

CBT Pointers to help Depression

- Trying to make your feelings 'GO AWAY' does not work-AVOID.
- Learn to ACCEPT YOUR FEELINGS; they have evolved for a purpose.
- Trying to figure out WHY you are 'FEELING BAD' makes you feel worse-AVOID.
- Thinking 'I shouldn't be feeling like this' causes negative ruminative cycles-AVOID.
- THOUGHTS often DON'T REFLECT REALITY-CONSIDER
- INSTEAD of thinking what we don't want to happen (difficult, exhaustive), think of what WE DO WANT TO HAPPEN (easier, positive results).
- Trying to block negative thoughts does not work, instead RESPOND ADAPTIVELY & try to SUBSTITUTE POSITIVE THOUGHTS.
- TEACH yourself that a thought is 'JUST A THOUGHT'; not fact, not sure to happen.
- Say to yourself: 'I am just having a distressing/negative thought/feeling'-FEEL BETTER?
- Be CAREFUL of the QUESTIONS YOU ASK YOURSELF, what do you want to achieve?
- NEVER ask the brain WHY questions (ask HOW & WHAT questions instead).
- Learn to RECOGNISE THINKING ERRORS & IRRATIONAL THOUGHTS.
- CONSCIOUSLY LABEL these thinking errors: 'I recognise I am being impatient/childish'.
- DECIDE to STOP RUMINATING (brooding), it makes us feel worse-DETACH.
- Consciously DETACH from ruminative cycles: 'I recognise I am having a negative thought/feeling/vision about...'
- Take action to CHANGE your BEHAVIOUR or PERCEPTION of situations.
- MAKE PERSONAL POSITIVE CHANGES (hobbies, sport, drinking less, behaviour, going out, visiting friends); particularly if you brake your own life rules/ethics.
- If others are continuously violating your rules, ask yourself if your rules are reasonable; if they are not-ADAPT, if they are -CHANGE SITUATION/CHALLENGE OTHERS.
- REALISE we have developed rules for good reasons, but also that they can make use depressed if continuously challenged by ourselves/others-CONSIDER.
- Be AWARE that certain RULES (Protection Strategies) are unhelpful. They are often egocentric, immature & rigid (esp. if developed in childhood)-IDENTIFY THEM.
- To compensate for limiting beliefs we have PROTECTION STRATEGYs (RULEs) eg. 'Make people laugh & act happy' or 'keep everyone else happy'.
- A PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOUR is used to SUPPORT the RULE: eg. 'Avoid serious discussion & pretend your fine' or 'avoid saying anything which upsets others'.

- **IDENTIFY LIMITING BELIEFS:**
 - Think of situations which make you uncomfortable, depressed or when you over reacted>concentrate on the thoughts you had>how are you feeling (physically/psychologically)?
 - IF you thoughts WERE TRUE, what would that say about you = LIMITING BELIEF eg. 'I am not good enough'.
 - Limiting beliefs are often NOT LOGICAL/FACTUAL but can still affect you drastically.
- **REMEMBER** limiting beliefs are **LEARNT/TAUGHT** and not genetic traits.
- **BRING** limiting beliefs into your **CONSCIOUS AWARENESS** and **CHALLENGE** them:
 - 'who taught me these beliefs', 'why did I develop this belief', 'does this belief say more about (Dad/Partner etc) than me', 'is this belief logical/true or untrue'.
- Try to **DROP** your **PROTECTION STRATEGIES** as they cause **REINFORCEMENT CYCLES** supporting your limiting beliefs.
- **REALISE** using protection strategies makes us act **INCONGRUENT** which can make us & others angry, frustrated, withdrawn & depressed.
- **ASSESS** what happens when you **IDENTIFY & DROP** protection strategies/behaviour: eg. Others are fine, nothing bad, feel better?
- **TRY** to establish which protection strategies are helpful/mature and which are **MALADAPTIVE** (they may have developed to support us as children).
- **BRING** protective strategies into your **CONSCIOUSNESS** then consider positive **ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES**-the brain will start to use these instead over time.
- **WHAT** happens when you use alternative strategies? How do others react? Do you feel better?
- Be **AWARE** you will not be comfortable letting go of your protective strategies or confronting limiting beliefs-but you must strive to.
- **USE THE LAW OF OPPOSITES:**
 - Think what you could do which would make you feel worse. eg. 'not go out'>How would you need to think to achieve this? eg. 'they don't really want me there'>Think exactly what you need to do to make this happen. eg. not contact people, sleep, act withdrawn, make excuses
 - Do the **OPPOSITE**.
 - Isolate yourself=go out (see friends, have a walk)
 - drink allot=drink little
 - laze around=exercise
 - dwell on negative issues=chose not to ruminate
- **DOES** doing the opposite have a **POSITIVE EFFECT**? Do you feel better?
- **REMEMBER** you have to keep working on your thinking (your teeth deteriorate if you don't keep brushing them, keep tuning the guitar!).
- Others may be irritated with your altered behaviour, or try to get you behave like you used to for personal gain-**RESIST**, remember your life + mind is better now.
- **DONT FOCUS ON THE PAST**, it can't be changed (**ACCEPT** past experiences but **DENY** their continued negative impact on us).
- Be aware (personally/of others) without judging.

This help sheet is based on ideas from the following sources:

Think about your Thinking: Nicola Ridgeway & James Manning

Overcoming Depression: Paul Gilbert

Depression Relief (online CBT): www.thewellnessshop.co.uk

It should only be used as an 'aid memoir' when using one of the above or seeing a qualified counsellor/psychotherapist.

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