

Thought Records

When you are depressed, you often have trained yourself to think in a negative manner. When something happens in your life that is bad and makes you feel uncomfortable, or emotional, you may think it has to be your fault or the world is against you and you can never win. These feelings control you and they dominate your thoughts, and in doing so they stop you from living your life.

When you are in this negative state of mind, you believe that you are one hundred percent correct in your thinking and that there is no way you could be wrong. You think this way because you feel that being in control and knowing that you are right will protect you from these things when they happen, but allowing these thoughts actually grows your depression. You are separating yourself from the outside world, internalizing your emotions, and not rationalizing them out.

“It is this way because I said so, and there is no way I am wrong!”

When you think this way, you are using one-sided thinking. I like to say that the blinders go up and the world closes in, and you see only what you want to see. It is very hard and scary to acknowledge this because any other solution to your problem is just totally out of reach and absolutely wrong.

The truth is, there are a number of different ways to look at things in our lives, you have to learn how! Just like riding a bike, playing a musical instrument, painting etc. We don't roll out of bed and become the greatest at everything we do in life, it takes practice. Before we know it though, we just ride that bike, we play that guitar, we just paint the picture. It is the same when we start to change our negative way of living. We have to learn to change our thoughts and how we react to emotion when it hits us.

Thought records are a way of proving yourself wrong. You write down your thoughts at that time, acknowledging what is making your moods/emotions go a certain way, and then for each line you write you counter it with a balanced thought that proves that what you're thinking is actually wrong.

What do thought records look like!

Date (We always have dates when we write)

Title (The title is going to give a value to what you are experiencing, we give it a title because it means something to you, it has had an effect on you and now we will give it the time it deserves)

Situation (What happened, a short description of this event)

Moods/emotions we feel use % to rate the intensity 0 to 100%

Now write freely, write the emotions you feel and why you feel them. (After each line you write take the time to now counter the thoughts you have. In brackets under each thought you have)

Mood after you have done your work using %

Easer said then done right!

Example of a thought record

July 6/2013

I went to therapy

Situation

I went to therapy and it was going well. We tried to create a safe place. I broke down crying and was just a complete mess.

Mood:: Scared 80%, Sad 100%, Distressed 100%

Thoughts::

I'm useless I will never get better. I'm better off dead.

(I'm not useless. I passed level 2 training at work. I can do a thought record. I'm a good father and husband. I help people every day)

Why could I not do this? I feel I can never do anything right.

(I do things right all the time. I do all the shipping and receiving at work. They trust me with that and I do it well. I'll be able to do create a safe place next time)

Mood:: relaxed 100%

Let's break it down and have some fun!

July 2/2013

Moe going poop on a walk

SIT:: I took my dog Moe for a walk. It was a sunny day, and we got to a corner when Moe went up to a tree and took a poop; I had no bag on me to pick up his mess.

What emotions do you think I felt?

Moods:: Embarrassed 100%, Ashamed 100%

Thoughts

I am ashamed of myself because Moe pooped on a tree, and I don't have a bag to clean it up. The owner of the house is on his front porch, watching, and I am so ashamed of myself for not having a bag.

(I shouldn't be ashamed. It is a nice sunny day, I was in a hurry to get outside and forgot to bring a bag with me. There is no shame in what has happened here at all. I am human. I forget things.)

This is horrible. This man is watching me and I don't have a bag. He knows I live around the corner, and now he will see me all the time and think of me as the guy who never cleans up his dog's poop! How will I ever walk down this street again? What a loser I am.

(I am not a loser, and I can just come back and pick up the poop later. I am not a bad man. All I did was leave some dog poop beside a tree. I can walk down the street anytime I like. Who cares if one day I didn't clean up poop right away? I'll come back.)

Mood:Relaxed 100%

A Positive Thought Record

Every tool that we will work on in this program will have two sides to it. The one side where it is used to stop a negative thought or feeling we have about ourselves and a positive side where we learn to see the good things in our lives and celebrate them. I came up with this way of doing things because every tool that was given to me in therapy was only used for when I was having negative thoughts or reacting in a negative manner.

But what about the good days? How come there wasn't a tool to rewire my brain to celebrate the good days? To reinforce that I deserved to have fun times in my life, without what I like to call the yeh but moment? That moment when second guess that you should be having that good experience! So much time was being given to the negative why not dedicate time to the positive? So I flipped each tool on its head so they can give you the same effect but in a positive way!

Example of a positive thought record

Aug 2 /2016

Took a day off work

Happy 100% relaxed 100%

Today I took a day off work to relax and enjoy myself.

Today I woke up and I sat on my back porch, I had my morning coffee. I sat and watch the birds fly around my back yard, listened to my pond and watched my fish swim around.

(I am more than happy to take a day to myself and start it off so peacefully I deserve to be happy and enjoy my life)

After I finished my coffee I wrote in my journal and enjoyed doing it.

(I take pride in using my tools, I love that I have writing as special place were I can write about all the things that happen in my life)

I also went for a nice long run. While I ran I got lost in the moment I looked at my surroundings, practiced mindfulness and reached a deep meditative state.

(I love to run it is one of my favourite things today I get lost in the moment and allow my self to be free and happy)

I am very proud 100% of the fact that I am able to completely enjoy a day off work!! Something that I could never do before.

(I am able to enjoy life like everyone else in the world, I deserve to be happy and I deserve to have a day to myself and enjoy my life, I only have one life, so I can make my own happiness)

What a Positive thought Record looks like

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Situation(What happened, a short description of this event)

Moods/ Emotions (how strong they are, using %)

Positive experience you had,Write about the happy experience, (Then in brackets below, reinforce the positive experience, prove to your self that you deserve to feel happy!)

Write as many things down as you feel. Sometimes there are only a couple of thoughts to write down, other times there are way more. There are no rules, the more positive examples and reinforcements the better!)

Moods after you have reinforced your good experience. Be sure to use % again. (This also can be a statement not just a single word, but use % at the end)

How often should you do thought records

This standard thought record layout should be practiced everyday, over and over again. You will bring your journal with you everywhere you go. My journal is always with me, never out of reach, whether I am at work or even out to dinner. I make no exceptions to the rule on this because proving my negative thoughts wrong is a lifelong journey for me and I enjoy doing it, and over time you will as well.

The assignment for this section is to write at least two thought records per day, everyday. You are by no means limited to only two a day, write more if you have to; in fact, I strongly suggest doing so. This is your chance to organize your thoughts and feelings. Take the time to treat yourself with love and care, because that is what you are learning to do with these thought records. Spend time adding up the good! Do positive thought records as much as you can, the more time you spend time adding up the good the more comfortable you will feel writing about your experiences and emotions. You will start to feel about doing it and you will start to feel good about feeling good!

Quick Thought Records

Quick thought records are used when a situation happens in your life and you notice right away that it has upset you and know what the trigger is. Using this type of thought record can be the most rewarding because you are going after the thought right away and proving it wrong instantly. This makes you feel good about yourself and builds pride in the fact that you are progressing in your thought process. You have the ability to assess any situation, and you are now able to just write it out without any second guessing.

Here's what they look like

Date

Situation

Body

Thought//Counter thought (2 lines separating the thought with the counter thought right away to stop the negative and start the positive!)

Solution to your problem! (New)

EXAMPLE!

June 15/ 2013/

Alex called and cancelled on a night out

My friend Alex and I have had plans for over a week to go out. He just called to tell me he can't go. He was in such a hurry that he didn't even give me an answer for why he is not going out with me. All he said was I will call you tomorrow.

Does he not like me any more? // No, don't be silly- he is a long-time friend.

Did I do something to piss him off in some way? // I haven't seen him since we made the plans a week ago. I couldn't have pissed him off.

No one ever likes hanging out with anymore, I must be the problem here. // No, Alex was in a hurry and didn't have time to talk, maybe he has a family crisis? His mother has been ill and maybe she isn't doing well and Alex had to go to be with her.

(Now the solution to your problem)

I will wait for him to call tomorrow and explain why he had to cancel. I can still go out, so maybe I will call another friend or go by myself? There is no reason why I should stay home on a Friday night.

Let's look at it with out the // counter thought

Does he not like me any more?

Did I do something to piss him off in some way?

No one ever likes hanging out with anymore, I must be the problem here.

This is what a downward spiral looks like! We have all thought this way at some time in our lives, but there are all ways different ways of thinking and looking at things, this tool helps us to quickly change our thought! And find a solution to the problem, instead of allowing it to bring us down we turn it around and see it as an opportunity to find a new perspective and feel good about it!

A Quick Positive Thought Record

We can also use this very same tool to add up the good things in our lives. The same way that we learn to do a positive thought record. Adding up the good is a great way to change our mind sets! And it is fun to actually feel good! It feels good to feel good about positive things in our lives!

Here's the layout for a Positive Quick Thought Record

Date

Situation

Body

Thought//Reinforcement

(2 lines separating the thought to reinforce that we deserve the positive!)

Your feelings about doing something we love.

Example of a Quick Positive Thought Record

July 6, 2019

Playing in the waves on the beach

I enjoyed playing in the waves at the beach with my son while on vacation

I enjoyed playing in the waves//I love water, I love laughing and body surfing, I am never too old to enjoy life!

I enjoy making life long memories with my son, these memories are priceless, I am very proud of myself for feeling good about this.

How To Use Quick thought Records

Practice doing quick thought records and positive quick thought records everyday. They don't have to be long, they just have to be helpful. Sometimes you may only need to do one and sometimes you may need to do ten but sooner or later it will become natural and fun!

This part of the creative writing course is very important and is the basis for everything else we are going to work on.. Learn to love writing in your journal and do it everyday. Journaling can become an everyday event in your life.

How to use these new tools

*Be mindful of what is going on, both physically and emotionally!

*Write every morning, it only takes 5 minutes.

*Write at lunch

*Write before bed

*Find the tool that best suits you in the moment

*Don't feel handcuffed by your journal, make it your friend.

*Get creative and use an APP. Diary app on your phone. Memoires, the diary

Spend time adding up the good!