

The Depression Thinking Checklist CBT Handout

This iVeronicaWalsh.wordpress.com CBT handout was posted on July 13, 2023 and tagged [cbt depression exercise](#), [cbt for depression handout](#), [depression thoughts examples](#), [reframe depression self talk](#), [veronica walsh depression cbt resource](#).



What are you thinking? How are you explaining the world to yourself? Have you 'gone dark'?

There are many reasons for us to view the world through a gloomy grey lens – life can be very stressful for many of us – and of course we are going to respond to negative events with a negative emotional and physical response – but, even with that, (or *especially* with that!), there are

ways to manage our mental health through building awareness and regulation of our 'self-talk' – to assess if we have developed an exaggerated automatic unhelpful style of explaining the world to ourselves.

Identify where you might have a distorted self-talk style of 'depression thinking' through these examples – and consider how accepting the exaggerated negative self-talk without any challenge causes you to feel and behave. Think about your thinking...

- I can't cope.
- I'll never be happy.
- Nobody really loves me.
- Nobody really likes me.
- I am alone in this.
- I don't have any willpower.
- I'll never be successful.
- I don't have any patience.
- I never get it right, so there's no point in trying.
- I never know what to say.
- I'm stupid.
- Life is too hard.
- I'm ugly.
- Life is not fair.
- I bet they're talking about me.
- Things are just going to get worse.
- I can't really take care of myself.
- I have a horrible personality.
- No matter how hard I try, people aren't happy.
- I'm not normal.
- I'm always scared
- I'm always confused
- I'm wasting my life.
- I'm selfish.
- I get my feelings hurt easily.
- I can't express my feelings.
- I'll never find what I really want.
- I can't really get close to people.
- I am worthless.
- I'm not nice.
- I'm boring.
- People are horrible.
- People are fake.
- People only like toxic people.
- Everybody uses me.
- Things will never get better.
- I'm an oddball and I don't fit in.
- It's all my fault.
- Bad things always happen to me.

- I can't think of anything that would be fun.
- I'll never get over this depression.
- I'm broken.
- People don't give real friendship.
- Things are so messed up that worrying about them is useless.
- Anybody who thinks I'm nice doesn't know the real me.
- I'm afraid to imagine what my life will be like in ten years.
- I hate my friends.
- My family are awful.
- I'm screwed.

Are these kind of thoughts and beliefs 100% correct and rational? Or are they distorted and exaggerated? Are they grey and hopeless? Are they over the top? Are they healthy or unhealthy? Helpful or unhelpful? How does accepting this binary thinking make you feel and behave? What would you advise somebody you love if they were talking about themselves and their world this way?

Language matters. Build awareness and self-regulation of your self-talk with CBT by correcting and reframing it, becoming your own compassionate best friend and support – it is proven to help change how you feel and behave.

e.g. "Example of new self-talk:

It's not true that 'I can't cope', and when I say that it maximises my discomfort and can become a self-fulfilling prophecy where I literally choose not to cope – it's more true to say that I find it hard to cope, and that I wish I didn't have to cope, but I do cope, even if it's badly sometimes. And I'm working on my coping skills. Everything I've done has been based on what I was thinking and feeling at the time – I did my best, and I'm changing how I think and feel and my best will get better... I am of value and worth. There are lots of lovely things in this world for me right now, and in the future."

Become your own best friend and your own therapist by thinking differently. It is important to do so consciously and deliberately in order to build this skill.

The following are examples of new self-talk to counter depression distortions – create your own, in your unique voice and style, with true affirmations that apply to you and your life:

- Instead of saying "I can't cope," reframe it as "I find it challenging to cope, but I can seek support and learn effective coping strategies."
- Instead of saying "I'll never be happy," reframe it as "Happiness is attainable, and I can work towards improving my well-being and my life experience."
- Instead of saying "Nobody really loves me," reframe it as "I'm going to work on figuring out who the people are in my life who care about me and appreciate my presence in their lives. And there are always opportunities to connect with new people or build on relationships I already have."
- Instead of saying "Nobody really likes me," reframe it as "There are individuals who genuinely like and appreciate me for who I am, and I can't control those who don't, but I can work on influencing them to think differently."

- Instead of saying “I am alone in this,” reframe it as “Although I may feel alone at times, there are resources and supportive people and communities available to me if I can talk myself into moving towards them.”
- Instead of saying “I don’t have any willpower,” reframe it as “I have the ability to cultivate my willpower and develop self-discipline.”
- Instead of saying “I’ll never be successful,” reframe it as “Success is subjective, and I can work towards achieving my own personal goals and definitions of success.”
- Instead of saying “I don’t have any patience,” reframe it as “Patience is a skill that I can practice and develop over time.”
- Instead of saying “I never get it right, so there’s no point in trying,” reframe it as “It’s not true that I have never gotten anything right in life. I have gotten plenty of things ‘right’. Anyway, mistakes are a natural part of learning and growth, and I can keep learning by experience and doing my best.”
- Instead of saying “I never know what to say,” reframe it as “I have valuable thoughts and ideas to contribute to conversations if I decide to and feel comfortable enough to.”
- Instead of saying “I’m stupid,” reframe it as “I have unique strengths and areas for growth, and intelligence is not solely defined by one’s perceived shortcomings – I’m beating myself up, everybody is of value and worth, including me.”
- Instead of saying “Life is too hard,” reframe it as “Life presents challenges, but I find it hard to cope right now, but I can build more resilience to cope well, and to be present and to experience moments of joy.”
- Instead of saying “I’m ugly,” reframe it as “Beauty is subjective, and I possess qualities that make me attractive in my own way, everybody does.”
- Instead of saying “Life is not fair,” reframe it as “While life may have its unfair moments, I can focus on making positive changes and seeking fairness where I can.”
- Instead of saying “I bet they’re talking about me,” reframe it as “I really don’t know what people might be saying about me, I’m guessing, and it’s entirely possible I’m wrong – and, even if somebody does think little of me, I don’t have to agree with it. I have the opportunity to reinvent myself with others every day through my attitude and behaviour...”
- I am of value!

Review and reframe to clean the language up and strip it of hyperbole and drama.

WRITE IT DOWN to *learn by discovery*, catch and examine your thinking, and design new evidence based compassionate and rational self-talk instead, to use every day. Build the skill, and see if it gives you better outcomes to change your understanding and responses to stressors.

Extra notes:

When life becomes overwhelming and it feels like the weight of the world is on our shoulders, it's easy to believe that we simply can't cope. However, it's important to remember that this belief can amplify our discomfort and hinder our ability to navigate challenges with resilience. Instead of falling into the trap of thinking we *can't* cope, it's more accurate to acknowledge that coping can be difficult at times. It's natural to wish that we didn't have to face these hurdles, but the reality is that we do. Even when we struggle to cope, it's essential to remind ourselves that we are capable of finding ways to manage and grow.

Every decision we make and every action we take is driven by our thoughts and emotions. Sometimes, despite our best efforts, coping may not come easily. But the beauty of the human brain lies in our capacity to adapt, learn, and evolve. We can consciously work on improving our coping skills, seeking support when needed, and nurturing a moderate mindset. It's a process that takes time and patience, but with each step forward, we empower ourselves to handle life's challenges more effectively.

Remember, you are not defined by your struggles. Regardless of how well or poorly you cope in a given situation, it doesn't diminish your inherent value and worth as a person. You have unique strengths and qualities that make you special. Sometimes, amidst the chaos, it can be helpful to focus on the things that bring joy and positivity into your life. There are countless wonderful experiences waiting for you, both in the present moment and in the future.

So, begin your journey of growth and self-discovery. Embrace the opportunities to enhance your coping abilities, knowing that change is always possible. You are of value – you are deserving of happiness, fulfilment, and a life that is filled with a sense of purpose that is unique to you and your circumstances. Allow yourself to believe in your own resilience and remember that you are capable of facing whatever comes your way. We can only do our best, and when we know better we can do better...

Key takeaway ideas: