

Mindfulness for Stress

Week 4 – Thoughts are not facts

Grounding Meditation

Who is John?

He was on his way to school

He was worried about the maths lesson

He was not sure he could control the class again today

After all...it's not part of a caretaker's duty!

You are feeling happy because you and a work colleague have just been praised for good work. Shortly afterward, you see another colleague in the hall and he or she rushes off quickly, saying he or she can't stop

What thoughts go through your mind?

You are feeling down because you've just had a quarrel with a colleague at work. Shortly afterward, you see another colleague in the hall and he or she rushes off quickly, saying he or she can't stop.

What thoughts go through your mind?

Theme for this week

Relating differently to thoughts

We can free ourselves when we see negative moods as passing states of mind,

and negative thinking as the distorted products of those mind states.

Thoughts are just thoughts and not facts!

Moods and feelings are a powerful lens through which we see the world.

This, in turn, shapes our patterns of thinking.

Thinking patterns often echo themes similar to the feelings that shape the mood we are in.

For example...

Thought = “I’m so useless at everything; I never finish anything...”

This thought poses a risk of being dragged down by a powerful waterfall of ruminations about failure and what it says about us as a person...



When feelings and thoughts 'mesh' together in this way, our thinking patterns re-create the feelings that shaped them in the first place.

These thinking patterns keep the echoed feelings going, as well as the close link between feelings and thoughts makes the thoughts seem very real!

So, what can we do?

We invite ourselves to focus directly on the feeling that gives birth to the thought:

Instead of getting tangled in thoughts, we explore the option of asking, “What is this I am feeling now, specifically, in this moment?”

When we do this, we may discover more feelings than were apparent earlier.

Focussing on the feelings that help drive the vicious cycle of thoughts may give us another place to stand...

**THE ABILITY TO SEE THEIR FORCE MORE CLEARLY
WITHOUT BEING DRAGGED DOWN BY THEM**

First step when feeling that thoughts are getting the better of you...

Stop or Pause

Take a few moments to ground yourself with your breathe

All or nothing thinking



Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

If I'm not perfect I have failed

Either I do it right or not at all

Over-generalising

"everything is always rubbish"
"nothing good ever happens"

Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

Mental filter



Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes

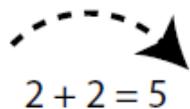
Disqualifying the positive



Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another

That doesn't count

Jumping to conclusions



There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:

- **Mind reading** (imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling** (predicting the future)

Magnification (catastrophising) & minimisation



Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

Emotional reasoning



Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.

I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot

should
must

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration

Labelling



Assigning labels to ourselves or other people

I'm a loser
I'm completely useless
They're such an idiot

Personalisation

"this is my fault"

Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault.

Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

Finding Alternative Thoughts

Unhelpful Thinking Habit	Alternative more balanced thought
Mental Filter 	<i>Am I only noticing the bad stuff? Am I filtering out the positives? Am I wearing those 'gloomy specs'? What would be more realistic?</i>
 Mind-Reading	<i>Am I assuming I know what others are thinking? What's the evidence? Those are my own thoughts, not theirs. Is there another, more balanced way of looking at it?</i>
Prediction 	<i>Am I thinking that I can predict the future? How likely is it that that might really happen?</i>
 Compare & despair	<i>Am I doing that 'compare and despair' thing? What would be a more balanced and helpful way of looking at it?</i>
Critical self 	<i>There I go, that internal bully's at it again. Would most people who really know me say that about me? Is this something that I am totally responsible for?</i>
 Shoulds and musts	<i>Am I putting more pressure on myself, setting up expectations of myself that are almost impossible? What would be more realistic?</i>
Judgements 	<i>I'm making an evaluation about the situation or person. It's how I make sense of the world, but that doesn't mean my judgements are always right or helpful. Is there another perspective?</i>
 Emotional Reasoning	<i>Just because it feels bad, doesn't necessary mean it is bad. My feelings are just a reaction to my thoughts – and thoughts are just automatic brain reflexes</i>
Mountains and molehills 	<i>Am I exaggerating the risk of danger? Or am I exaggerating the negative and minimising the positives? How would someone else see it? What's the bigger picture?</i>
 Catastrophising	<i>OK, thinking that the worst possible thing will definitely happen isn't really helpful right now. What's most likely to happen?</i>
Black and white thinking 	<i>Things aren't either totally white or totally black – there are shades of grey. Where is this on the spectrum?</i>
 Memories	<i>This is just a reminder of the past. That was then, and this is now. Even though this memory makes me <u>feel</u> upset, it's not <u>actually</u> happening again right now.</i>

