

EMPOWER



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ACTIVITY SHEET



The more often you repeat, replay or retell a thought, the more likely you are to believe it. The more you travel down the same highway of thinking, the more ingrained that thought becomes. This is not just true of toxic thoughts, but also of thoughts that build and strengthen you.



SESSION OBJECTIVES

This session is designed to help you understand:

- (a)** how to institute healthy boundaries and promote mental discipline
- (b)** the importance of counter-balancing your thoughts
- (c)** ways to adopt healthier, more constructive mindsets

Bursting the Bias

Research indicates the human brain is biased towards negative thinking. Your brain not only has a tendency to pick up on negative cues and register negative stimuli more readily than positive, but also has a propensity to automatically dwell on and rehearse negative thoughts as well. Because the experiences of pleasure and pain are processed in the same parts of your brain, absurd as it might sound, it actually feels good... to feel bad.



From the examples below, identify your most likely default thought:

<p>“I had such a terrible night’s sleep; this day is going to be a complete write off.”</p>		<p>“I had such a terrible night’s sleep, so I’ll relax and enjoy taking it easy today.”</p>
<p>“If this situation continues, I’ll be financially ruined. It will be impossible to recover. My situation will be completely hopeless.”</p>		<p>“If this situation continues, I’ll need a financial miracle. Thankfully, God specialises in doing ‘the impossible’.”</p>
<p>“I feel so bad for what I have done. This time, I’ve really blown it. How can I ever forgive myself for what I’ve done?”</p>		<p>“I feel so bad for what I have done. I’m so genuinely sorry. Thank God, His mercy is renewed for me every day.”</p>
<p>“They are driving me crazy. They are so inconsiderate. All they ever do is think of themselves. They are so selfish.”</p>		<p>“I’m feeling frustrated. This dynamic between us must improve. So, I’m going to model what it looks like to be considerate.”</p>

NEGATIVE THOUGHTS ARE ENTICING, SOMEWHAT LIKE A RASH. INTUITIVELY, YOU KNOW THAT SCRATCHING THE RASH WON’T MAKE IT GO AWAY, BUT IT FEELS SO GOOD (TO FEEL BAD) THAT IT’S COMPELLING TO SCRATCH. PERHAPS, YOU’RE NOT AWARE YOU’VE ALREADY BEEN ITCHING.

Thought Court

There is a time to think challenging thoughts, process difficult circumstances and make important decisions about your future. However, that time is not 'all the time'. To bring a little law and order back to your mind, implement specific boundaries around your thinking. Rather than allowing your thoughts to dictate to you, dictate to your thoughts when they will have their day in court. Thought court is a nominated time frame during the day that you will allow yourself to process and consider the facts.



TIMING AND DURATION

Not Ideal

1. AT NIGHT WHEN TRYING TO FALL ASLEEP:

Why? Negative thoughts and memories produce chemicals in your body, which turns into energy and keeps you awake - making you feel restless and causing difficulties falling asleep.

2. EARLY IN THE MORNING:

Why? Starting your day with negative thoughts and memories can adversely influence the rest of the day, and in turn, demotivate you to fulfil important responsibilities.

3. ANYTIME YOU'RE FEELING FRUSTRATED ANGRY, SAD, WORRIED OR STRESSED:

Why? Negative thoughts and memories have a way of fuelling and triggering other painful feelings. When feeling bad, you are more vulnerable to making poor decisions.

Ideal

1. MID-MORNING OR MID-AFTERNOON:

Be sure to establish your nominated 'thought court' time in advance. These specific times occur before lunch and dinner, allowing for a successful break and biological transition.

2. 15-30 MINUTES:

When that time is over, you should be able to walk away and leave your negative thoughts and memories behind.

3. BE DISCIPLINED:

Whenever you recognise that you're having intrusive, unwanted or unhelpful thoughts and memories outside your established 'thought court' time, arrest the thought and come back to it later (at the specified time).



NOTE: PROFESSIONAL CARE: Some intrusive, unwanted and unhelpful thoughts are like woodpeckers in your mind. They won't leave you alone, and as such, become particularly hard to arrest. In such circumstances, apply the 'Emergency Response Plan' you established in Session 5 (Emotional Alarm Bells).

Allocate your 'Thought Court' time of day:

_____ AM / _____ PM

Duration:

_____ mins



RULES OF THE COURT

When processing negative thoughts or memories, follow a specific methodology.

1. Make a list of the past hurts or future concerns you are wrestling with.

(a)

(b)

(c)

2. Pray over the list and surrender each one to God with thanksgiving.

Example 1: Thank you God that You care about what has happened; You see my broken heart and You grieve with me. I know this too shall pass, so I ask that you please lead and guide me as I process my thoughts.

Example 2: Even though my future seems uncertain to me, I thank You that You've already prepared the way forward. I might not yet see it, but I thank You that Your plan is to help me, not to hurt me. So please help me now to have the kind of faith-filled thoughts that line up with Your will, as I contemplate what to do next.

3. Problem-solve what steps you can practically take to deal with past hurts or future concerns.

(a)

(b)

(c)



APPLYING FAITH TO OUR FEAR AND TRUTH TO THE TAUNTS-OF-OUR-MIND IS LIKE A MUSCLE THAT NEEDS EXERCISING. BUILDING NEW THOUGHT HABITS TAKES TIME AND REPETITION. AS NEW NEURAL PATHWAYS BECOME ESTABLISHED, HEALTHY THINKING WILL PREVAIL.



CROSS EXAMINATION

Putting intrusive, unwanted and unhelpful thoughts to a truth test involves placing your painful past or uncertain future under a microscope, asking a few simple questions:

Q: What's one particularly difficult thought you're currently wrestling with?



IS THIS THOUGHT TRUTHFUL?	YES	NO
IS THERE ANY EVIDENCE THAT SUPPORTS THIS THOUGHT?		
IS THERE ANY EVIDENCE THAT DISQUALIFIES THIS THOUGHT?		
IS THIS THOUGHT HELPFUL?		
WOULD I ENCOURAGE A FRIEND (IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES) TO THINK THE SAME?		

Examine The Cross

When confronted with crisis, the world tells you to focus on yourself; play the victim, feel entitled, cast blame, demand your rights and seek pleasures that will improve your mood. But a victim mindset only keeps you stuck. So, when your hope has slumbered, proactively choose to wake her back up with the promises of God. Consider your past pain and future uncertainty in light of what Jesus has done for you. To effectively 'cross-examine' your thoughts, your thoughts in turn would do well to 'examine the cross'.

**TO BE A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST,
YOU SACRIFICE YOUR RIGHT IN
ORDER TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT;
INSTEAD OF EXERCISING
THE RIGHT TO NURSE YOUR
WOUNDS AND SCRATCH THE
RASH OF WORRY,**

**take up your
cross and
follow Him.**





DO MY THOUGHTS LINE UP WITH GOD'S WORD?	YES	NO
WOULD THE VOICE OF WISDOM, FAITH AND HOPE SAY THE SAME THING?		
DO MY THOUGHTS ALIGN WITH MY FAITH AND CORE VALUES?		

Q: What's an alternative way you could think about your situation or circumstance?

