

Module 2

Challenging thoughts

In this module we pick up where we left off last time by looking deeper into the thoughts that pass through your mind, and seeing if you can start to challenge any unhelpful or distorted thinking that makes you feel anxious, stressed or down.

Taking a second look at your thoughts - Part 2

You've already learnt a few of the distorted thinking patterns that people use (particularly when they are anxious or sad).

You might have noticed that these thoughts can make you feel pretty bad.

If you are able to see the situation in a more balanced way, you might be able to feel a bit better about these situations. This means you can act more helpfully in these situations. So now it's time to challenge some of the thoughts that pass through your head.

This doesn't mean you have to think positively the whole time, and only think about rainbows and puppy dogs and lolly pops. Instead, it's about thinking realistically about things, and seeing them more clearly. It's about piecing apart the really bad things that are happening in your life, from the things that you're blowing out of proportion in your head.

How does it work?

When we're anxious or down, we seem to have mostly catastrophising, pessimistic and self-critical thoughts. This sets up a cycle where we only focus on the worst aspects of each situation.

This is not to say you're not facing some pretty tough situations at the moment. It's just that our minds tend to make the experience of these situations even worse for ourselves. We can end up getting stuck in a rut, where we can't seem to get ourselves out.

When you challenge your thinking, you are able to see whether you are thinking clearly or not. Sometimes you might decide that a situation is as bad as you had thought it was. But often, when you take a second look at your thoughts, the situation doesn't seem quite so bad, or you see a way to deal with the situation.

How do you actually do it?

Step 1: see if you can pick out a thought that passes through your mind, and figure out whether you might be using a thinking distortion (you started doing this in the last Module).

Step 2: 'challenge' this thought, by asking yourself one of the helpful questions below.