

SESSION 4: COGNITIVE REFRAMING (PART 2)

Review

Let's review one example from your practice last week.

- What were your automatic thoughts?
- What thinking patterns or inaccuracies did you notice were associated with these automatic thoughts (all or nothing thinking, catastrophizing?)
- Did you behave or respond in a certain way based on your thought?

AGENDA

In today's session, we will:

- 1** Review your practice since our last session
- 2** Challenge unhelpful, automatic thoughts
- 3** Identify new accurate thoughts and replace unhelpful thoughts with more accurate ones

Replacing Unhelpful Thoughts

You have identified your automatic thoughts in response to a stressful situation, and explored what unhelpful thinking patterns you might get stuck in (e.g., all or nothing thinking, jumping to conclusions, using should statements). Now, you can take the final step, step 2, which is challenging your unhelpful thought and replacing it with a thought that is more accurate and helpful. This will ultimately lead to behaviors that are more in line with your goals.

Step 2: Replace an unhelpful thought with a new one that is less negative, and more accurate.

To identify an alternative thought, ask yourself:

- *Is this thought accurate? How much do I really believe this is true?*
- *What is the evidence that makes this thought true, what is the evidence that makes this thought not true? Is there more evidence that it is not true?*
- *What would a close friend or family member tell me in this situation?*
- *What would I say to someone else in this situation?*
- *What is the worst-case outcome here?*
- *Is there language that is less extreme to describe the situation or how I feel?*
- *Can I identify a plan of action?*
- *Can I do this differently or break it up into manageable step*

Old Automatic Thought

"I don't feel like going and I know I won't enjoy being out with friends at all. No one understands what we are going through. I shouldn't have agreed to these plans in the first place."

Thought Traps

*Fortune telling
All or nothing thinking
Over-generalization
Should statements*

New Alternative Thought

I don't feel up to going to dinner, but I might enjoy myself once I am there and it may help to take my mind off of things for a short while. I will go for a short time, knowing that I can leave early if I need to. My friends care about me and will likely understand if I need to leave early.

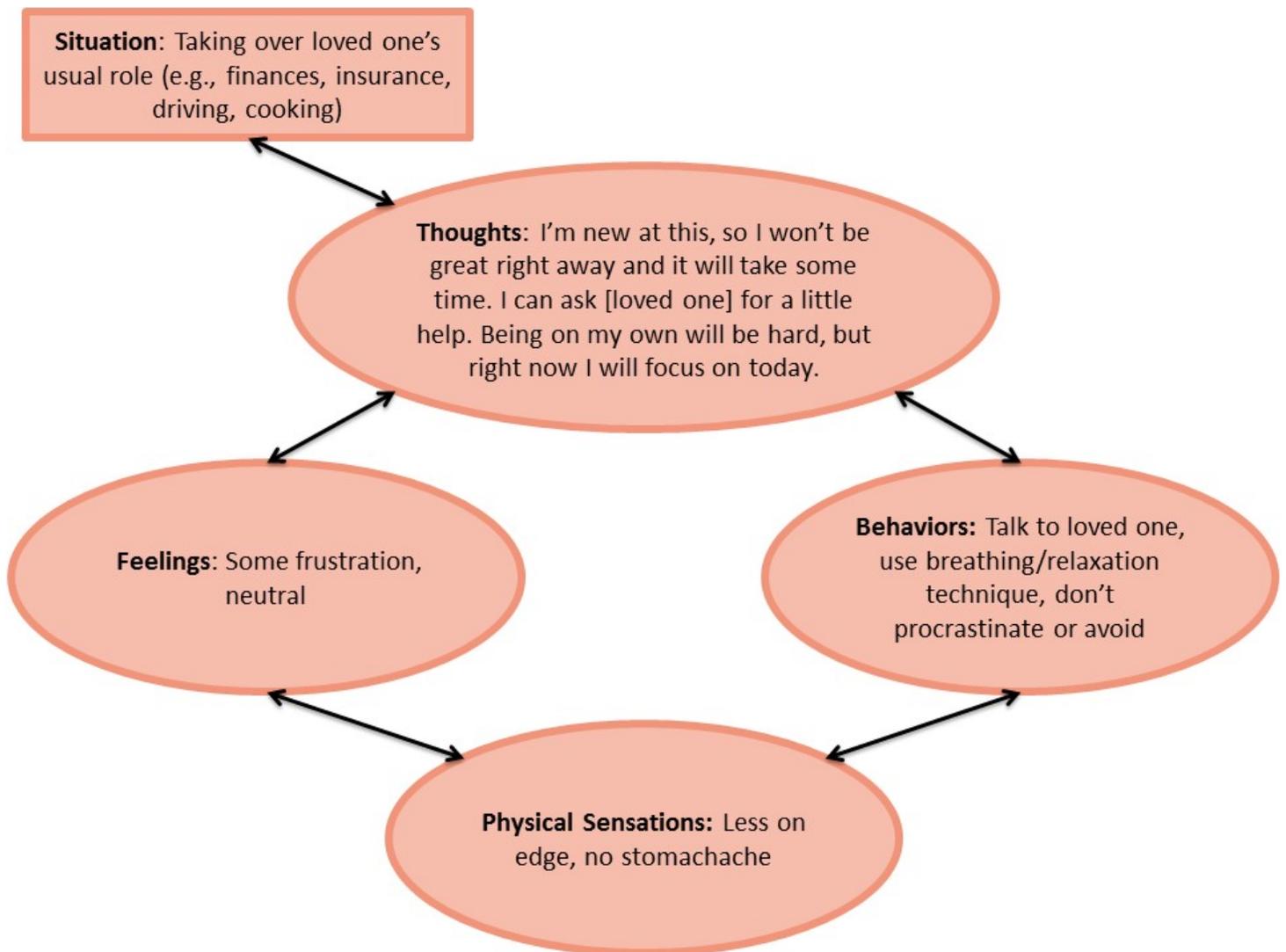
While the old thought led you to not go to dinner, this new thought leads to a different behavior; you go to dinner with your friends, giving yourself the opportunity for distraction and enjoyment, knowing that you can leave early if you need to. Friends who care about you will understand, but ultimately you may choose to do what is right for you and may have to let go of concerns about what other people think. The key to this alternative new thought is that it is not overly positive; it acknowledges the conflicted feelings you have and recognizes the potential for a different evening than originally anticipated, but it does not lead to you completely avoid the social activity.

Practice Exercise

Let's look back at our first example of the partner who is having trouble fulfilling her loved one's roles and worries about the future. What types of unhelpful patterns do you notice in their thoughts and what are some new, more accurate thoughts to replace the old thoughts?

Old Automatic Thought	Thought Patterns	New Alternative Thought (Accurate)
<i>I'm terrible at this</i>		
<i>I should be able to do this on my own</i>		
<i>I can't tell [loved one] that I am having a hard time</i>		
<i>I'll never be able to manage by myself</i>		

Notice that when this person's thoughts are more accurate, her emotions and physical sensations are less severe, and she responds in a way that is more helpful for and doesn't result in hopelessness and avoidance:



What if thoughts are not exaggerated or irrational?

Sometimes our worry thoughts are accurate, especially when your loved one has cancer and you are worried about their health. In this case, we don't want to try to reframe or push those thoughts away, because they are realistic, so we find a different way to deal with them. Once you have established that your thought is accurate, can you identify whether the situation or thought is controllable or uncontrollable and choose the appropriate action-oriented or emotion-oriented coping strategy from session 2?

Home Practice

1. As you go about your days, pay attention to stressful or worry situations and list some of the automatic thoughts that come to your mind. What other realistic, accurate, or helpful thoughts can you come up with to replace the unhelpful thoughts? Fill out the table on the following page so that we can review it together. You can use examples related to caring for your loved one, or from anything stressful that comes up during your week (e.g., running late, sitting in traffic, being sick, argument with a friend or family member). To come up with accurate thoughts, remember these questions:

Is this thought accurate? How much do I really believe this is true?

What would I say to someone else in this situation?

What is the evidence that makes this thought true and what makes it not true?

What would a close friend or family member tell me in this situation?

Can I identify a plan of action?

Is there language that is less extreme to describe the situation or how I feel?

What is the worst-case outcome here?

Can I do this differently or break it up into manageable steps?