

SELECTED HANDOUTS AND WORKSHEETS FROM: MUESER, K. T., ROSENBERG, S. D., & ROSENBERG, H. J. (2009). *TREATMENT OF POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER IN SPECIAL POPULATIONS: A COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING PROGRAM*. WASHINGTON, DC: AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION.

BREATHING RETRAINING

HANDOUT #3

Breathing fast and taking deep breaths (*hyperventilating*) are common responses to feeling stressed. However, breathing too fast increases the flow of oxygen to the brain, which can lead to feeling lightheaded and more anxious. *Breathing retraining* is a skill that helps you slow down your breathing, and decrease the amount of oxygen going to your brain, which can make you more relaxed. Learning breathing retraining takes daily practice, but once you get good at it you can use it in any situation you feel stressed or anxious. Try following the steps below.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR BREATHING RETRAINING

1. Choose a word that you find relaxing, such as “calm,” “relax,” or “peaceful.”
2. Take a normal breath (not a deep one) in through your nose and exhale slowly through your mouth.
3. While you exhale, say the relaxing word you have chosen very slowly: “calm” or “relax.”
4. Pause briefly before taking your next breath. You can count to four before taking in each new breath.
5. Practice this exercise several times a day, taking 10 to 15 breaths at each practice.

Some people like to combine breathing retraining with other relaxation exercises, such as focusing on the cool air going into your nose and the warm air going out of your mouth, picturing peaceful and restful scenes or places, or tensing and relaxing your muscles. Some people prefer using a different exercise than breathing retraining to relax. What is important is that you learn what relaxation strategies work best for you.

Trauma and PTSD often lead to negative thoughts about oneself, other people, or the world. Thoughts related to traumatic experiences can have very personal meanings to the individual, but are often not truly accurate. How do the traumatic events you've experienced affect how you think about yourself?

A. Do you tend to blame yourself or are you very critical of yourself? **Yes** **No**

If yes, give examples of these types of critical thoughts:

Do you tend to distrust other people? **Yes** **No**

If yes, give examples of these types of thoughts:

Are you generally very fearful or think the world is an unsafe place? **Yes** **No**

If yes, give examples of these types of thoughts:

B. Look at Handout #7 to learn about Common Styles of Thinking: All or Nothing Thinking; Overgeneralization; Must, Should, or Never Statements; Catastrophizing, Emotional Reasoning; Overestimation of Risk, Inaccurate or Excessive Self-Blame; or Mental Filter.

Which of your thoughts appears to reflect a Common Style of Thinking?

Self-critical or self-blaming thoughts

Common Style of Thinking

Thoughts about distrusting other people

Common Style of Thinking

Thoughts about not feeling safe

Common Style of Thinking

COMMON STYLES OF THINKING (ADAPTED AND MODIFIED FROM BURNS, 1989) HANDOUT #7

All or Nothing Thinking The world is seen in extremes with nothing in between. For example:

- “Since I’m not perfect, I’m a failure.”
- “The world is a totally dangerous place.”

Overgeneralization A single distressing event is seen as a never-ending pattern. When something bad happens, it is assumed that it will happen again and again.

- “Once a victim, always a victim”
- “I was unable to keep myself safe before, therefore I will always be unable to protect myself in the future.”

“Must,” “Should” or “Never” Statements These are unwritten rules or expectations for how people think they should behave that are not based on facts. These “rules” may have been learned when growing up and they may seem unchangeable. When they cannot be followed, they are distressing.

- “I never should have let it happen.”
- “I must stop thinking about my abusive experiences.”

Catastrophizing These thoughts occur when one focuses on the most extreme and distressing possible outcome. The thoughts often come out of the blue or following a minor problem when the person assumes the very worst will happen.

- “What if I’m attacked on my way to work?”
- “I didn’t do well on this exam, so I know I’m going to flunk the class.”

Emotional Reasoning This occurs when the person’s feelings determine what he/she thinks or believes, even when there is no ‘hard’ evidence to support it. Just because a person feels something, it doesn’t mean it’s true.

- “I feel anxious and afraid, so I must be in danger.”
- “I feel ashamed, so I must be a bad person.”
- “I feel sad, so my life must be hopeless.”
- “I feel angry, so somebody must have wronged me.”

Overestimation of Risk The person thinks the risk of something is much greater than evidence supports.

- “I’m not going to take a walk because I might be attacked.”
- “I’m not going to drive because I might get into a car accident.”

Inaccurate or Excessive Self-blame The person blames him/herself for something they had little or no control over or responsibility for.

- “It’s my fault that I let the abuse go on for so long.”
- “I’m responsible because my child got into a fight.”

Mental Filter

These thoughts occur when the person focuses only on negative aspects of something and ignores the positive aspects. By focusing on the negative, the person does not see the 'whole picture' and feels worse than necessary.

- After fumbling for words in a conversation, you tell yourself, "I'm such a screw-up, I made a total fool of myself."
- Your boss gives you positive feedback about your work, but then recommends improving one area. You think, "My boss is unhappy with my performance."

Directions: When you begin to feel distressed or upset, ask yourself, “What am I thinking right now that is causing this feeling?” Identify whether the upsetting thought is a Common Style of Thinking, and come up with a more helpful or realistic thought. Use this sheet to write down your thoughts.

SITUATION	UPSETTING THOUGHT/FEELING	COMMON STYLE OF THINKING*	MORE HELPFUL OR REALISTIC THOUGHT
Example: On Friday at noon I was walking down the street when I saw a friend, but she did not say hello to me.	She must not like me anymore. / Sad	Catastrophizing	Maybe she did not really see me. Maybe she was distracted and was thinking about something else.

* More than one Common Style of Thinking may be related to the distressing feeling

1. SITUATION

Ask yourself, "What happened that made me upset?" Write down a brief description of the situation.

Situation:

2. FEELING

Circle your strongest feeling (if more than one, use a separate sheet for each feeling):

Fear/Anxiety Sadness/Depression Guilt/Shame Anger

3. THOUGHT

Ask yourself, "What am I thinking that is leading me to feel this way?" Use your Guide to Thoughts and Feelings handout to identify thoughts related to the feeling circled above. You may identify more than one thought related to the feeling. Write down your thoughts below, and circle the thought most strongly related to the feeling.

THOUGHTS:

Is this thought a Common Style of Thinking? If yes, circle the one:

All-or-Nothing Over-Generalizing Must/Should/Never
Catastrophizing Emotional Reasoning Overestimation of Risk
Self-Blame Mental Filter

4. EVALUATE YOUR THOUGHT:

Now ask yourself, "What evidence do I have for this thought?" "Is there an alternative way to look at this situation?" "How would someone else think about the situation?" Write down the answers that do support your thought and the answers that do not support your thought.

Things that DO support my thought:

Things that DO NOT support my thought:

5. TAKE ACTION!

Next, ask yourself, "Do things mostly support my thought or do things mostly NOT support my thought?"

- NO**, the evidence does *not* support my thought.

If the evidence does NOT support your thought, come up with a new thought that is supported by the evidence. These thoughts are usually more balanced and helpful. Write your new, more helpful thought in the space below. And remember, when you think of this upsetting situation in the future; replace your unhelpful automatic thought with the new, more accurate thought.

New Thought

- YES**, the evidence *does* support my thought.

If the evidence DOES support your thought, decide what you need to do next in order to deal with the situation. Ask yourself, "Do I need to get more information about what to do?" "Do I need to get some help?" "Do I need to take steps to make sure I am safe?" Write down your action plan for dealing with the upsetting situation or complete the Action Plan Worksheet (Handout 11).

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Action Plan:

1. Define the goal. What situation requires action?

Consider what change you would like to see in your situation. Be as specific as possible.

2. Brainstorm possible strategies. What can you do to change the situation?

Using your creative problem-solving skills, think of all the possible ways of effectively achieving your goal. Then, when you have identified a list of different strategies, evaluate each one and place an asterisk (*) next to the best ones.

3. Plan how to implement the strategies you chose. What steps can you take to make this happen?

Consider these questions:

What information do you need to have?

Do you need to get some help?

Who is going to support you in taking this action?

What obstacles could interfere with the plan?

How could I prevent or deal with these obstacles? Then, write down the plan below.

I will take the following actions:

4. Set a time or a situation to follow up your plan. When and how are you going to take this action?

Ask yourself:

What is the situation or type of situation where you want to use your plan?

When is it likely to come up again next?

<u>Feelings</u>	<u>Ask Yourself</u>	<u>Related Thoughts</u>
Fear or anxiety	What bad thing do I expect to happen? What am I scared is going to happen?	Thoughts that something bad will happen, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some terrible thing is going to happen • I am going to be attacked or hurt • I am going to be rejected or abandoned • I am going to lose control or go crazy
Sadness or depression	What have I lost? What is missing in me or in my life?	Thoughts of loss, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am worthless • I don't have anyone I can depend on • Nothing will ever get better
Guilt or shame	What bad thing have I done? What is wrong with me?	Thoughts of having done something wrong or lacking in some way, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am a failure • I am to blame for what happened to me • I am a bad person
Anger	What is unfair about this situation? Who has wronged me?	Thoughts of being treated unfairly or having been wronged, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am being treated unfairly • I am being taken advantage of • Someone has done something wrong to me

SKILLS COVERED IN CBT FOR PTSD PROGRAM

- **EDUCATION ABOUT PTSD AND RELATED SYMPTOMS**
- **BREATHING RETRAINING OR OTHER RELAXATION SKILLS**
- **COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING**

WHAT THINGS HAVE GOTTEN BETTER SINCE I STARTED THE CBT FOR PTSD PROGRAM?

WHAT THINGS DO I STILL WANT TO WORK ON AFTER THE PROGRAM ENDS?

WHICH SKILLS FROM THE CBT FOR PTSD PROGRAM WILL HELP ME TO WORK ON THESE THINGS?

WHAT CAN HELP ME TO REMEMBER TO USE MY NEW SKILLS IN THESE SITUATIONS?
