

Grokker

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BREAKING FREE
FROM STRESS

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

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DR. CATHERINE WIKHOLM₁

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Welcome to Breaking Free From Stress a **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy stress reduction program.**

There are times in life when we feel like we're doing well - things seem OK and in balance - then all of a sudden we are thrown a curveball. Deadlines change, we hit a financial crisis, a relationship breaks down, we experience a health issue or conflict at work - and we feel really stressed. We've all been there.

Life has a way of sending us unexpected challenges which can be difficult to react to in a calm and focused way.

Cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT, is a psychological therapy that provides a number of strategies that can effectively help to manage how we react in these situations.

Over the next 7 days, I'll introduce you to key CBT techniques that you can use in your day-to-day life. We'll start by identifying the unhelpful thoughts and behaviors which may be contributing to our feelings of acute stress, then use those strategies to change them.

We can't always control what happens in our lives...however, we can learn to control how we think and respond in stressful situations.

I am really happy to share with you the empowering techniques Cognitive Behavioral Therapy has to offer.

Dr Catherine

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

This workbook can be completed on its own or alongside the audio program. We recommend doing both if you have time in order to ensure you practice and fully understand the key learnings of each section. The program has been designed for you to complete one exercise per day over 7 consecutive days. However if you take longer to complete the program that is also fine. You will find a summary of the key learnings at the end of each day which you can go back and review.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Over the next 7 days you will be introduced to a number of new concepts and ways of understanding your mind. If at first you don't understand an exercise or grasp the meaning of a practice you can repeat the exercise via the audio guide or in this workbook. At the end of this workbook you will find a glossary of key terms which you can refer to as you progress through the program.

WHAT IS CBT?

You may have heard the term CBT or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy before - however what does it actually mean and how can it help us to feel less stressed?

Cognitive behavioural therapy, or CBT, is a psychological therapy that proposes that our thoughts, feelings, body sensations and behaviours are all connected - and that if we change one of these, we can alter the others.

In this introductory series, we will be focusing on how CBT can help you to reduce feelings of *acute* stress. Acute stress is that short-term, situational stress that we all experience at certain points - that feeling you get of being really stressed out or overwhelmed in relation to a specific situation or challenge you're facing. When we start to feel stressed, many of us fall into patterns of unhelpful thinking or problematic behaviours which can cause us to feel even worse.

CBT works through the use of strategies and techniques that enable you to identify and change any unhelpful or problematic thinking patterns and behaviours that may be making you feel more stressed than is warranted in certain situations.

The exercises I will guide you through over the next 7 days will enable you to experience for yourself how CBT can help you to understand your thoughts and ways of responding, to help you to feel calmer and better able to cope with the challenging situations that can arise in daily life.

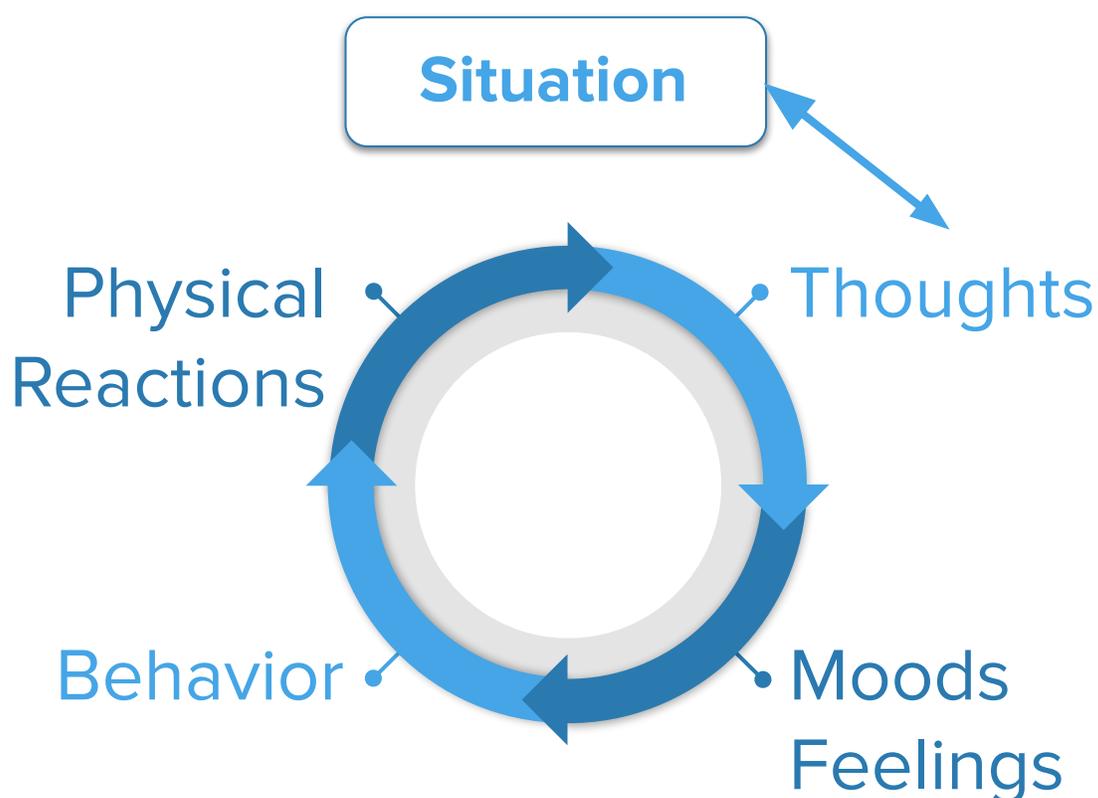
CBT is the main therapeutic approach I use in my own Clinical Psychology practice and I believe in its effectiveness for helping people manage their emotions and cope with the challenges of life. I have seen many people benefit from CBT techniques and I really hope that you will too.

REACTING TO STRESS

Step one of learning to cope better with stress is to become more self aware of your own thoughts and how they impact how you feel about a situation. Often our thoughts about difficult situations make them even more stressful than they need to be.

We can't always control what is going on around us in life. However, we can learn to control how we respond to situations.

Today we will complete a short simple exercise where you will be asked to imagine different ways of thinking about a stressful situation, in order to increase your awareness of how much impact our thoughts can have on our emotional state, and how by changing our thinking and behaviour we can effectively improve our emotional state and ability to cope with life stress.



DAY 1 - EXERCISE

Imagine that you are on the train, and that you are seated next to someone who is talking loudly on their phone. While you know they are allowed to talk on their phone, this is one of your pet peeves. In this scenario, you are tired after a long day at work and just want some peace and quiet on your long journey home. You quickly start to feel annoyed and irritated by this person. It appears to you that they **MUST** know how annoying it is to you, but they seemingly just don't care.

Given this perspective, try to imagine the thoughts that might automatically come into your mind, and notice the emotions you experience...

List below some of the thoughts you may have in response to this situation.....

Next, list below some of the feelings you may have in response to this situation.....

What physical response might you have in reaction to this situation? List below.

Now, imagine that you then realise this person may well continue talking on their phone for the entire rest of your journey. This means you could be feeling this way - angry, stressed, tense, frustrated - for another twenty minutes or so. You realise you have a choice. You might not be able to change what they're doing, but you **ARE** able to change how you respond to it. You realise if you continue to *focus* on how much it is stressing you out and annoying you, you're only going to feel *more* stressed out and annoyed. You don't want to keep feeling like that.

You decide to try to think about the situation differently. You remind yourself that it is unlikely that the person is being intentionally disrespectful to you. Yes, it is annoying, but it is not personal to you.

DAY 1 - EXERCISE

You remind yourself that you have coped with annoying situations before, situations much more stressful than this. This doesn't have to get the better of you, and leave you stressed all evening.

You take slow deep breaths in and out, and intentionally relax your shoulders and jaw. You start to feel some of the tension and stress begin to dissipate.

You ask yourself the following questions:

What will feel better for me, to fixate on how annoying and rude this person's behaviour is, or to choose to let it go?

In the grand scheme of things, how much does this matter?

How much will I care about this in a day, a week, a month or a year?

Considering your answers helps you to realise the situation is not worth your stress and upset. You continue to breathe slowly and deeply, in through your nose and out through your mouth, as you make the conscious decision that rather than continue to fixate on it, you choose to let your feelings about it go.

You start to feel calmer and more in control.

You turn your attention away from the person on the phone, and intentionally redirect it towards something more pleasant. You look out of the window, noticing the scenery rolling past. You think of something you are looking forward to, later that evening, maybe seeing your partner or what you might enjoy having for dinner.

As you get off the train, you still feel mild annoyance at your fellow passenger, but as you walk down the street towards your house, you remind yourself again,

How much will I care about this in a day, a week, a month or a year?

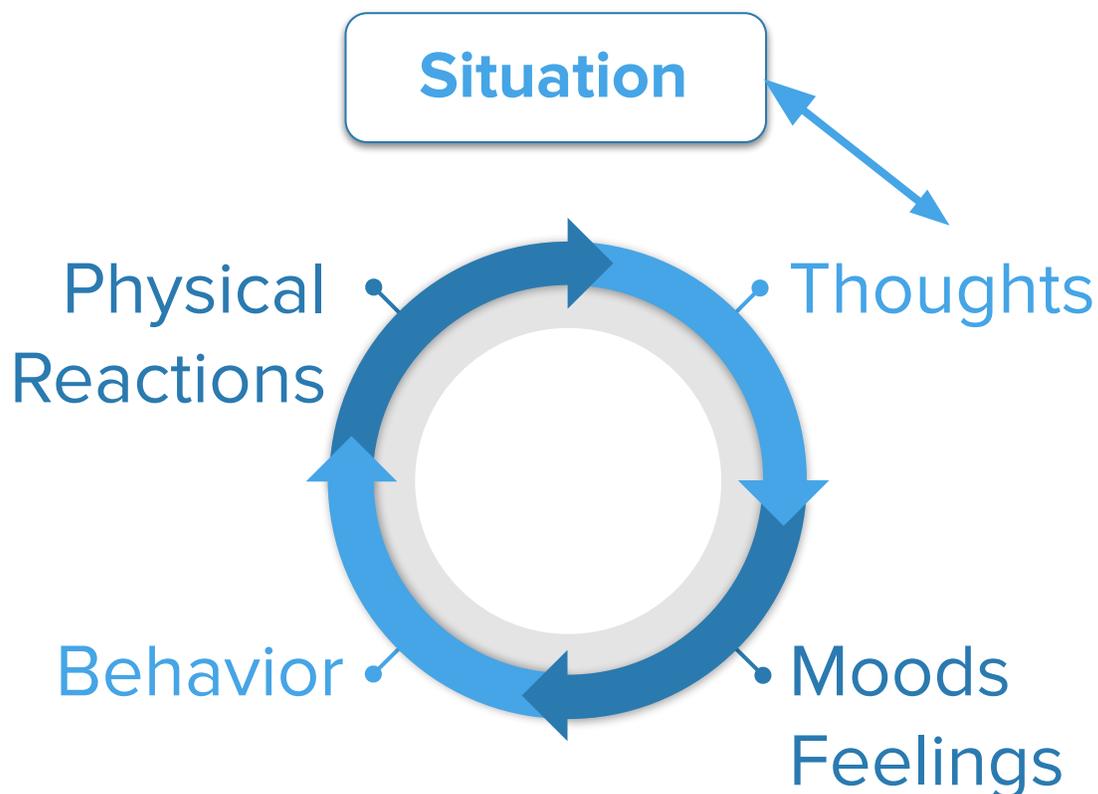
Realising that in the grand scheme of things, this person's behaviour really doesn't matter to you, the residual stress you feel continues to lift as you walk home, as you focus on your present experience, rather than the temporary annoyance that has now passed, and you enjoy a relaxed, peaceful evening when you get home.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are the types of situations that commonly cause you to feel irritated, annoyed or stressed?
2. How might you be able to change the way you think about these situations to that may alleviate your stress?
3. What alternative, more helpful actions could you take the next time you are faced with a situation that is causing you stress or annoyance?

KEY LEARNINGS

While we can't always control what is going on around us in life we can learn to control how we respond to situations, and this can have a significant impact on our ability to cope with daily stress.



THOUGHTS ARE NOT ALWAYS FACTS

The average person has up to 50,000 thoughts per day. Many of these will be ‘automatic thoughts’ - the kind of thoughts that just pop into our minds in response to a trigger. Yet something many of us don’t consider is that our thoughts are not always facts. The thoughts we have about any given situation are our interpretation of it through the lens of our past experiences, current emotional state, and point of view in that moment. They are not necessarily reflective of the actual reality of our situation.

Thoughts are just thoughts, and sometimes our automatic thoughts can turn out to be unhelpful and unbalanced, making us feel more stressed, anxious or upset about a situation than we need to be.

When we stop assuming that our automatic negative thoughts are necessarily true, we start to be able to gain some perspective and control over our emotional responses, and open the door to developing alternative, more helpful ways of thinking, which can enhance our coping ability and help to rebalance our emotions.

In today’s exercise you will review a scenario and then I will ask you to review your reaction through an alternative perspective.



DAY 2 - EXERCISE

Imagine you are walking down the street and up ahead you see a friend of yours walking on the other side of the street in the opposite direction. As you get nearer, you look towards them, smile and start to wave. However they simply keep walking and pass you by without acknowledging you at all. In this situation, imagine that your initial thought is that they have chosen to ignore you.

Take a moment to reflect on what thoughts might come into your mind, as you try to make sense of this. Note these thoughts below.....

How does this situation make you feel?

What might you do, as a result of these thoughts and feelings?

Now imagine the same situation, however, this time, imagine that the initial thought that comes into your head is instead, 'oh, they must not have seen me'.

What emotional response would you have instead, if this was your thought in that situation?

What behaviours might then result.. perhaps you might phone to check how they're doing?

This is a simple example of how one situation can lead to many different responses depending on how we interpret it. You can see how the way we think about a situation impacts how we feel emotionally and how we behave.

The next time you are in a situation where you find yourself thinking negatively, try to remind yourself that thoughts are not always facts, and challenge yourself to see whether you can think of alternative ways of seeing the situation, to help stop you jumping to negative conclusions and assuming the worst.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of a time when you may have misinterpreted a situation or assumed the worst?
2. What beliefs or assumptions may have led to your misinterpretation?
3. How might you think about this situation differently now?

KEY LEARNINGS

Our thoughts are not always facts - they are our interpretations of a given situation our past experiences, current emotional state and point of view in that moment.

It is often the way we think about situations we find ourselves in that shapes how much they will affect us emotionally. When we assume the worst in situations and jump to negative conclusions that aren't necessarily true, we can cause ourselves unnecessary stress.



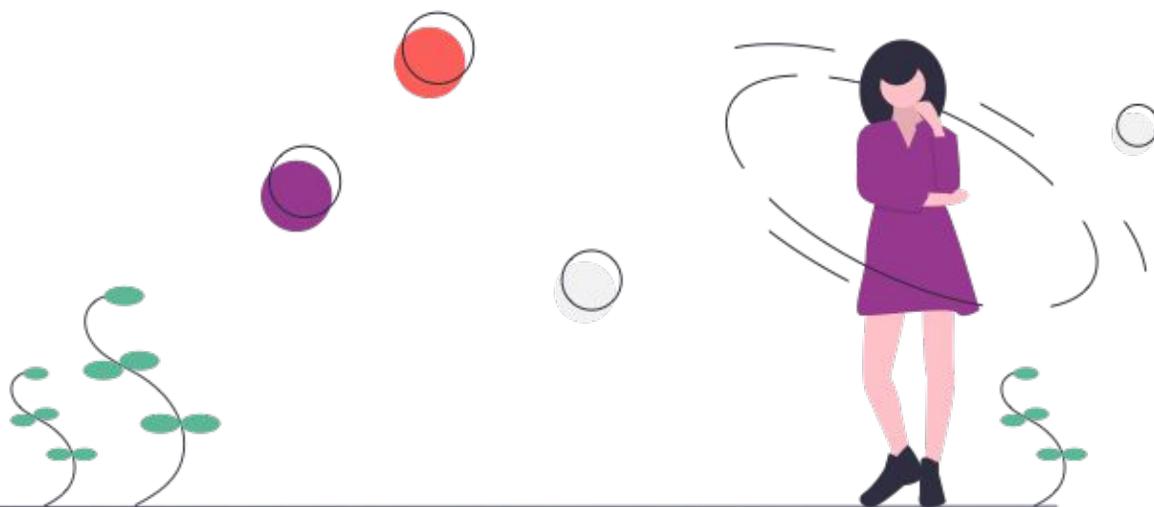
THOUGHT CHALLENGE

During times of stress we may fall into negative and unhelpful patterns of thinking, which end up making us feel even worse. We might overestimate the likelihood that something bad will happen, assume the worst about someone else's intentions, or underestimate our ability to cope with a challenge.

In our last session we learned how our thoughts are not always facts but are often our subjective interpretation of our circumstances. In today's session we are going to look at how we can further counteract the negative automatic thoughts that can often arise at times of stress using a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy technique known as Thought Challenging.

Thought challenging is a simple and effective technique that will help you to consider things from multiple angles, using actual evidence from your life. It involves looking at the whole picture and weighing it up, in order to helpfully rebalance your thinking and your emotions.

Today's exercise is best completed when you have some quiet time to yourself to focus on your answers.



DAY 3 - EXERCISE

Bring to mind as vividly as you can a type of situation that tends to make you feel particularly stressed and worried, and where you can recognise that the amount it actually stresses you out is more than you feel it probably needs to... maybe a situation where you tend to become critical and negative about yourself or others, or tend to assume the worst. For example, working under pressure to meet a deadline, getting stuck in traffic and running late for an important meeting...

What are the negative thoughts that might automatically come up for you, if you were feeling really stressed out in that situation. For example, 'I won't be able to get it done in time', 'it's not going to be good enough', 'my boss is going to be disappointed in me'

Take a few moments to notice what thoughts come up for you. Write these down below....

Now, ask yourself: Is this thought definitely true - is it fact or opinion?

If it's an opinion, it means it's not the only way of seeing the situation - and it may not be the most helpful or balanced way. So rather than assume it's true, let's use some techniques to challenge your automatic thinking and check out its factual basis.

First, ask yourself if there is any evidence that contradicts your negative thoughts.

**What facts do you have that the negative thought isn't totally true?
Write this down below.**

Next, can you identify any of the following unhelpful thinking patterns occurring?

- Jumping to conclusions
- Focusing on the negative
- Ignoring the positive
- Taking things personally
- Catastrophizing
- 'All or nothing' thinking
- Mind-reading
- Predicting the future

DAY 3 - EXERCISE

Now, ask yourself what would you say to a friend if they were in a situation like this?

How will I feel about this situation in six month's time?

Is my current reaction in proportion to the actual situation?

Is there another way of looking at this situation?

Is there another potential outcome?

Having thought this through, now try and formulate a more balanced, helpful thought about the situation. Now, holding this new thought in mind, imagine how you would feel emotionally, if this was how you thought when in that stressful situation

Do you notice a change in how you feel as a result of changing your thinking? Make a few notes below on the changes you have noted.

You have now experienced how by challenging our negative automatic thoughts by turning our attention to the evidence and recognising alternative ways of seeing a situation, we can change how we feel about a situation.

KEY LEARNINGS

It is possible to challenge our negative thoughts, and feel less stressed out by life situations, by asking ourselves questions that help us see the situation from a different perspective and in a more helpful, balanced way. This technique is known as Thought Challenging.

DAY 3 - THOUGHT RECORD

Situation / Trigger	Feelings Emotions – (Rate 0 – 100%) Body sensations	Unhelpful Thoughts / Images	Facts that support the unhelpful thought	Facts that provide evidence against the unhelpful thought	Alternative, more realistic and balanced perspective	Outcome Re-rate emotion
<p>What happened? Where? When? Who with? How?</p>	<p>What emotion did I feel at that time? What else? How intense was it? What did I notice in my body? Where did I feel it?</p>	<p>What went through my mind? What disturbed me? What did those thoughts/images/memories mean to me, or say about me or the situation? What am I responding to? What 'button' is this pressing for me? What would be the worst thing about that, or that could happen?</p>	<p>What are the facts? What facts do I have that the unhelpful thought/s are totally true?</p>	<p>What facts do I have that the unhelpful thought/s are NOT totally true? Is it possible that this is opinion, rather than fact? What have others said about this?</p>	<p>STOPP! Take a breath.... What would someone else say about this situation? What's the bigger picture? Is there another way of seeing it? What advice would I give someone else? Is my reaction in proportion to the actual event? Is this really as important as it seems?</p>	<p>What am I feeling now? (0-100%) What could I do differently? What would be more effective? Do what works! Act wisely. What will be most helpful for me or the situation? What will the consequences be?</p>

DEACTIVATING THE STRESS RESPONSE

As we have learned so far our thoughts play a major role in shaping our emotional responses to stressful situations and how well we are able to cope.

Experiencing a stressful situation can trigger the release of stress hormones in the body, such as adrenaline and cortisol, which produce physiological changes such as an increased heart rate, faster breathing and tensing of muscles. This is known as the 'fight or flight' or acute stress response and it functions to help us to survive in situations of immediate threat.

However, this response can also be activated by thought alone. This means we can sometimes end up feeling the strong physical effects of stress at times when the current situation might not necessarily warrant it and when it isn't helpful or wanted.

Changing our patterns of thinking takes time - so while you are learning to do this, it is important to know how to counteract your stress response if it is triggered by your thinking.

No one can avoid all stress, but you can counteract its detrimental effects by learning how to produce **the relaxation response**, a state of deep rest that is the polar opposite of the stress response. The relaxation response puts the brakes on stress and brings your body and mind back into a state of equilibrium.

One of the simplest ways to elicit the relaxation response is through deep breathing. Deep breathing activates the **parasympathetic nervous system** which sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax.

DAY 4 - EXERCISE

In today's session you will learn a simple breathing technique that will help you to feel calmer, more relaxed during times when you're experiencing stress. For this exercise, either sit comfortably in a chair with your feet on the floor, or you can lie down if you prefer.

Breath Awareness Exercise

- ★ Place your hands on your lower abdomen, just below your belly button. Now take calm, slow breaths, in through your nose, and out through your mouth.
- ★ When you inhale, focus on breathing into your lower abdomen. You should notice your hands move up when you breathe in, like you're filling up a balloon with your breath.
- ★ Breathe out slowly to the count of '5'.
- ★ As you keep breathing, calmly and deeply, try to slow down your exhale a little further, so it is slower than your inbreath.
- ★ Now, after your exhale, hold for 2-3 seconds before inhaling again.
- ★ Continue to slow down the pace of your breath.
- ★ As you breathe slowly and deeply, bring your attention to the rest of your body, and just scan your body for any areas of tension or tightness.
- ★ If you notice an area of tension, intentionally relax the muscles, feeling your jaw loosen, your shoulders drop, or your back soften.
- ★ Continue to breathe slowly and deeply, in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- ★ Picture a balloon in your lower abdomen that inflates as you breathe in, and deflates as you exhale. Feel your hands move up and down as you breathe. Scan your body again for any areas of tightness or tension. If you notice any tension, relax those muscles.
- ★ Notice how relaxed your body feels as you breathe deeply and slowly, in and out.
- ★ Repeat the above steps for 5-10 minutes until you feel calm and centred. When you are ready to bring your awareness back to the room and gently open your eyes if you have had them closed.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What thoughts did you notice arising when you started this relaxation practice?

Did you experience any resistance or negative thoughts?

What did you notice happening in your mind as you began to focus your attention on your breath?

What physical changes did you notice or feel during this practice?

List a few words below to describe how you felt at the end of this exercise?



TAKING BETTER ACTIONS

In situations of stress our ability to think clearly and make decisions is impaired.

When our minds are busy and we are feeling overwhelmed, there can be a tendency to act on impulses and engage in behaviours that might make us feel better momentarily, but are not so good for us in the long term..

We might overeat, drink excessively, sleep too much or spend more time scrolling through social media late at night all in an attempt to temporarily ease or distract ourselves from the emotional discomfort we are experiencing.

Making a change to our habits and behaviours starts with greater self awareness of what our common responses at times of stress are and how they impact our wellbeing in the long-term, which can motivate us to try to make different choices.

Yet even if we know that a behaviour we currently engage in when we're feeling stressed isn't that good for us, it can still be very hard to drop it as a coping mechanism, unless we can replace it with an alternative, healthier way of coping.

In today's session we are going to identify our unhelpful behaviours and then plan what alternative actions we can take.

DAY 5 - EXERCISE

I would like you to think of a type of situation that you know often stresses you out and that you struggle to cope with well. For example it could be having a big work deadline looming.

Write this situation down below.

Next, identify the kinds of negative thoughts and emotions that this type of situation often generates for you.

Now I would like you to identify the behaviours you tend to engage in, when faced with these stressful thoughts and feelings.

Here is a list of some common behaviours that many people sometimes engage in when stressed. Are any of these familiar to you?

- Overeating or under-eating
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Smoking
- Over-sleeping
- Compulsive spending
- Procrastination or overworking
- Isolating yourself
- Caffeine overconsumption

If you have recognised that you currently engage in any of these common unhealthy coping mechanisms, take a moment to reflect on the following question.

Are these behaviours keeping your stress going, or even causing you MORE stress in the long-term?

What would life be like if you DIDN'T do this behaviour? How would things be better?

Have you identified one or more behaviours you would like to change? Outline below.

FINDING ALTERNATIVE BEHAVIOURS

Even if we know why we want to change an unhelpful behaviour, it's hard to let go of a coping mechanism without having something to replace it with.

The next step in managing stress better is to identify an alternative, healthy behaviour you can do instead when you are feeling stressed that can replace each unhealthy coping behaviour you may currently use.

Take 5-10 minutes to see if you can come up with some ideas of different coping strategies that might enable you to reduce your stress in a healthier, more sustainable way, a way that will benefit you in the long-term, not just in the moment.

List all the possible options below:

Now, take some time now to reflect on the following questions.

1. Of these options which is the most realistic or simplest for you to do?
2. What do you think the benefits will be?
3. How can you set yourself up for success? Eg. plan ahead, schedule in an activity.
4. How will you make this change sustainable?
5. Is there anyone who can support you in making this change? Or a way you can hold yourself accountable?

KEY LEARNING

In times of stress we can sometimes engage in unhelpful behaviours and habits that end up causing us more stress in the long term. In order to change, we need to identify a replacement coping strategy and make a plan of action.

It is important to remember that changing behaviours or habits is not easy and its important to not punish yourself if you sometimes find yourself falling back into old habits. If this happens, be kind to yourself, and try again.

Well done for completing today's exercise.

Weekly Planner

First week: Write down what you do and how you feel (emotion). Rate the emotion 0-100% E.g. "Watched TV, Sad 85%"

Subsequent weeks: Plan activities each day, mixing activities of Work, Rest and Play (or Achieve, Connect & Enjoy). Pace yourself!

Day							
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

POSITIVE SELF TALK

The way that we think about things has an impact on our mood, anxiety and stress levels, and vice versa. Feeling stressed and thinking negatively can easily become a vicious cycle that can feel hard to break.

In today's session I will introduce you to the CBT strategy of using positive self talk or coping statements. This strategy will enable you to counteract negative automatic thoughts and effectively rebalance your thinking at times when you are feeling stressed out and overwhelmed, so that you can feel calmer, more resilient, and better able to cope with difficult life situations.

Using positive self talk or coping statements is a way of coaching ourselves through difficult situations by using encouraging statements based on evidence that normalise our emotional reactions and help to remind us of our ability to cope with life stressors.



DAY 6 - EXERCISE

First of all, I want you to think of a current difficult situation that triggers you to feel stressed or overwhelmed, or a situation that you envisage could happen in the near future. For example, having an exam coming up and catastrophizing about what would happen if you fail it, or feeling really stressed out about an upcoming appraisal at work and predicting a bad outcome.

Briefly describe this situation below:

Next, take a few moments to hold in mind the stressful situation. What are the negative thoughts you might typically have in that scenario that might be particularly driving or amplifying some of those feelings of stress?

List these thoughts below:

Now, consider the impact of this negative self talk on how you feel about the situation and yourself. Is it helping you or hindering you?

Are these negative thoughts definitely true... or might they not be? Are they fact or opinion? If they are opinion, then it means it's possible to think about the situation differently, in a more helpful way. Remember that CBT proposes that if we can change the way we think, we can change the way we feel.

COPING STATEMENTS FOR NEGATIVE AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

If our negative thoughts about a situation aren't necessarily true, then that's an indication there may be other healthier, more helpful ways to think about the situation.

We are going to use the strategy of using positive self talk and coping statements to help us to counteract the negative automatic thoughts.

Below is list of example coping statements that you can use:

Make a note next to any of any of the ones that resonate with you, that you think would be helpful to remind yourself of when you are feeling stressed, to help you to cope as best as you can with this difficult situation.

Stop and breathe - I can do this.

These feelings will pass. They won't last forever.

I have done this before and I can do it again.

I feel this way because of my past experiences, but I am safe right now.

I can learn from this and it will be easier next time.

I can use my coping skills and get through this.

Thoughts are just thoughts - they're not necessarily true, or factual.

I have coped with harder things than this in the past.

I can get through this.

I can be stressed/anxious/sad and still deal with this in a healthy way.

COPING STATEMENTS FOR NEGATIVE AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

Take a few moments now to see if you can come up with any additional positive coping statements of your own, that might help you to manage as best as you can in the specific situation you have in mind.

To help you to do this, it may help to cast your mind back over prior experiences where you have coped with stressful situations, overcome challenges, or got through difficult times.

Remind yourself of the facts, of the evidence that you can cope.

Write down a statement or two that would help to remind you of your coping ability.

Now, I want you to imagine that your closest friend is in a similar difficult situation.

They are feeling really stressed out and overwhelmed. You believe in them and want to support them.

What would you tell them to encourage them and help them to cope with their stressful situation as best as they can?

Write down what you come up with below:

Now tell this to yourself, as you imagine your stressful situation. How do you feel about the situation now?

Describe below:

KEY LEARNING

Using positive self talk or coping statements is a way of coaching ourselves through difficult situations by using encouraging statements based on evidence that normalise our emotional reactions and help to remind us of our ability to cope with life stressors.



KEY LEARNINGS REVIEW

Over the past 7 days we have learned a number of different ways in which we can reduce feelings of stress through greater awareness of our automatic thinking patterns, challenging negative thoughts, and changing behaviours,.

In today's final session we are going to review some key learnings from the series.

Here are a few key learnings for you to remember.

1. We can't always control what is going on around us in life but we can control how we respond to situations.
2. Thoughts are not always facts - just because you think something doesn't mean it's necessarily true. Thoughts are often interpretations of a given situation our past experiences, current emotional state and point of view in that moment - and when we're feeling stressed, we may particularly find ourselves engaging in unhelpful patterns of thinking, such as predicting the worst and jumping to conclusions.
3. It is possible to challenge our negative thoughts by asking ourselves questions that help us see the situation from different perspectives and in a more helpful, balanced way. This technique is known as Thought Challenging.
4. We can deactivate the physical stress response in our body when it occurs by using simple relaxation techniques like deep breathing
5. Using positive self talk or coping statements is a way of coaching ourselves through difficult situations and can help us remain calm and better able to manage.

NEXT STEPS

Here are a few things you can do now you have completed the program:

- Review the key learning of each program and repeat any of the exercises that you feel you need to understand a little better.
- Start to notice your thinking patterns as you go about your day. See where automatic negative thinking comes up for you and reflect on which of the techniques you have learned may be able to help you make a positive change.
- Action the alternative coping mechanisms you have noted that may help you overcome any unhelpful behaviours or additions.
- Make time in your day to practice a relaxation technique that can help you better manage the physical effects of stress on your body. Set this time in your diary and make it a priority.
- Make a note of your positive coping statements and carry this with you in your wallet or a diary so you can refer to these when you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed.
- Repeat the 7 day program whenever you encounter periods of heightened stress or crisis.
- Seek out support. If you are finding that you are continuing to struggle with stress and experiencing symptoms of more serious mental health issues like anxiety or depression, seek the guidance of a professional therapist, psychologist or qualified counsellor.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

A psychological therapy that proposes that our thoughts, feelings, body sensations and behaviours are all connected - and that if we change one of these, we can alter the others.

Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are thoughts that cause individuals to perceive reality inaccurately. Challenging and changing cognitive distortions is a key element of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).

Automatic Thoughts

Automatic thoughts are thoughts or images that occur as a response to a trigger (like an action or event). They are automatic and 'pop up' or 'flash' in your mind without conscious thought.

Automatic Negative Thinking

Sometimes our automatic thoughts can be negatively skewed - and if we assume these negative thoughts as being true/factual, this can make us feel more stressed, anxious or sad than we need to be. Learning to notice and challenge our negative automatic thoughts when they arise, and identify more balanced, helpful ways of thinking about situations, can help increase our ability to cope with life events and rebalance our emotions.

Stress

Stress is a biological and psychological response experienced on encountering a threat or demand that we feel incapable of dealing with.

Acute Stress

Acute stress is that short-term, situational stress that we all experience at certain points - that feeling you get of being really stressed out or overwhelmed in relation to a specific situation or challenge you're facing

Internal stressor

Internal stressors are the sources of stress that are inside us, such the pressure we may put on ourselves in terms of high standards, expectations, attitudes,, goals, etc.

External stressor

External stressors are events and situations that happen to you. Examples include, work deadlines, traffic, technology and finances.

Thought Challenging

Thought challenging is a simple and effective CBT technique helps you to identify negative or unhelpful thoughts and examine their validity. It involves considering things from multiple angles, using actual evidence from your life, and looking at the whole picture and weighing it up, in order to helpfully rebalance your thinking and your emotions.