

This is the companion worksheet to the following blog post

<https://blogs.flinders.edu.au/student-health-and-well-being/2018/07/30/dealing-negative-self-talk/>

Cognitive Restructuring

Troubled by negative self-talk? Tormented by self-critical thoughts?

Take some time to interrogate those thoughts to determine just how valid and/or useful they are.

Thought/belief to be questioned

Interrogation questions

What is the evidence for this thought? What is the evidence against?

Am I basing this thought on facts, or on feelings?

Is this thought an oversimplification, when in fact the truth is more complex?

Am I misinterpreting or cherry-picking the evidence for this thought?

Would other people agree with this thought?

Could I be exaggerating?

Might I be making a common [cognitive error](#)?

Is this thought just a regular brain fart, or do the facts support it?

Has this thought been passed to me by someone? If so, are they a reliable or trustworthy person?

Does this thought motivate me to make positive changes in my life?

Does this thought tell me how to solve my problems?

Does this thought help me cope with what is happening to me?

Is this thought what I would tell someone who was struggling with a similar issue?

The alternative, more realistic, more helpful thought

Cognitive Defusion

Stuck with a particularly obnoxious thought in your head? It is time to put that thought in its place. Try one of the following cognitive defusion techniques

<i>'The Mind'</i>	Treat "your mind" as an external event; almost as a separate person ("my mind is telling me all sorts of stupid shit today")
<i>Mental appreciation</i>	Thank your mind; show aesthetic appreciation for its products
<i>Cubbyholing</i>	Label private events as just some kind of background noise
<i>"I'm having the thought that ..."</i>	Use this phrase when reporting thoughts to identify exactly what they are
<i>Commitment to openness</i>	Commit to being open to whatever thoughts show up
<i>Just noticing</i>	Use the language of observation (e.g., noticing) when talking about thoughts ("I just noticed that the thought 'im stupid' just showed up")
<i>"Buying" thoughts</i>	Acknowledge when you are really entangled with a thought ("I've totally bought into this thought about being lazy")
<i>Physicalizing</i>	Label the physical dimensions of thoughts (e.g. size, colour, shape). Give it a physical form
<i>Put them out there</i>	Put the thought out in front of you (e.g. type on a computer)
<i>Open mindfulness</i>	Practise mindfulness with the goal of noticing thoughts as they arise and then letting them go like leaves on a stream
<i>Focused mindfulness</i>	Practice mindfulness where you focus on non-literal stuff like sight, sound, touch
<i>Sound it out</i>	Say difficult thoughts very, very slowly
<i>Sing it out</i>	Sing your thoughts
<i>Silly voices</i>	Say your thoughts in other voices -- a Donald Duck voice for example
<i>Polarities</i>	Say the opposite of the thought and then watch it fight back
<i>Think the opposite</i>	Engage in behaviour while trying to command the opposite (shows that thought doesn't have to drive behaviour)
<i>Your mind is not your friend</i>	Suppose your mind is mindless; who do you trust, your experience or your mind?
<i>Thoughts are not causes</i>	Ask yourself "Is it possible to think that thought, as a thought, AND do x?"
<i>Choose being right or choose being alive</i>	If you have to pay with one to play for the other, which do you choose?
<i>Monsters on the bus</i>	Treating scary private events as monsters on a bus you are driving, but where you have full control of the bus and where it is headed
<i>Feed the tiger</i>	Like feeding a tiger, you strengthen the impact of thoughts but dealing with them
<i>Who is in charge here?</i>	Treat thoughts as bullies; use colourful language to put them back in their place
<i>OK, you are right. Now what?</i>	Take the perspective that the thought is "right" but then go about determining a course of action that you want to take, as opposed to what it is telling you to take
<i>Mary had a little</i>	Say a common phrase and replace the final word with the troublesome thought
<i>Get off your butts</i>	Replace virtually all self-referential uses of "but" with "and"
<i>Find a free thought</i>	Just start learning to identify any free floating thought
<i>Do not think "x"</i>	Try to not think about 'pink elephants' after reading this. Shows how easily thoughts can be triggered and how trying to not have them has the opposite effect
<i>Find something that can't be evaluated</i>	Look around the room and notice that every single thing can be evaluated negatively
<i>Carry cards</i>	Write difficult thoughts on 3 x 5 cards and carry them with you
<i>Carry your keys</i>	Assign difficult thoughts and experiences to the keys in your pocket. Every time you handle the key, think the thought but then put them back in your pocket