

# Coping with Low Mood

## Session 3

### Weekly check-in

- How has your week been overall?
- What's been positive about your week?
- How are you feeling today?



### What about your target?

- Did you use your new helpful coping strategies when you felt low?
- Did you create an Emotional First Aid Kit (a physical one or a paper/online version)?



- What helpful coping strategies did you use that you found useful?
- How often did you use these?
- Will you be able to do these things on a daily basis?
- How will you make sure you use these strategies when you feel low?

# Thinking Traps and Low Mood

In this session, we will start to look at how when we feel low, our thoughts can often get sucked into a 'thinking trap'. Imagine the thinking trap as something that catches an automatic thought and turns it negative.

Click on the video below to watch a Youtube clip on Thinking Traps:

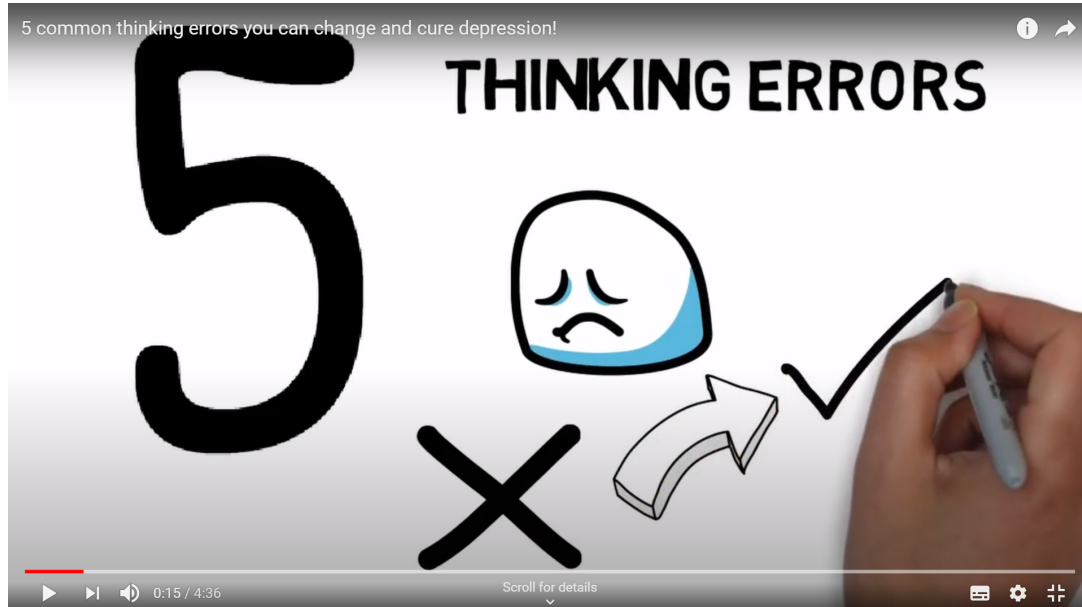


As you can see from the video - Thinking Traps often make us see the worst case scenario in situations. Thinking Traps can feel particularly powerful when you are also suffering with low mood - in fact thinking traps can often make your low mood worse because they can constantly make you view the world in a negative way.

Imagine that thinking traps are like having negativity glasses on. The glasses make you have a negative view of everything but they also stop you from seeing the full picture. So when you look at situations, you can only see the negative and don't think about the positives or a more balanced view.

# Examples of Thinking Traps

Click on the video below to watch a Youtube Clip explaining the 5 most common thinking traps. Can you identify to any of these?



The first step in challenging your thinking traps is to recognise them! Most of the time thinking traps become a habit and we accept our negative thoughts as the truth.

Remember the Negative Automatic Thoughts we talked about last week (NAT's)? We can't always stop NAT's from appearing but we can recognise them as unhelpful and learn ways to challenge them so we get a better view on situations.

# Thinking Traps

| Thinking Style                                                                                                      | Explanation                                                                                                  | Example                                                                                                                                           | More balanced view                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Catastrophising</b><br>         | Thinking the worst case scenario. Blowing problems up and making them seem a lot worse than they really are. | I didn't get a good mark on my Maths test so I may as well give up now because I'm never going to get a good job and I will be a failure in life. | Okay so I didn't do my best on this test but I know I can practice more and do better next time- it's not the only Maths test I will ever take. |
| <b>Predicting the Future</b><br> | When we predict that things in the future will turn out badly.                                               | I know I won't pass any of my GCSE's and I will make everyone disappointed.                                                                       | It's impossible to predict the future and know what will happen. All I can do is try my best.                                                   |
| <b>Mindreading</b><br>           | When we believe that we know what others are thinking and we assume that they are thinking the worst of us.  | My friend didn't text me back, I must have upset her. She probably finds me annoying and doesn't want to be my friend.                            | My friend might be busy or having a hard time. I know she likes me because we have so many great times together.                                |
| <b>Labelling</b><br>             | Using a single negative word to describe yourself when something doesn't go to plan.                         | I always mess up- I'm so STUPID.                                                                                                                  | Just because I made a mistake doesn't mean I'm completely stupid- everyone makes mistakes.                                                      |
| <b>Should Statements</b><br>     | This is when you tell yourself how you "should", "must", or "ought" to feel and behave.                      | I should only eat vegetables and fruit because I must lose weight.                                                                                | I choose to eat healthy because my body deserves it and I want to look after it.                                                                |

# Learning to Challenge Unhelpful Thinking



## What you should know about thought challenging

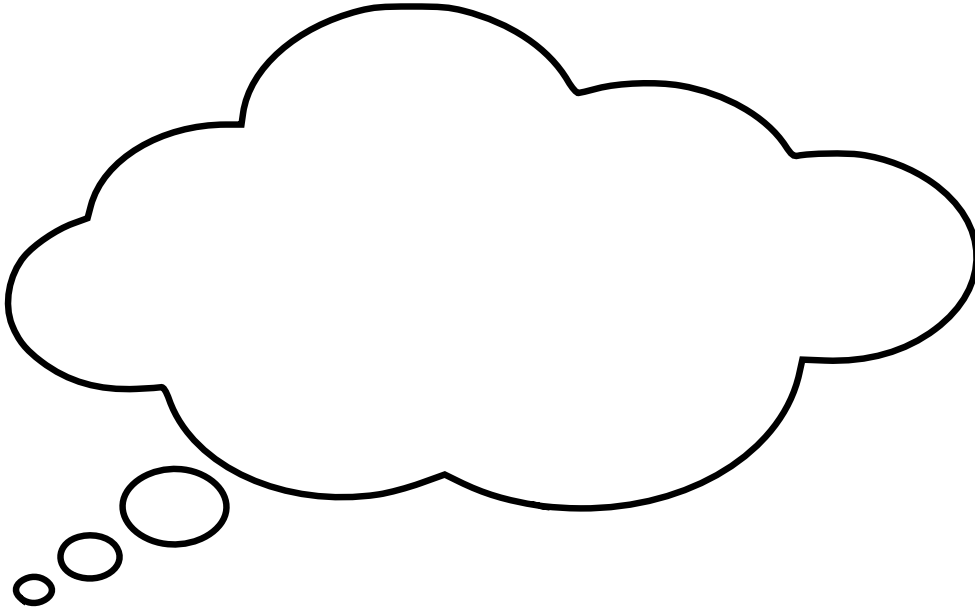
- Challenging unhelpful thinking can be difficult at first – often it feels forced and unnatural.
- Like any new skill, thought challenging gets easier with practice.
- You need to set aside time to practice thought challenging. It won't just happen automatically to begin with.
- It's often hardest to try thought challenging when you're feeling highly depressed or anxious.

Therefore, it is recommended that you first start practicing thought challenging when you feel less distressed. You could practice with someone you trust.

- Thoughts and unhelpful thinking styles are like habits; like any other habit, you need lots of practice to be able to change them effectively.
- It is important to be realistic with your expectations about this skill. You won't master it immediately; however, it will become easier (and more automatic) with practice.
- Thought challenging is not about thinking positively in a bad situation, it is about realistic thinking.

# Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts

Use the space in the bubble below to write or draw an unhelpful thought that you have about yourself or your life.



Now lets challenge it! Write your answers on a piece of paper.

1) Am I falling into a thinking trap?

2) What evidence do I have that proves this thought is true?

3) What evidence do I have that proves this thought is false?

4) What would I say to a friend who had this thought?

5) What would happen if I listened to that advice?

6) What is the worst thing that could happen if it was true? How could I cope?

7) Can you rephrase the unhelpful thought to make it helpful?

Do you feel that you were able to challenge that thought? Don't worry if you found it hard to begin with, remember this takes practise like any other skill.

# Weekly Targets

## Tracking and challenging unhelpful thoughts

The first target this week is to keep an unhelpful thought log. You could use the mood diary from Session 1 as a template.

Try and notice unhelpful thoughts and note them down to see if there is a certain time or place when you get more unhelpful thoughts. Remember the first step is noticing that you are doing it.



You may find this difficult to do at first. You could ask family members or friends to help point out when you may be stuck in a thought trap and ask them to challenge it with you.

Your second target: Now it's time to start challenging all of those unhelpful thoughts that have kept you feeling low for so long. When you have noticed a thought and written it down, try going through the list on Page 6 to help you break it down and challenge it. Remember unhelpful thinking is a habit and we want to break it.



# Information Page

If you are under 18, any professional working with you can refer you to Mind for further support. You can direct them to this website for more information:  
<https://cwrise.com/how-to-refer-to-services/>



The best people to talk to about getting a referral are:

- School
- GP
- Support Worker
- School Nurse



Please aim to leave at least 5 days before completing Session 4 of this workbook. This will give you time to track your unhelpful thinking patterns and learn to start challenging them.