

Thought Challenging

A short stop, breathe, question routine for negative thoughts

Research-informed use. Common stress, worry, intrusive thoughts, and formal disorders are not treated as interchangeable. Cognitive and exposure-based tools require context; intensive exposure or response prevention is planned treatment, not an instruction to confront severe distress alone.

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

A four-page client tool for catching and challenging negative thoughts: notice the thought and say 'stop', take a mindful breath, then work through a set of challenging questions. A closing page gathers observations about the overall tone and patterns of one's thinking.

HOW TO USE IT

Teach the routine in session, then send the question list home as a pocket prompt.

AT A GLANCE

AUDIENCE	Client Resource
FORMAT	Short handout
FAMILY	CBT · anxiety · OCD · panic

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PAGES

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QUESTION PAGES

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Questions 1–3

Thought Challenging · question bank

COLLABORATIVE PROMPT MENU · ADAPT, SKIP, OR REPHRASE AS NEEDED

1 When you notice you're having a negative thought say "stop" either mentally or verbally

2 Take a mindful breath or pause

3 Ask yourself these questions and try to create secondary thoughts. With CBT we want to stop the negative thinking and re-route our pattern of thoughts. At first it may be difficult to challenge our thoughts, but much like learning a new

— HOW IT MAKES YOU FEEL.

— THE RULE TOOL

— R - ARE MY THOUGHTS REALISTIC? ARE THEY RESPECTFUL?

— U - ARE MY THOUGHTS USEFUL?

— L - ARE MY THOUGHTS LOGICAL?

— E - IS THERE EVIDENCE FOR MY THOUGHTS?

— EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE

— ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

— • BASED ON THE EVIDENCE, HOW ELSE COULD I

— INTERPRET THIS?

— • IS THERE ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW I OVERLOOKED?

— • WHAT WOULD A FRIEND OR LOVED ONE SAY ABOUT

— THIS?

— • IS THERE ANOTHER EXPLANATION?

— • AM I JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS?

— THE EFFECTS

— • ON A SCALE OF 1-10 HOW MUCH DO I BELIEVE THIS

— TO BE TRUE?

— • WHAT ARE THE PROS AND CONS OF THINKING THE

— • WHAT'S THE EVIDENCE THAT IT'S TRUE?

— WAY I AM?

— • IF I HAD TO CONVINCE SOMEONE THAT THE THOUGHT

— • WHAT DO I WANT AND WHAT ARE MY GOALS?

— WASN'T TRUE, WHAT WOULD I TELL THEM?

— • WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT I SHOULD KEEP IN MIND

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COLLABORATIVE PROMPT MENU · ADAPT, SKIP, OR REPHRASE AS NEEDED

— • CAN I PREDICT THE FUTURE? HAVE I BEEN ABLE TO IN

— RIGHT NOW?

— THE PAST?

— • WHAT DO I WANT IN 5 YEARS? CAN I COPE?

— • WHAT ARE THE FACTS?

— • WHAT DO I WANT FOR MYSELF? WHAT'S A BETTER

— • WHAT'S A MORE REALISTIC WAY TO THINK ABOUT

— WAY TO THINK ABOUT THIS?

— THIS?

— • WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF THINKING THE WAY I AM

— AND WHAT'S A BETTER WAY TO THINK ABOUT THIS?

— SO WHAT

— MISCELLANEOUS

— • ON A SCALE OF 0-100 HOW BAD COULD IT REALLY BE?

— • IF MY WORST FEAR CAME TRUE COULD I COPE?

— • HOW WOULD THE IDEAL OR WISE VERSION OF

— • HOW MUCH WOULD IT REALLY AFFECT MY LIFE?

— MYSELF THINK ABOUT THIS OR COPE?

— • IN 5 YEARS WOULD IT MATTER?

— • DOES ANY OF THIS COME FROM TRAUMA? IS IT FAIR

— • IF WORST CASE HAPPENED WILL I BE OKAY?

— FOR ME TO THINK THAT WAY?

— • HAS THIS HAPPENED IN THE PAST AND DID I

— • HOW CAN I GET THROUGH THIS? DO I HAVE ANY

— SURVIVE?

— COPING SKILLS THAT HELP? IS THERE SOMEONE I

— • DOES THIS HAPPEN TO OTHER PEOPLE?

— CAN TALK TO ABOUT THIS?

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COLLABORATIVE PROMPT MENU · ADAPT, SKIP, OR REPHRASE AS NEEDED

— • DO I REALLY WANT TO LET THIS BOTHER ME?
IS IT

— • WHAT'S A NICER WAY TO WORD THIS?

— • WHO WOULD I BE WITHOUT THIS THOUGHT?

— • WHY SHOULD I CARE?

— WORTH IT?

— • WHAT'S A KINDER THING TO SAY?

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COLLABORATIVE PROMPT MENU · ADAPT, SKIP, OR REPHRASE AS NEEDED

— MY OVERALL MY THOUGHTS ARE:

— HOW CAN CBT BENEFIT ME?

— MY THOUGHTS

— WHY IS THIS WORK WORTH IT?

— THE TONE TO MY THOUGHTS ARE:

— WHAT MIGHT HINDER ME FROM

— COMMON PATTERN I NOTICED:

— CHALLENGING MY THOUGHTS?

— MAKE A LIST: WHAT HELPS ME

— HOW CAN I PROBLEM SOLVE?

— THINK MORE RATIONALLY?