

Replacing 'What if' Statements

Our emotions and behaviours can be changed by identifying irrational beliefs and swapping them with more relational ones (Ivtzan et al., 2016)

Like Albert Ellis's ABCDE model, the following process leads to a more positive, beneficial belief system that reduces the anxiety associated with catastrophizing.

Work through the following steps individually with a client or in a group:

1. Identify and understand the catastrophic consequences, i.e., the 'what if's'

- What are you afraid will happen?
What if I don't do well in my job interview?
- What is the worst thing that could happen?
What if I don't get offered the job?

2. Replace "what if" questions with factual statements

- Change the "what if" questions into clear statements

I did not do well in the job interview.

I did not get the job.

3. Use a selection of the following questions to understand and challenge the truth or likelihood of each statement:

Have you been in a similar situation before? What was the result?

What was different, and what was the same?

What are the best and worst outcomes, and what is most likely?

Why am I so sure that it will go wrong?

What evidence is there to confirm this statement, and what evidence is there to refute it?

What would I tell a friend?

Does this thought help me or hurt me?

What would change if I replaced this thought with something more positive?

4. What balanced thoughts reflect the evidence you discovered in step three:

- Based on what you have learned in step three, how could you make each 'what if' question into an accurate statement?

I am well prepared for the interview.

I have the experience and skills they have advertised.

I usually receive positive feedback from interviews.