

Thought Review

In order to effectively identify thinking traps and neutralize their effects, there are several steps you will need to take. Using this Thought Review method, review each step in the process. You will move through identifying a trigger situation through challenging it and sensing a feeling of improvement. The model contains an example of a negative event (comment made during a staff meeting) and its associated features. Note how the negative thought (thinking trap) is identified and neutralized through a replacement thought. This “defusing” leads not only to a more realistic perspective, but also to feelings of optimism. The steps in the technique are as follows:

<p>Step 1: The Situation</p>	<p>Briefly describe the situation that led to your unpleasant feelings. This will help you remember the situation later if you review your notes. <i>Ex: I said something inappropriate during a staff meeting. I felt embarrassed, and later I began to worry about it and felt anxious thinking about it</i></p>
<p>Step 2: Initial Thought</p>	<p>What was the first thought to come to your mind? This was probably a subconscious or automatic thought that you have experienced before in similar situations. <i>I feel stupid. I shouldn't have said that. I worry that people think I'm ignorant or don't know how to act professionally. I hate this feeling. I'm always seem to be clumsy in groups and making dumb mistakes.</i></p>
<p>Step 3: Consider the Consequences</p>	<p>Why do you want to change your thinking? Consider the short-term and long-term consequences if you don't change. Look at the psychological, physical, professional, and relationship consequences. <i>If I keep thinking like this, my negativity will harm my relationships. It could harm my self-esteem if I continue thinking like this. I'll become exhausted and maybe ill. This is not helpful.</i></p>
<p>Step 4: Challenge the Initial Thought</p>	<p>How helpful has this thinking been for you in the past? What facts do you have that support or challenge your initial thought? What strengths do you have that you may have overlooked? What advice would you give someone else in the same situation? <i>I feel stressed when I try to be perfect. I'm my own worst enemy and really hard on myself. I don't have to be perfect. People who always beat themselves up are boring. I prefer people who are kind to themselves. In the past, people have been interested in what I have said. I am not this critical of other people who make occasional mistakes.</i></p>

Step 5: Negative Thinking/Thinking Traps	<p>Summarize the kind of negative thinking behind your initial thought. Identify one or more types: Black/White Thinking, Catastrophizing, Labeling, Mind Reading, Should Statements, etc.</p> <p><i>I was Mind-Reading, Labeling and Filtering.</i></p>
Step 6: Background	<p>Is there a history to this type of thinking? When did you first have thoughts like this? How deep do the roots go? Do you know anyone else who thinks like this? How successful has this thinking been for them?</p> <p><i>I can hear my parent saying that I'm a failure and that I'll never amount to anything.</i></p>
Step 7: Alternative Thinking	<p>Now that you understand your negative thinking, look for a healthier way of thinking about the situation. How could you have handled it differently?</p> <p><i>I don't have to be perfect and I can't be perfect. Nobody is. It's human to make mistakes. I have some strengths that people appreciate. I want to get rid of this negative thinking. I feel better when I am kind to myself.</i></p>
Step 8: Positive Belief and Affirmation	<p>Write down a positive affirmation that reflects this more helpful approach. Choose something that can be used as your motto or reminder when you encounter similar situations.</p> <p><i>Everybody makes mistakes. Be kind to yourself.</i></p>
Step 9. Action Plan	<p>What can you do if this situation arises again? Knowing your tendencies, how can you prepare for the situation? Write a list of strengths you bring to the situation? What can you do if you fall back on old habits?</p> <p><i>The next time I make a mistake, I won't dwell on the negatives. I will remind myself of my past successes and talents. I will remember to be kind to myself and to others. I will acknowledge my human nature and move on.</i></p>
Step 10. Improvement	<p>Do you feel slightly better or more optimistic? This step reinforces the idea that if you change your thinking, you will change your life.</p> <p><i>I feel better, more optimistic, hopeful, and ready to face life's challenges and hassles.</i></p>
<p>Adapted From: Melemis, S. (2017). How to Do a Thought Review.</p>	