



Challenging Depressive Thoughts



When mood is low, negative and self-critical thoughts can feel especially convincing. Learning to notice and examine them can help you develop a broader, more balanced perspective.

NOTICE THE THOUGHT

Try to capture the thought in your own words. Depression may bring thoughts about yourself, other people, the future or your ability to cope.

NOTICE THE EFFECT

What happens when you believe the thought completely? Notice its effect on your mood, motivation, body and what you feel like doing next.

LOOK AT THE WHOLE PICTURE

Ask what supports the thought and what information may be missing. Are you focusing only on what went wrong, judging yourself harshly or treating a feeling as a fact?

DEVELOP A BALANCED RESPONSE

A balanced thought does not need to be positive. Aim for something realistic, fair and compassionate that takes more of the available information into account.

Balanced does not mean artificially positive.

The aim is to respond to yourself with the same fairness you might offer someone else, while still acknowledging what is difficult.



My Thought Check-In



Choose one recent situation when your mood dropped or you noticed a strong self-critical or hopeless thought. Work through it slowly.

1. WHAT HAPPENED?

Describe the situation or trigger. Keep it specific.

2. WHAT DID MY MIND TELL ME?

Write the thought as closely as you can to how it appeared in your mind.

3. HOW DID I FEEL - AND WHAT DID I WANT TO DO?

What emotions showed up? Did you want to withdraw, give up, avoid something or respond another way?

4. WHAT INFORMATION SUPPORTS THE THOUGHT?

Write down the facts or experiences that seem to fit the thought.

Continue on the next page

Next, look for information the depressive thought may be leaving out.



Looking at the Whole Picture



Now broaden the picture. You do not need to prove the original thought wrong - simply consider whether it is the only possible way of understanding the situation.

5. WHAT INFORMATION DOES NOT FIT THE THOUGHT?

What facts, experiences, strengths, context or alternative explanations might the thought be overlooking?

6. WHAT WOULD I SAY TO SOMEONE I CARE ABOUT?

If someone you cared about had this thought in the same situation, how might you respond to them?

7. WHAT IS A MORE BALANCED RESPONSE?

Write a response that acknowledges what is difficult while being fairer and more complete.

8. WHAT COULD I DO NEXT?

What is one small action you could take if you held the balanced response a little more lightly?

Using this with your psychologist

Recurring thoughts can be explored together, including where they come from, how they affect you and which responses are most useful.