

Coping Strategies for Dealing with Intrusive and Distressing Thoughts

Thoughts



Silly voices technique – pick an animated cartoon character with a humorous voice and ‘hear’ the thought in the character’s voice.

Thanking your mind—when old stories arise – ‘Thank you mind! How very informative!’ or ‘Thanks for sharing!’ or ‘Is that right? How fascinating!’ or ‘Thanks mind, but I’m not playing today’, or simply ‘Thanks mind!’ – not sarcastically or aggressively but with warmth, humour, and genuine appreciation for your minds ability.

Not taking a thought seriously – hold the thought “I am x” in your mind and notice how it affects you. Now bring to mind the thought, ‘I am a banana!’ Hold it in your mind and notice how it affects you.

Recognise and name your stories, e.g. ‘Ah yes, I recognise this...that old favourite, the “I’m a failure story” or ‘Aha! Here comes the “I can’t cope story”’.

Research recovery quotes and images to encourage and remind yourself of all the reasons you need to eat and move forward.

Practice mindful breathing, being aware of any sensations. Allow images to come and go in the background.

Challenge the thoughts.
 *Are they true?
 *Is that so?
 *Do they benefit me?

The good news is... nothing lasts forever.
 The bad news is... nothing lasts forever.

*I’m having the thought that... (Cognitive defusion)
 *I’m making the judgement...

Feels scary? That’s ok. Do it anyway.

This too shall pass.

Compose a list of reasons for wanting to get better; where you want to be in 2 years from now; and what you have to live for.

Musical thoughts – sing the thought to the tune of Happy Birthday or Jingle Bells.

We can try to stop our thoughts, like trying to hold a beachball under water, but it keeps popping up or we can allow the ball (our thoughts) to float around us, not intruding, just letting them be.



Sarah-Louise McKenzie

Some cognitive and acceptance strategies retrieved from:

Harris, R 2007, *The happiness trap*, Trumpeter Books, Boston, Massachusetts, USA.

Linehan, MM 1993, *Skills training manual for treating Borderline Personality Disorder*, The Guilford Press, New York, USA.