



Thoughts

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Our thoughts are so powerful and can have a huge impact on how we feel. When we're not feeling ourselves, we can get stuck into vicious cycles, of how our thoughts (what is running through our mind), impacts on our physical symptoms (how we feel on the inside) which impacts on our behaviours (the things we're either doing more or less of because we're feeling a certain way), which impacts on our emotions and so forth. What can be helpful to do is to write this cycle out for ourselves and really start to understand our own vicious cycles.

One way to help to change how we feel is by concentrating on our thoughts and challenging the way we talk to ourselves.

Often we talk to ourselves in a way that we would never dream of talking to anyone else, so why do we deserve to speak to ourselves in that way?

We have thousands and thousands of thoughts pass through our minds every single day. Sometimes when things are feeling difficult some of our most critical thoughts, develop Velcro, and stay stuck in our mind a little longer than usual.

It can be helpful to think about these thoughts a little differently with thought challenging questions which can challenge our perceptions such as:

-  Will this matter in a year from now or in 5 years time?
-  Am I making myself feel better or feel worse?
-  What is the worst or the best thing that can happen?
-  What would I say to a friend?

Writing our thoughts down onto paper can help us to take an emotional step back from the thoughts and start to see them differently. It can be helpful also to ask ourselves whether we are thinking about this situation or circumstance in a rational way and challenge the thought that we're experiencing.

For example if I was walking down the street and I seen my friend walking down the other side of the pavement,

I shout hello and my friend continues walking. What automatic thoughts am I likely to experience?

Probably thoughts such as 'oh no, my friend must be upset with me', 'they ignored me, I must have done something wrong', 'I must be a rubbish friend'.

Do I have any evidence for these thoughts? No, the only evidence I have is that my friend didn't return my greeting, and there are other possible explanations for that response.

They may have had headphones in that I couldn't spot, they may have not heard or seen me, they may have been having a difficult day and have things on their mind.

We often jump to the thoughts that support how we're feeling when we're not feeling ourselves. It isn't about being the worlds most positive person, because that isn't realistic. It is about being more rational with our thoughts and being kinder to ourselves. Weigh up your evidence, what evidence and not opinion, do I have to support this thought, and what evidence not opinion do I have against this thought. And then come to a more balanced and rational thought. With this example it could be 'my friend didn't return my hello, but that doesn't mean that they are upset with me, I hope everything is okay.'

Challenging these thoughts can sometimes be difficult to do in your mind, try writing down your evidence for and against the thought to help to come to a more balanced thought. If you're experiencing several critical thoughts, start with the one that feels easiest to challenge.

Sometimes it can be difficult to do altogether which is okay too. Talking to others and sharing how we're feeling is helpful. Whether this is family, friends or professional treatment and support. There are services there to help.

Try making a start at catching your thoughts today, notice when you speak to yourself in a critical way. Stop and ask yourself, would I speak to a friend that way?