

Challenging Negative Thoughts for Effective Decision Making

Some exercises based on Cognitive Behavioral techniques to help you slow down overthinking, change your habits and challenge negative thoughts.

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Challenging Negative Thoughts -Exercise 1^I

Key Concept: based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy^{II}:

1. Recognize and Isolate the Thought
2. Write Down the Thought
3. Identify the Distress Level
4. Identify the Cognitive Distortion
5. Challenge & Reframe Your Thoughts
6. Reevaluate the Distress Level

1

Write down the exact thought that you just had.

2

On a scale of 1 to 5, how distressing was this thought for you

3

What cognitive bias or biases is this thought associated with? Why

4

Write down three ways in which you can reframe this thought more positively.

5

On a scale of 1 to 5, how much distress do these new thoughts cause you? Rank them by order of least distressing to most distressing.

Source:

- I. Challenging Automatic Negative Thoughts, n.d.
- II. <https://www.mindmypeelings.com/blog/challenging-cognitive-distortions>

Challenging Negative Thoughts -Exercise 2^I

Positive Replacement Thoughts ^{II}:

1. Write any Automatic Negative Thoughts that you can think of in the left column.
2. Next, consider each in turn and see if you can challenge it with a Positive Replacement Thought in the right-hand column.



The Negative/Biased Automatic Thought	The Positive Replacement Thought

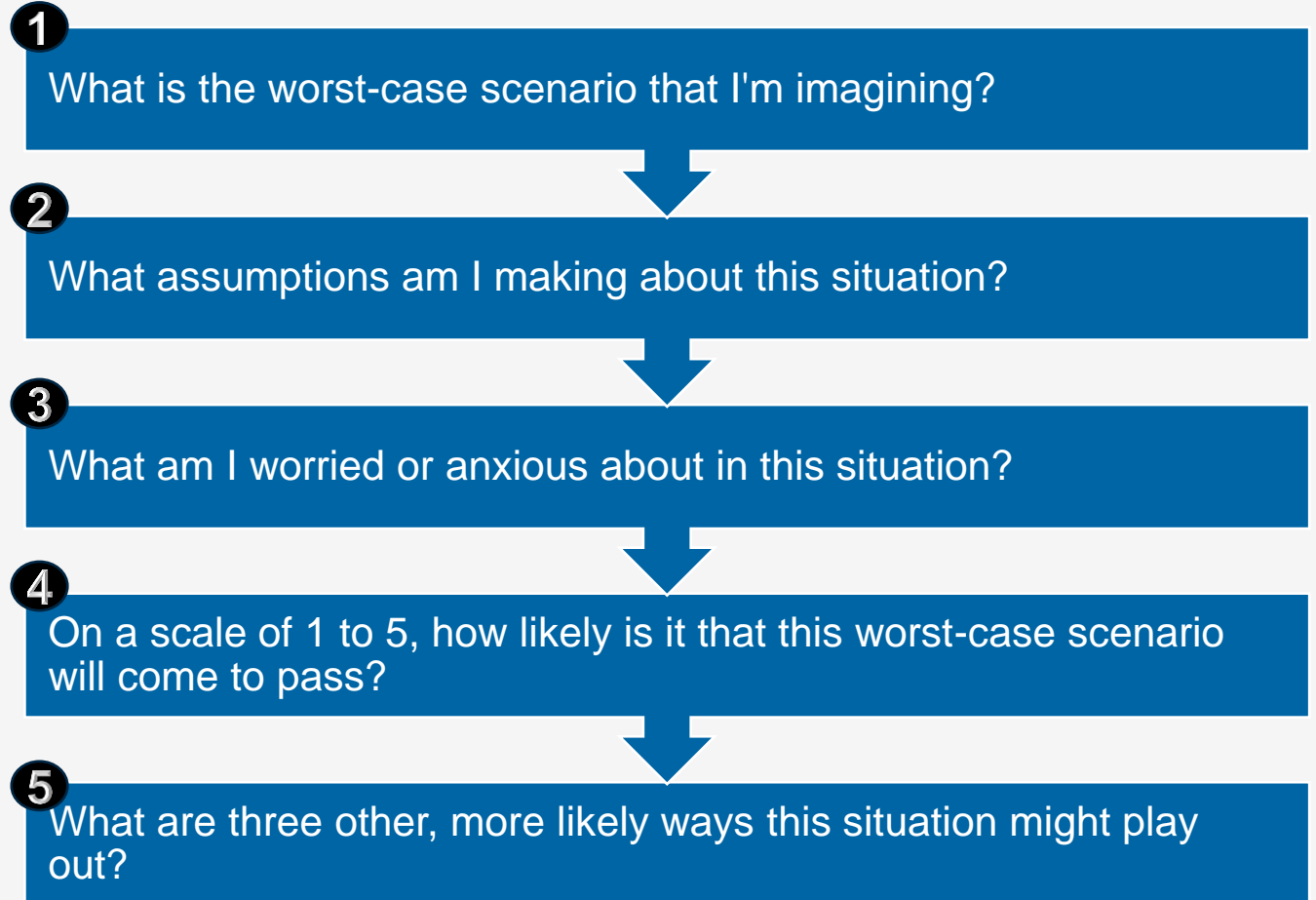
Source:

- I. Positive Replacement Thought Worksheet (Selva, 2018):
- II. <https://positive.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/Positive-Replacement-Thoughts-Worksheet.pdf>

Challenging Negative Thoughts -Exercise 3^I

What-If Exercise ^I:

- What if you're more prone to overthinking and always jumping to worst-case scenarios? In such cases, you can turn to the What-If exercise.



Source:

- I. What-If exercise (Ackerman, 2018):

Challenging Negative Thoughts -Exercise 4^I

Rain Method ^I:

- Recognize your thought.
- Allow it.
- Investigate it.
- Nurture it.

1 Write down what thought you are having and name it.

2 Wait to see if it changes. Sit with it for a moment and observe what emotions it awakens in you.
Name the emotions that it evokes.

3 Ask yourself where this thought is coming from. Is it based on an experience?
Does it stem from the fear of failure? Where did this type of thought first emerge? Write down the story of its origin.

4 Approach the thought and yourself with self-compassion.
How would you respond to a friend who thought and felt as you do now? What would you say to them? Write down your responses and be honest.

Challenging these thoughts further

- Do I know with absolute, 100% certainty that this thought is an undeniable fact?
- How?

- What's my reaction like, both emotionally and behaviorally, when I believe in this thought?
- How did I react the last time I had this thought?

- What kind of person would I be if I believed in the exact opposite of this?
- How would I feel?
- How would I act? What would I change?

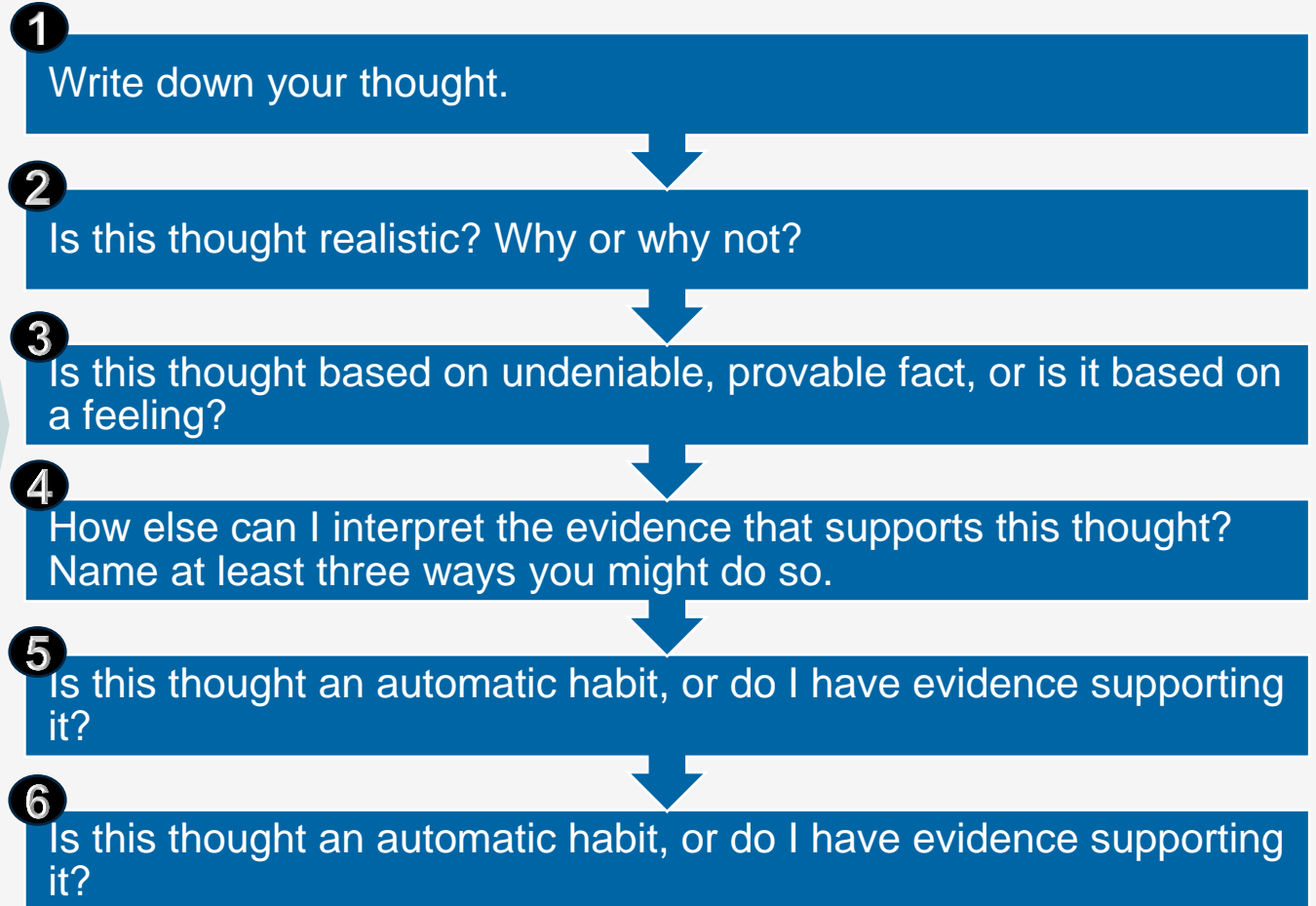
Source:

I. RAIN Method (Reframing thoughts, n.d.):

Challenging Negative Thoughts -Exercise 5^I

Accentuating the effects of RAIN method through Socratic Method ^I:

- Changing your perspective on your thoughts, proving to yourself that they're not true, and see how they impact you. To accentuate this affect from the RAIN method (prev. slide), you can also use the Socratic Method



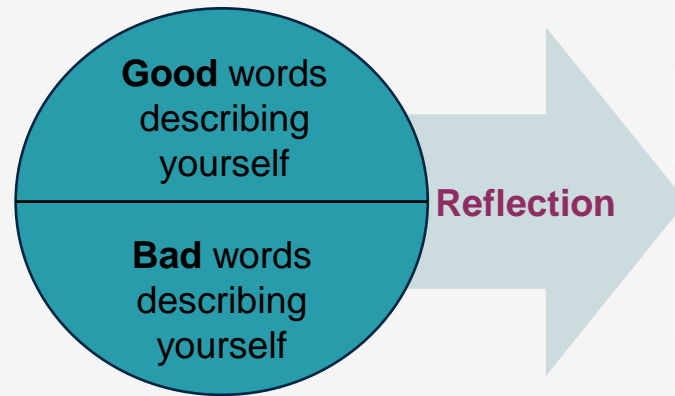
Source:

- I. Socratic Questioning method (Ackerman, 2018):

Challenging Negative Thoughts -Exercise 6^I

Tackling negative thoughts through Circle Activity I :

- Draw a circle on a blank page
- Draw a line through its middle, bisecting it in two.
- In the upper half of the circle, you write all the good words you'd use to describe yourself.
- In the lower half, you write all the bad words you'd use to describe yourself.



How did you feel recalling the positive words you use for yourself?



How did you feel about the negative words?



Read each word again and note the feelings they give rise to.



Try to recall where they came from. Is it a word you first used to describe yourself or is it a word someone else used to describe you?



Does it come from a specific memory?



What kinds of events or circumstances trigger this word and the feelings associated with it?

Source:

I. (Circle Activity for Negative Thoughts, n.d.)

Challenging Negative Thoughts -Exercise 7¹

Tackling negative thoughts through Reality Testing ¹:

- A lot of the negative thoughts we have about ourselves are biased and simply untrue. However, we all too often take them as undeniable facts. To question the reality of a specific thought, you can use "Reality Testing"

Source:

1. Sigmund Freud, n.d.

Write down the thoughts you just had.



Consider the thought from every possible angle. Is it an undeniable truth or can it change, depending on how you look at it?



Consider alternate ways you can interpret a given situation. Try to take other people's perspectives into account as you do this.

More interpretations for more perspective. Write each interpretation down



When was the last time you thought this and had this emotional reaction? What seems to trigger them? Can you spot any patterns?

Ask yourself how you emotionally respond to that thought.



Ask yourself whether you may be minimizing or magnifying your emotions in any way.



Remind yourself that just because you feel a certain way about something doesn't mean the way you interpret it is true.



Do they agree that your interpretation of events is how they really are or is it just one way of looking at things?

Ask a friend what they objectively think about an event, reaction, thought, or situation

THANK YOU