

CHALLENGING UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS

JO'S QUESTIONS + EIGHT STEP PROCESS

1. What is your unhelpful thought?

Writing down the unhelpful thought word-for-word as it appears in your mind will help you stay focused during this process.

2. What is the situation that causes or precedes your thought?

If you can recognise the situation or event that initiates your thought, you can make an effort to be more aware of who or what it is that triggers this thinking, and also be more alert when these times or interactions arise.

3. How does the thought make you feel?

There is undoubtedly a strong relationship between how we think and how we feel. Recognising the impact of your thought on your overall wellbeing is so valuable in understanding why challenging it is important, and how you may continue to suffer if you don't.

4. What evidence is there to suggest your thought is true?

List as many things as you can which suggest that the thought is true, focusing only on the facts.

5. What evidence is there to suggest your thought is not true?

Now list as many things as you can to suggest why the thought is not true.

6. Would you speak to a friend or loved one in this way?

If you would not speak to a friend or a partner this way, why should we treat ourselves so poorly?

7. Does the thought help or hinder the life you want to live?

At the end of the day, the truth of the thought does not matter. What matters is if the thought is getting in the way of you reaching your goals. If the thought doesn't make you feel good or act in a way that contributes to your ideal life, why should you accept it and allow it to reside in your mind? Knowing that a thought is not helpful is reason alone to strive towards replacing it.

8. What is a more balanced thought to replace the unhelpful one?

If you can come up with a more balanced and helpful thought to replace the unhelpful one, based solely on the evidence you have identified, when that nasty thought next arises you can acknowledge it, and then promptly challenge it with your new, balanced equivalent. If your new thought is surrounded by evidence it is likely to hold much greater weight in your mind than its mean 'ol counterpart.