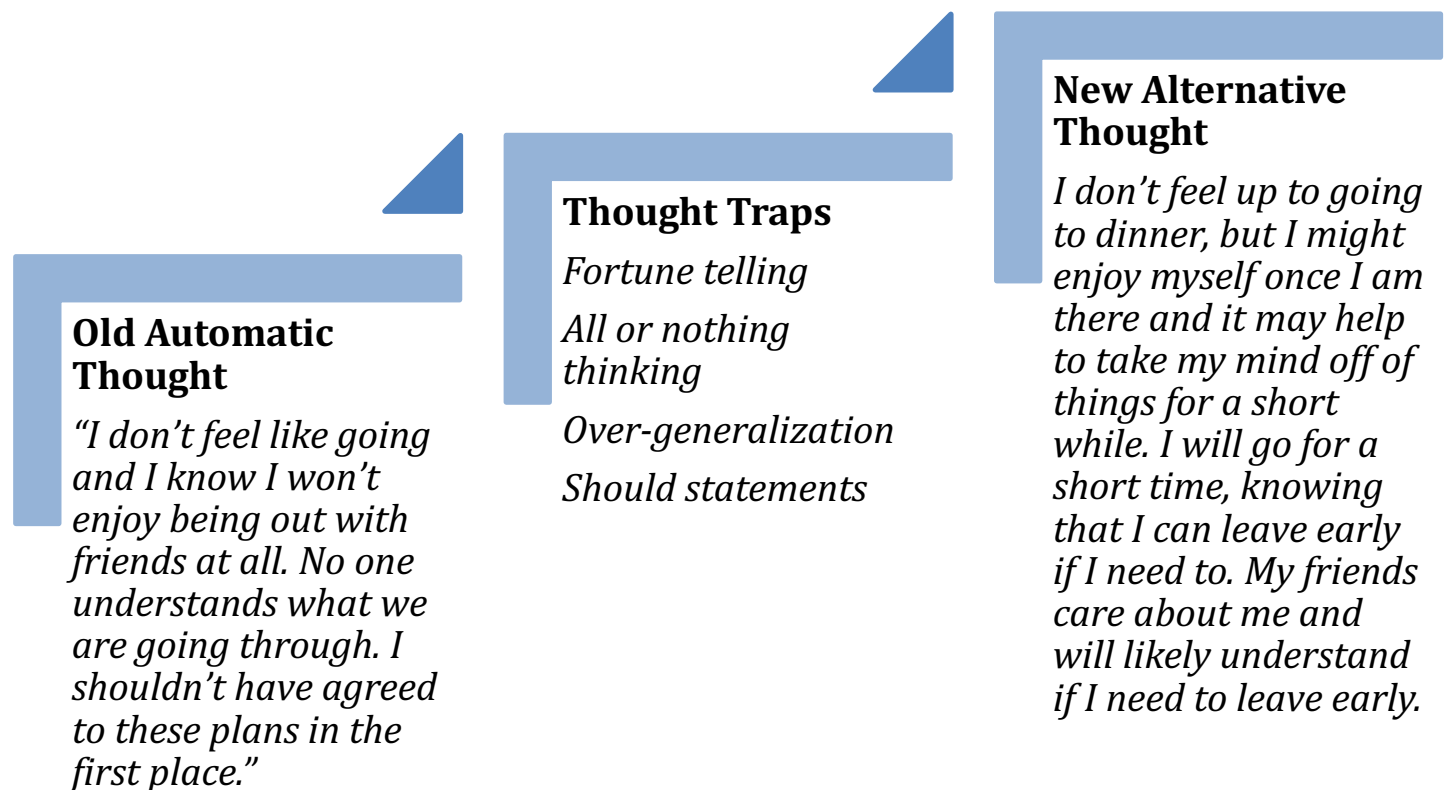# Replacing Unhelpful Thoughts

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.

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?