



AUTOMATIC NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

QUESTION AND GAIN A DEEPER
UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR
AUTOMATIC NEGATIVE THOUGHTS.
IDENTIFY ALTERNATIVE
RESPONSES FOR THE FUTURE.

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CHALLENGING AUTOMATIC NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

A note from your coach...

Often, our negative thoughts go unquestioned and subsequently are 'believed' to be true, sometimes without the realisation that our thoughts are for the most part not facts but simply our opinion, our assumption (usually negative), or our false beliefs. Furthermore, this can lead to over-generalising and catastrophising our thoughts.

We all have a tendency to accept our initial negative thoughts without further exploration or realistic and rational viewpoints. Often as a result of our core beliefs, we listen to negative 'chatter' and carry on living our lives without stopping to really examine our thoughts or determine a more balanced thought, and so consequently, have negative feelings and restrictive behaviours. These patterns continue to maintain themselves when our thoughts go unchallenged.

The next time you recognise negative feelings or behaviours explore what your thoughts are telling you.

It is important to attempt to question and challenge our automatic negative thoughts by not assuming they are accurate. What would you say to a friend who experienced the same thoughts? What is an alternative viewpoint? What evidence backs up my thoughts? When have I thought this way before and my assumptions were inaccurate?

Firstly, identify a past event that you have felt anxious about and work through these questions:

Begin by exploring the event in more detail and gaining a deeper understanding of any triggers and your initial feelings.

WHERE WAS I? WHAT WAS THE SITUATION?

HOW DID I FEEL AT THE TIME?

WHAT WERE MY PHYSICAL SENSATIONS?

Now, start to explore what you were thinking at the time. Identifying the most powerful thought you were experiencing and the repercussions you feared were going to happen.

WHAT WAS I THINKING AT THE TIME?

WHAT WAS THE ULTIMATE THOUGHT MAKING ME ANXIOUS?

WHAT IMAGES WERE GOING THROUGH MY HEAD?

HOW CONVINCED WAS I THAT SOMETHING BAD/UNPLEASANT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN?

Secondly, work through these questions to help you think twice about future anxiety provoking situations:

Gaining a deeper understanding supports you in being able to identify and plan what you can do differently in the future.

HOW REALISTIC WERE MY THOUGHTS?

WERE MY THOUGHTS FACTS OR SIMPLY OPINION OR FALSE ASSUMPTIONS?

HOW COULD I HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT THE SITUATION IN A DIFFERENT WAY?

Consider the evidence that was and wasn't available at the time. Finally, identify potential alternative responses for in the future.

WHAT WAS THE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT MY INITIAL ANXIETY?

WHAT WAS THE EVIDENCE THAT DID NOT SUPPORT MY ANXIETY?

HOW COULD I THINK ABOUT ANXIETY PROVOKING SITUATIONS IN THE FUTURE?
WHAT WOULD BE A MORE REALISTIC, ALTERNATIVE, OR BALANCED THOUGHT?



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