood may have changed by doing this part of the exercise.

We have included examples from our previous work with using this technique with groups below.

SAMPLE CHAINING EXERCISE

9	↑	I can focus on what is positive in my life and make positive changes.
8		I am still capable of doing many things.
7		There are things I can do to take care of myself.
6		I need to learn more about my health problem.
5	↓	I have a serious health problem.
4		This is really awful.
3		Why me? Why am I being punished.
2		I'm not normal. I won't be able to do anything.
1		Everyone else is having fun. No one cares about me.

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SUMMARY: SO HOW DOES THE WAY WE THINK AFFECT HOW WE FEEL?

At the end of the exercise elicit from the group the links they see between thoughts and mood.

Try to cover the following points:

- We can make choices about the way we think.
- Our thoughts really do affect how we feel.
- Our thoughts also affect the way we behave.
- Our thoughts can also affect our health.

Other topics to consider include:

- 1) how these examples apply to their own lives.
- 2) internal and external reality - When we think in different ways, we change or internal reality. In the example given above, the person shows that they can change their internal reality, making it more negative or more positive. As you change your internal reality, you also change your external reality. Once you begin to think in different ways, you behave in different ways.

III. PERSONAL PROJECT REVIEW

Review the homework from the previous session. (Unless you do so, participants will not think it is important. They need to experience how it is helpful.)

WEEKLY PROJECT

- Mood Scale
- Track the positive and negative thoughts you have each day.

OPTIONAL PROJECT

Find out which optional personal project participants did and then review what they learned from doing the project.

- 1) Go through the list of “Helpful and Harmful Thoughts” on pages 14 and 15 of your books and identify thoughts in each category that could apply to you.
- 2) Talk to someone about what you have learned today.

BRIDGE (Approximately 5 minutes)

Introduce this week's material, linking it to material taught in previous sessions.

[sample bridge]

Last week we began talking about how our thoughts affect the way we feel. Today we will begin talking about how we can change the way we think to change the way we feel. We will begin by identifying patterns in thinking that are unhelpful.

IV. NEW MATERIAL

1. WHAT ARE COMMON THOUGHT PATTERNS?

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PURPOSE: The purpose of this section is to provide participants with information about common thought patterns.

[sample introduction]

Last session we began talking about how what we think affects how we feel. In order to better understand this relationship, we have often found it helpful to think about specific categories of thoughts.

If you turn to page 20 in your books, there is a description of different patterns of helpful and harmful thinking. Let's go through them.

Go through the lists of types of helpful and harmful thinking.

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HELPFUL THINKING

CONSTRUCTIVE

“Puts you together.”

Example: I can learn.

NECESSARY

Helps you do what you have to do.

Example: To find out if I am HIV positive, I need to have a blood test.

POSITIVE

Makes you feel better.

Example: I can focus on what is good in my life or what I can do.

HARMFUL THINKING

vs. **DESTRUCTIVE**

“Tears you apart”, “destroys you.”

Example: I don’t know anything.

vs. **UNNECESSARY**

Does not change anything (no matter how much you think).

Example: What if I am HIV positive?

vs. **NEGATIVE**

Makes you feel worse.

Example: There are many things that are wrong with my life, and there’s nothing I or anybody can do about it.

ACTIVITY

OPTION 1:

As you go through the list, ask participants to share examples of each type of thinking that they may have had. They can use examples from their personal projects. You may also bring up examples that they have mentioned in group. You may also use the “Type of Thoughts” list.

OPTION 2:

Pick from the situations listed below and ask group members to come up with examples of helpful and harmful thoughts they might have given the situation. Make sure the thoughts fit the category that you are discussing (i.e. constructive vs. destructive).

Note: You can also make up situations that would be more pertinent to your group members.

Situations:

- 1) I have just been diagnosed with diabetes.
- 2) The rent is due, and I don’t have any money.
- 3) I live in a place where there are many earthquakes.
- 4) I am at the store, and there is a very long line. I am in a big hurry for an important appointment.
- 5) I am unable to work right now because I am very depressed.
- 6) I had unprotected sex. I could be pregnant. I could be HIV positive.
- 7) I haven’t talked to my relatives for years. I want to now. I don’t know how they’ll react.
- 8) I’d like to work, but I don’t want to lose my disability payments.
- 9) People treat me different because I am Latino/Black/gay/a woman/poor/disabled/overweight/etc.

2. CATEGORIES OF UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS

PURPOSE: To provide information about standard categories of unhelpful thoughts.

[sample introduction]

Another way that we can learn to see that we are having unhelpful thoughts is by learning some basic categories of unhelpful thoughts. That way we can catch ourselves and say something like “oh there I go again. I’m ignoring the positive.” Then we can change the way we are thinking and make it more helpful.

If you turn to pages 21 and 22 in your books there’s a list of common categories of unhelpful thinking. Let’s go over it.

Go over the list. It is often helpful to have the group leaders cover each category on the blackboard by first drawing the symbol, discussing what it means, and then eliciting examples of the category from the participants. Categories are adapted from David Burn’s Book Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy. Morrow, 1980).

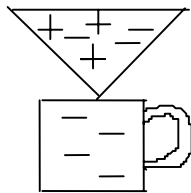
Symbol

Unhelpful Thought Pattern



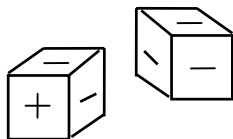
All or Nothing Thinking

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.



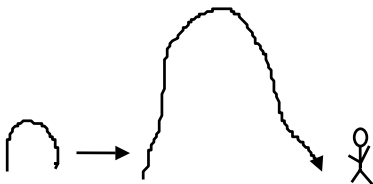
Negative Filter (Ignoring the Positive)

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



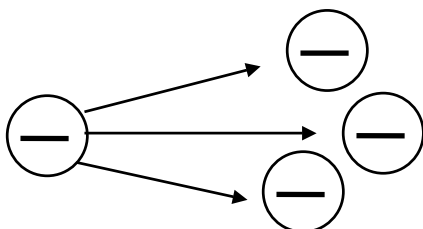
Pessimism

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”



Overgeneralization

Taking one negative characteristic or event and

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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.



Labeling (either yourself or others)

Attaching a negative label, instead of seeing a error or problem. Labels can become self-fulfilling prophecies.

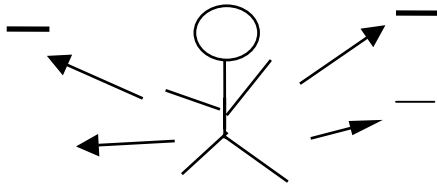
“Stupid” vs. not good at math.

“Clumsy” vs. drop things occasionally.

CATEGORIES OF UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS (continued)

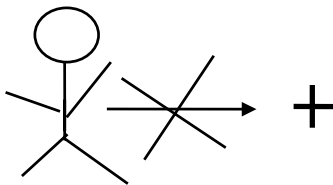
Symbol

Unhelpful Thought Pattern



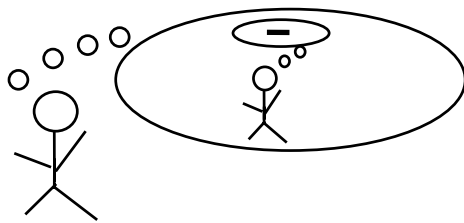
Blaming Oneself

Thinking negative things happen, and they are always entirely your fault.



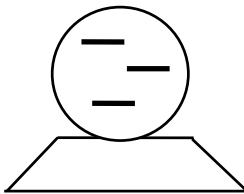
Not Giving Oneself Credit

Thinking positive things that happen are either just luck or somebody else's doing and never the results of one's effort.



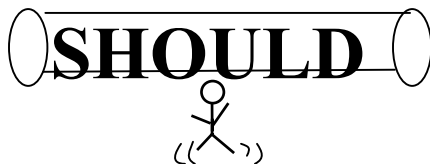
Mind Reading

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



Negative Fortune Telling

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



"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."

ACTIVITY

OPTION 1: If participants tracked their thoughts using the 3x5 index cards, as a group go through the negative thoughts and identify which categories of harmful thoughts they fit under.

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OPTION 2: Play a game, have participants form two teams and then play the game like “Family Feud”. One of the group leaders can play the game show host. This leader reads a phrase (either from the participants’ 3x5 index cards or from one of the phrases below) and then participants try and decide which category of harmful thoughts it fits under. The first participant to guess the correct category, gets a point for her team. If neither participants gets it, it goes to the next person on their team. It can also be helpful to have participants discuss whether they have had similar thoughts in the past.

The purpose of this game is to help participants begin to identify harmful patterns of thinking. You can let them know that next week you will begin talking about how to fight these patterns. As you do these exercises, try to use thoughts that specific patients appear to typically have. By doing this, you will increase the likelihood that patients will generalize what they learn from this exercise to their own lives.

Key point: Everyone has these thoughts at one time or another, but people with depression frequently have these extremes in thinking. At one point it may have felt safe or reasonable to hold the belief and in some cases these types of beliefs may feel safe and familiar, but they can also cause us problems.

Tell participants that thoughts can be in more than one category.

Item	Category of harmful thinking
1. I have to be the best.	All or nothing thinking + should
2. The party is going to be really boring so why bother going	Negative fortune telling
3. My partner seems very upset today, maybe I did something wrong.	Mind reading + blaming oneself
4. I can’t work. I am useless.	Negative filter (ignoring the positive), blaming oneself.
5. I can’t believe I don’t know the answer. I must be stupid.	Labeling
6. If I can’t get this job then everything’s lost. I might as well give up.	Overgeneralization
7. Yes, I came to group today, but it’s no big deal.	Not giving oneself credit
8. I did not get the answer first. My team members must be mad at me.	Mind reading
9. If we lose it will be all my fault.	Blaming oneself (possibly ignoring the positive)
10. Why bother talking to the doctor, he/she probably can’t help me.	Pessimism
11. Yeah I can feel better if I take a walk outside, but it’s not permanent.	Negative filter (ignoring the positive) + all or nothing thinking
12. I can’t tell others how I feel because they will think I am crazy.	Mind reading
13. I can’t believe my friend did what she did.	Overgeneralization

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I don't think I can trust anyone ever again.	
14. My life is worthless if I can't see.	Negative filter (ignoring the positive)
15. I'll never be happy again.	Negative fortune telling.
16. I can't stand it.	Unnecessary thinking + Exaggerating
17. I wish I were dead.	Unnecessary thinking
18. I am ugly (or unattractive)	Labeling+unnecessary+destructive+mind reading.
19. I am not capable of loving.	Negative fortune telling+not giving yourself credit.
20. I can't express my feelings.	All or nothing thinking.

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3. CAN WE CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK?

PURPOSE: To begin to explore the possibility that group members can change their thoughts to improve their mood.

[Sample introduction to the activity]

We've been talking about different patterns of harmful and helpful thinking. Now that we've identified some of these patterns, do you think it's possible to change them?

Elicit participants responses. Make sure you understand the factors that may be preventing them from changing and empathize with them that many of these thought patterns are familiar and comfortable. Also, many of them are automatic. They spent many years learning to think this way, so at first it may seem strange trying to think in a new way. It will require practice, but it is possible.

V. RELAXATION EXERCISE: MINDFULNESS EXERCISE

[sample introduction]

Today, we would like to try a relaxation exercise, one that teaches us to focus our thoughts as a way of relaxing. This is one way that we can have a break from our negative or harmful thoughts. To do this, we will use oranges.

Pass out oranges and pass out handy wipes or towels so those who want to can clean their hands (cleaning their hands can itself be a mindfulness exercise). If you do not have oranges, you can substitute other neutral objects, such as a pencil, Kleenex, anything that is available, and modify the exercise.

I would like you each to get comfortable. You can spread out if you want, so you can each have your own space. For the next five minutes, I would like you to each focus on your orange. The purpose of this exercise is for us to practice being only in the present. For now, there is nothing you have to do. I want you to forget about all the things in the past, good or bad and just focus on the orange. I also want to point out that it is not easy to do this and that it is natural for your mind to wander. When you find it wandering, use the orange to anchor you in the present. Focus on how the orange feels, smells, tastes. Whenever you feel your thoughts wander, bring them back to the orange.

Answer any questions and then ask the group to begin. Group leaders should also do the exercise. At the end of five minutes, stop the exercise as gently as possible and then process the experience with the group.

Here are some key points other participants have noted in the past.

- People approach the task differently. We all think differently.
- It's nice to be able to take a break from problems and our own negative thoughts.
- By focusing our thoughts on the present, we can relax and feel better.
- Focusing our thoughts and appreciating the little things in life can help our mood.

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Let them know that the instructions for the exercise are on page 23 of their books should they want to practice the exercise at home.

VI. TAKE HOME MESSAGE (Go over the take home message)

My thoughts can be helpful or harmful.

I can think in ways that will make me feel better.

I can mold my internal reality so that it helps me achieve a healthy mood.

VII. PERSONAL PROJECT ASSIGNMENT

WEEKLY PROJECT

a) Continue tracking mood using the mood scale and track significant positive and negative thoughts you have each day.

OPTIONAL PERSONAL PROJECT

b) select one of the following activities to do

1) Practice the orange exercise (see page 23)

2) Continue using 3x5 cards to track thoughts you have.

3) Try and figure out whether there are specific harmful thought patterns that apply to you.

4) Find the most helpful thought patterns that give you noticeably better feelings.

VIII. PREVIEW AND FEEDBACK

Let the participants know that next week you will continue talking about thoughts. Let them know that you will begin talking about specific ways that you can change your thoughts.

Before ending the group, encourage group members to provide feedback regarding today's session. Questions to encourage discussion are listed below.

- What was helpful about today's session?
- What was not helpful?
- What suggestions do you have to improve your therapy?

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GROUP LEADER SELF EVALUATION FORM: THOUGHTS 2

INSTRUCTIONS

Content Covered: Rate the degree to which you feel this material was covered (0=not at all, 10=fully covered) If not done this session but done later, when it is done write in the date and rate how well you feel you covered it.

Satisfaction with Teaching: Rate the degree to which you are satisfied with the way you and your co-leader taught the material (0=not at all satisfied, 10=extremely satisfied).

Participant Process: Rate on average the degree to which participants seemed to participate, understand and complete the exercise (0=on average very poor no one understood or no one was able to complete exercise; 10=everyone seemed to understand keypoints and complete the exercise).

	Taught/ Done? (0-5)	Satisfaction with Teaching (0-10)	Participant Process (0-10)
Review	_____	_____	_____
Personal Project Review	_____	_____	_____
1. What are common thought patterns?	_____	_____	_____
2. Categories of unhelpful thoughts.	_____	_____	_____
-had participants identify thoughts that fit categories	_____	_____	_____
3. Can we change the way we think?	_____	_____	_____
-mindfulness relaxation exercise	_____	_____	_____
Personal Project Assigned	_____	_____	_____
Preview and Feedback	_____	_____	_____
Optional: What automatic thoughts did you identify for:			
Name:	_____		
Name:	_____		
Name:	_____		
Name:	_____		
Name:	_____		

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Name: _____