



## **Anxietylab.org**

### **3-4-5 Program Course**

#### **Metacognition (CBT)**

#### **Key Idea: thinking about how I think**

**People have proven that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy ("metacognition") can be extremely effective.**

Seeing the mechanics of how we respond to things can help guide us in changing our habits.

#### **Thinking about thinking**

Often explained as "thinking about thinking", this is a vital skill.

We all learned how to 'listen' to the body and understand signals of hunger, thirst, fatigue, need for affection or warmth or pain relief. The same kind of self-awareness of our thinking should be a skill everyone has. Listening to and regulating our thoughts and feelings should be a normal part of our day. But we don't think of our thinking as something to be monitored and 'regulated'. Don't we all simply respond to every thought as if it is something important to follow up on? Eventually, most people learn that they do not have to listen to every thought. With experience, we learn which thoughts can be dismissed as random noise, and which thoughts to pay attention to and act on.

Increased self-awareness of how we think and how we may be thinking unrealistically or negatively is one of the best tools a person can develop to avoid unnecessary bouts of depression and anxiety.

The psychology industry professionals call it Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. It is used as a standard method to refocus negative thinking in a more positive direction by teaching each individual how to recognize and change destructive thinking habits.

This process is not only effective for pin-pointing and reducing harmful thinking habits, it also has other benefits such as increased working memory and enhanced focus abilities.

## **TO BEGIN:**

Try to NOTICE your feelings and thoughts as you have them. This takes some concentration to be relaxed enough to notice how your body feels and what your mind is thinking in each situation.

Whatever your problem is, slowing down enough to LISTEN to your thoughts and follow them to their source will help make clear what you're going through and why. This is usually done with a therapist but can be done alone.

Most people can learn to listen closely to their own thoughts and ask themselves all the probing questions about why and how and when and who. Always connecting your feelings to your life experience... "Where are these feelings coming from? What are they related to? What is making me respond like that?"

This is the detective work we do to pinpoint our own problem. This is also where the challenge of coming to terms with our own wrong thinking comes in. It is possibly one of the most difficult things for a human being to do: realize we are simply wrong about something, accept that we are wrong and change how we think.

For many, it will turn out that their thinking is not the problem but rather coming to terms with past experiences. In that case, CBT is also helpful with the coming to terms process as it enables a person to see their past relationships in a new way by thinking of them in a new way.

## **Skills to develop:**

- \* ability to recognize your own thought process
- \* ability to regulate your own thought process
- \* ability to recognize negative thinking habits
- \* ability to devise a strategy for changing those thinking habits

- \* ability to recognize if the strategy is working

- \* ability to change strategy to something else,