

## A Thought Replacement Exercise - a CBT worksheet/handout

Think different, feel different, and behave different - with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)...

A simple exercise to build awareness and self-management - catch and challenge negative automatic thinking, and replace with healthy alternative thinking...



**What are you thinking? Catch exaggerated negative thoughts and beliefs:** Keep a journal, taking notes of the actual thoughts you are thinking when you're in a situation that upsets you and ends in self-limiting and self-sabotaging behaviour. Example: 'It's going to be awful, I'm going to embarrass myself...' - (and then avoiding an event). Drill down, look for context...

**Thought Stopping:** build awareness - catch yourself when you are thinking dramatic negative automatic thoughts - you can stop them mid-stream by saying to yourself **"STOP"**, **"NOPE"**. You might also **wear a rubber band or elastic bracelet around your wrist**, giving it a little twang each time you notice you are allowing negative thinking to take over your head in a never-ending loop. It will make you more aware of how often, and in what situation, you are having the negative thoughts - it will give you a physical association routine to deliberately challenge and change your thinking.



**Challenge the negative thought through journalling:** Dispute the thoughts and beliefs - examine them to see if they're valid. 'What is the evidence for this? Is there evidence against it? Is there another way to look at it?'. Example: 'Actually, that's negative predicting, I don't actually know what's going to happen, all I can do is my best, maybe I'll be a bit anxious, I can cope with that if it happens, and it might not happen, I was okay last week at that other event even though I tortured myself before it with this kind of thinking. It costs me too much, what is another evidence based, clear way, to look at this situation....'

### Summary: thought-stop, reappraise, and reframe!

Note the distorted self-talk – stop it in its tracks – examine it for evidence – and if you decide it is irrational and unhelpful, replace it with alternative healthy thinking - consciously and deliberately. Here is an example:

Self-talk	Rational Reframe Replacement
Nobody likes me	That's not a true statement. My family like me, and I have my friend from work and my friend from school. And I got on well with many other people now that I think of it. Also, not everybody will adore and admire me in this life. I accept that. It's the same for everybody. Also, if somebody does think little of you, you don't have to agree with it ...
It's going to be awful, I'm going to embarrass myself...	Actually, that's fortune telling, I don't know what's going to happen, all I can do is my best, maybe I'll be a bit anxious, I can cope with that if it happens, and it might not happen, I was okay last week at that other ...
I can't cope...	That's a bit silly. If I 'couldn't cope' I'd drop down dead or burst into flames, yet here I am. It's more true to say that I have problems coping, and I wish I didn't have to cope, and that I'm doing my best. Accepting that I can't cope as true only maximises my discomfort, and if I believe it I'll avoid things...

Try it yourself! Check out my blog at [iVeronicaWalsh.wordpress.com](http://iVeronicaWalsh.wordpress.com) – for free CBT resources