

*Self-Help Information*

**Let's Talk**

## **Leaflet 2: Think Good Feel Good**

*Cognitive Restructuring*



## **Leaflet 2: Think Good, Feel Good (Cognitive Restructuring)**

A person's moods such as sadness or anxiety are strongly linked to the thoughts that they are having at the time. Many of these thoughts are 'unhelpful'. Key features of these thoughts are that they are automatic, seem believable and real at the time they appear, and are the kind of thoughts that would upset anybody. These thoughts act powerfully to maintain moods. Cognitive restructuring is a way of changing unhelpful thoughts by identifying, examining and challenging them, making them more realistic and thus helping to improve a person's mood from negative and upsetting towards a more positive and stable state.

### **The 3 steps to changing unhelpful thoughts**

Cognitive restructuring comes in three steps. Firstly, you need to identify your thoughts, particularly the exact content of any unhelpful thoughts. The key thoughts are those that make you feel bad, we call these 'hot thoughts'. The next step is to explore your thoughts more objectively. This requires you to examine your thoughts objectively, considering the facts which support your viewpoint, and any facts which could challenge your viewpoint. The final stage is to reconsider your thoughts in the light of the evidence – for and against – that has been collected and write a new balanced thought. This technique takes practice and we encourage you to use a thought diary. This process is outlined in more detail below:

#### **Step 1: Identification of thoughts**

In order to identify thoughts, record a situation in which you felt bad on the below C1 thought diary. Try to identify the key emotion you felt at the time, for example angry, sad or anxious. Rate the intensity of this emotion on a scale from 0-100% (100 being the worst you've ever felt). Try and capture the exact thoughts that were in your mind when you felt this emotion and write these down in the thought record. Now rate how strongly you believed your thoughts at the time, again from 0-100%.

#### **Step 2: Looking for the evidence**

Once all the thoughts have been collected, select one of the thoughts to work on. Choose the 'hot thought' (the one which makes you feel the worst and has a belief rating of at least 60%). Use the C2 evidence recording sheet to list evidence. You will see that one column is labelled 'evidence for' and one is labelled 'evidence against'. Next, almost like the prosecution and defence counsel in a court, think of evidence for and against the truth of the thought and write it down under the correct column.

You may find this quite difficult, particularly coming up with evidence that the thought is not true. Here are some questions which can be used to help you:

- If I were speaking to a friend with this thought, what would I say for and against it?
- How would someone else think about this?
- If I rate the belief in my thought as 75%, then there is 25% of the thought I do not believe to be true. What makes up that 25%?
- If I was not depressed/anxious, would I believe this thought?
- Is there another way of looking at this situation?

### Step 3: Reconsidering thoughts

Once your evidence has been collected on the sheet, you need to reconsider your thoughts in light of the evidence. The idea is to come up with a revised thought and consider if this changes your mood. In the fourth column of the thought diary (revised thought) write down a summary of the evidence you have gathered or write how your perspective on the situation has changed now you have looked at the facts. Rate how much you believe this revised thought on a scale of 0-100%. In the final column rate how your feelings have changed now you have a new, balanced, perspective on the situation (again using the same 0-100% scale). This is the way cognitive restructuring works to change the way you feel.

### Points to remember:

- Unhelpful thinking takes time to change. You may often need to challenge your thoughts several times before change takes place.
- It can be useful to ask a friend you trust to help you look for evidence for and against unhelpful thoughts.
- Revised thoughts should consider both sides of evidence i.e. for and against, not just trying to look at turning a negative thought into a positive one. This leads to more realistic interpretations, which in turn will help dampen down your intense negative emotions.
- Cognitive restructuring can be practised with other thoughts using the thought diary to judge them.
- As you become more expert in this you can try and catch the thoughts and judge them as they actually occur.

**You can download extra copies of this worksheet from our website:**

[www.talk2gether.nhs.uk](http://www.talk2gether.nhs.uk)

### Some useful books which you may like to buy or borrow from your local library:

- Dennis Greenberger and Christine A Padesky (1995): Mind Over Mood: Change How You Feel by Changing the Way You Think.
- Kenerley (1997): Overcoming Anxiety.

## C1 Thought dairy

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Feeling</b>  (Then rate how bad it is from 0-100%)	<b>Thought</b>  (The rate how much you believe this from 0-100%)	<b>Evidence for and against</b>	<b>Revised thought</b>  (The rate how much you believe this from 0-100%)	<b>Feeling</b>  (Then rate how bad it is from 0-100%)
			<b>Use the C2 Evidence recording sheet to gather evidence</b>		

## C2 Evidence recording sheet

Write your hot thought here:

Evidence for	Evidence against