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## Challenging Anxious Thoughts

Anxiety can be a healthy emotion—it forces us to focus on our problems, and work hard to solve them. But sometimes, anxiety grows out of control, and does just the opposite. It cripples our ability to solve problems. When this happens, irrational thoughts often play a role.

In this exercise, we will practice catching our irrational thoughts, and replacing them with rational alternatives. With enough practice, this will become a natural process that can help you manage anxiety.

Describe a common situation that triggers your anxiety.

example: "giving a speech in front of a crowd" or "driving in rush hour traffic"


Anxiety distorts our thinking by causing us to overestimate the likelihood of something going wrong, and imagine the potential consequences as worse than they really are. Sometimes, just taking a moment to think about these facts can help us recognize our irrational thoughts.

Imagine you are faced with the anxiety-producing situation from above. Describe the...

Worst outcome:
Best outcome:
Likely outcome:

Imagine the worst outcome comes true. Would it still matter...

1 week from now:
1 month from now:
1 year from now:

Usually, anxious thoughts focus on the worst possible outcomes, even when they aren't likely. For example, a person who is nervous about giving a speech might think: "I am going to forget everything and embarrass myself, and I'll never live it down".

As an outside observer, we know that an alternate, more rational thought might be: "My speech might only be OK, but if I do mess up, everyone will forget about it soon enough".

Using your own "worst outcome" and "likely outcome" from above, describe your...

**Preview**

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## 12 negative THOUGHTS holding you back

"We are addicted to our thoughts. We cannot change anything if we cannot change our thinking." [www.FB.com/TributetoStephenCovey](http://www.FB.com/TributetoStephenCovey)

### 1 "My past is indicative of my future."

- Failed attempts and mistakes are part of the growth process, valuable experiences.
- Being defeated is a temporary condition; giving up is what makes it permanent.

### 2 "I care what they think of me."

- Ignore the rude people who talk about you behind your back, exactly where they belong.
- True strength is being wise enough to walk away from the nonsense proudly.

### 3 "I'll do what makes me happy someday."

- Today is the oldest you've ever been and the youngest you will ever be again.
- The perfect moment to follow your values and pursue your own dreams is now.

### 4 "I can't," "It's too late," "I'm not good enough," etc.

- Our attitude shifts our sails and ultimately determines not only our final destination, but more importantly, the voyage and experiences along the way.

### 5 "There's so much that could go wrong."

- Stop being afraid of what could go wrong, and start thinking of what could go right.
- Be thankful for all positive things you have to fuel an even brighter tomorrow.

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Challenging Negative Thoughts
Directions: Use the following questions as a guide to challenge your negative thoughts.
1. Is this thought helpful? Explain.
2. Are my thoughts based on facts or are they just my opinion? Explain.
3. What evidence do I have that what I'm thinking is true?
4. What evidence do I have that my thoughts are false?
5. What other reasons could explain why this situation happened?
6. Am I jumping to conclusions? Explain.
7. On a scale of 0 to 10, 0 being not bad and 10 being really bad, how bad is this situation? Explain.
8. If my thoughts are true, what is the worst thing that could happen and how likely is it to happen?
9. If the worst did happen, how could I cope?

6 "I will never forgive you."

- Forgive them. You have learned about trust & being cautious when you open your heart.
- You are stronger now and better equipped to find the kind of love you deserve.

7 "I don't like them because they're broken."

- Be someone who builds and nurtures with an understanding, forgiving heart and looks for the best in people & leaves them a little stronger than before.
- Don't sum up a person's entire existence in one moment.

8 "I am too unhappy to make anyone else happy."

- Happiness is a boomerang. When you catch yourself feeling unhappy, doing something small that makes someone else happy. When they smile, it will be hard not to smile back.

9 "I can't trust anyone."

- We often keep our hearts closed because we don't trust ourselves to survive the pain again.
- We come to realize our true strength through hurt and sufferings.

10 "Everyone else is doing it, so it must be right."

- Live YOUR life.
- Never hide who you are.
- The only shame is to have shame.
- Stand up for what you believe in.

11 "It will never get better," / "It will never get worse."

- Appreciate every great moment.
- Take one day at a time.
- All moments, good or bad, would last forever.

12 "I don't have time to dream."

- The real tragedy in life lies in having no dream to reach.
- You don't have to see the whole staircase; you just have to take one step at a time.

### Thought Log

What is a good way to deal with depression. How to challenge depressive thoughts. What are some depressed quotes. What are some depressive thoughts

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