

Module 7
The End Result

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E: The End Result

We've spent some time examining the link between thinking and feelings, and discussed how to identify your unhelpful thoughts and thinking styles. In the previous module, we talked about looking for evidence that might prove or disprove your unhelpful beliefs as well as considering other alternative ways of viewing the situation. Now let's look at how you can change the way you are thinking in order to improve how you are feeling.

By this time, if you have been using the Thought Diary, you would have described an **A**ctivating Event, identified your automatic and unhelpful **B**eliefs and thoughts (including the Hot Thought) that have contributed to your experiencing distressing emotions (**C**onsequences), and recognised a few unhelpful thinking styles you might have used. You would have also used the **D**etective Work and **D**isputation section to challenge your hot thought. Now, take a good look at the evidence you have listed and the answers to the other challenging questions. Is there enough evidence to believe that your hot thought is true all of the time? Are there other alternative explanations?

At this point, ask yourself, "How can I revise my hot thought to take into account all the evidence I have listed?" Then, write out an alternative explanation. This becomes your new, balanced thought. A balanced and helpful thought or belief is one that takes into consideration all the evidence, objective information, and alternative viewpoints. This is the fifth step of the ABC analysis – the **E**nd Result, where you replace your original, unhelpful thought with this new, balanced, and helpful belief.

After you have written down your new, balanced thought or belief, ask yourself, "How do I feel now?" Look at the most intense emotion you identified in section **C**, and re-rate how intense that emotion feels for you now. Often, you will find that it is not as extreme and distressing.

Finally, read through the Detective Work and Disputation section again, and re-rate how much you believe the hot thought now.

This final step of replacing your unhelpful (hot) thoughts with balanced thoughts is very important. Challenging your beliefs and evidence testing is the process of change, but the final step is where you **MAKE** the change. You'll probably find that this process becomes easier after some practice. So keep it up. Over the next two pages, an example of the full Thought Diary (steps A to E) is provided, followed by one that is blank, for your use. Keep practising and remember that you can be your own expert at managing your moods!



Thought Diary

(Example)

A Activating Event

This may include an actual event or situation, a thought, mental picture or physical trigger.

When my partner came home this evening, she said 'hi' but didn't give me a kiss like she usually does.

B Beliefs

1. List all self-statements that link A to C. Ask yourself: "What was I thinking?" "What was I saying to myself?" "What was going through my head at the time?"
2. Find the most distressing (hot) thought and underline it.
3. Rate how much you believe this thought between 0 to 100.

"She must be tired of me moping around and feeling depressed."

"She probably doesn't care about me anymore. Maybe she doesn't even love me anymore." (90)

C Consequences

1. Write down words describing how you feel.
2. Underline the one that is most associated with the activating event.
3. Rate the intensity of those feelings (0 to 100).

Hurt
Afraid (90)

4. Jot down any physical sensations you experienced or actions carried out.

Chest feels very tight and sore

Unhelpful Thinking Styles

Do you recognise any unhelpful thinking styles you might have been using? (Mental filter, jumping to conclusions, personalisation, catastrophising, black & white thinking, shoulding & musting, overgeneralisation, labelling, emotional reasoning, disqualifying/ignoring positives)

Jumping to conclusions - mind reading

Mental filter

(and therefore I might be looking at only one part of the whole picture)

D Detective Work & Disputation

Detective Work: Now look at the hot thought and then ask yourself: “What is the factual evidence for and against my hot thought?”

My HOT Thought: <i>She probably doesn't care for me anymore. Maybe she doesn't even love me anymore.</i>	
FACTUAL EVIDENCE FOR MY HOT THOUGHT	FACTUAL EVIDENCE AGAINST MY HOT THOUGHT
<i>She told me to go and see a psychologist to do something about my depression.</i>	<i>She has been telling me that she understands my struggles and will support me through this period. She made a special dinner for me last night.</i>

Disputation: (2 out of the list of questions have been chosen for this example)

What other ways are there of viewing the situation?

*She might have had a difficult day at work and was just feeling tired and distracted.
She might have wanted to put the groceries away quickly.
She might have wanted to go to the toilet quickly.*

If I were not depressed, how might I view the situation differently?

*I might remember that she shows her affection to me in many ways.
I might remember that she stuck by me when we went through a rough patch.*

E End Result

Balanced Thoughts: After looking at all the evidence for and against your hot thought, and having considered the disputation questions, replace the hot thought with helpful, balanced thought/s.

I have no evidence to conclude that she doesn't love me anymore because she didn't kiss me tonight. Maybe she had a really difficult day and was just tired and distracted. She's been such a support to me since we've been together and she shows her affection to me in many other ways.

Re-rate Emotion: Now, re-rate the emotion you underlined in C, from 0 to 100.

40

Re-rate Hot Thought: Read through Detective Work & Disputation. Now re-rate

30

Thought Diary ³

A Activating Event

This may include an actual event or situation, a thought, mental picture or physical trigger.

B Beliefs

1. List all self-statements that link A to C. Ask yourself: “What was I thinking?” “What was I saying to myself?” “What was going through my head at the time?”
2. Find the most distressing (hot) thought and underline it.
3. Rate how much you believe this thought between 0 to 100.

C Consequences

1. Write down words describing how you feel.
2. Underline the one that is most associated with the activating event
3. Rate the intensity of this feeling between 0 to 100.

4. Jot down any physical sensations you experienced or actions carried out.

Unhelpful Thinking Styles

Do you recognise any unhelpful thinking styles you might have been using? (Mental filter, jumping to conclusions, personalisation, catastrophising, black & white thinking, shoulding & musting, overgeneralisation, labelling, emotional reasoning, disqualifying/ ignoring positives)

D Detective Work & Disputation

Detective Work: Now refer to the hot thought, and ask yourself: “What is the factual evidence for and against my hot thought?”

My HOT Thought:	
Factual Evidence For My HOT Thought	Factual Evidence Against My HOT Thought

Disputation: Ask yourself the following questions ...

- What other ways are there of viewing the situation?
- If I were not feeling this way, how would I view the situation?
- Realistically, what is the likelihood of that happening?
- How might someone else view the situation?
- Does it really help me to think this way?
- Think of some helpful self-statements

E End Result

Balanced Thoughts: After looking at all the evidence for and against your hot thought, and having considered the disputation questions, replace the hot thought with helpful, balanced thought/s.

Re-rate Emotion: Now, re-rate the emotion you underlined in C, from 0 to 100. _____

Re-rate Hot Thought: Read through Detective Work & Disputation. Now re-rate how much you believe the hot thought, between 0 to 100. _____

Finally... **F** for Following Through

Often, many people say they can understand the new helpful thought or belief in their minds, but find it difficult to “feel” it or believe it. They understand that the new belief is balanced and helpful, but at the same time, are not all that convinced. This is probably because the balanced thought or belief may have been newly ‘activated’ into the knowledge system, but has yet to be integrated into the person’s belief system.

This will take time and a bit of practice because you have probably established a habit of thinking in an unhelpful way, especially when you are depressed. Now is the time to uproot the old habits and establish a new pattern of balanced and helpful thinking. This process requires that you re-train yourself to think in a helpful way and continue to practice it until it becomes an unconscious skill. It’s all about repetition, repetition, repetition. One day, it will feel right and you might not even realise it. Remember how we learned to tie our shoelaces? We keep practising until we are not even conscious of the way we bring the laces together and how we tie the bow. Learning to think in helpful ways goes through the same process.

Thought Cards

You might want to write out your healthy beliefs on small cards and carry them in your pockets or handbags so that you can refer to them regularly and in situations where you may become upset or distressed.



Remember that it takes a little time for a new habit to be established. Be persistent in practicing your new helpful beliefs so that they will be integrated into your belief system. Use the Thought Diary whenever you feel upset or distressed, and work through the process of identifying, challenging, and changing your unhelpful beliefs. When you become familiar with this process, you can become better at managing your moods.

Turning Your Thoughts Into Actions

Another important way of integrating the helpful and balanced thoughts into your belief system is to **ACT ON THEM!** This means applying the balanced thoughts to your life and translating them into action. Ask yourself, “**How can I change what I do to reinforce my balanced thoughts?**” In the example that we’ve been using over the last few modules, the balanced thoughts are: *“I have no evidence to conclude that she doesn’t love me anymore because she didn’t kiss me tonight. Maybe she had a really difficult day and was just tired and distracted. She’s been such a support to me since we’ve been together and she shows her affection to me in many other ways.”* What do you think this person could do to reinforce their balanced thoughts? Sometimes, taking a look at the consequences (the “C”) might give you some ideas. For example, they could get up and demonstrate their affection for their partner, or ask her how she was feeling, or offer to help with whatever she was doing. If you have completed a thought diary, you can probably already think of some ideas for yourself.

Following through is especially important if you often avoid doing certain things or avoid certain situations. Avoidance of actions or situations can maintain and perpetuate depression. Remember our discussion about behavioural activation? If you have been depressed, and have avoided social activities, you probably would miss out on experiencing pleasant feelings, and this in turn, perpetuates your depressed mood. So don’t avoid potentially pleasurable activities, go ahead and do them!

We’ve worked through a substantial portion of how you can change your thinking to combat depression. Now, just keep going. Follow through. Keep reviewing and practising those helpful and balanced thoughts **AND** act on them!

Reviewing the ABCs – and the DEFs

We've spent quite a while on looking at all the different components of how thoughts influence feelings, and how you can start changing your thoughts to change your feelings. It might be useful to review this process now, and summarise all the new steps that you've learnt. Below is an outline of the general steps you need to take in order to replace unhelpful thoughts with more balanced thoughts.

STEP 1: Recognise the activating event and the consequences ("A" & "C")

The very first step in being able to manage your feelings is to initially recognise when you are experiencing a strong feeling and to be able to name the feeling. It also means recognising what kinds of situations activate the whole thinking-feeling process and what kinds of consequences result.

- ☛ Activating events are an objective "snapshot" of the situation, with facts only – not beliefs or feelings.
- ☛ Activating events include situations and events, but also memories and thinking about something.
- ☛ Consequences include emotions especially (there could be more than one), as well as physical sensations and behaviours.
- ☛ In the thought diary, underline the strongest emotion, then rate the intensity between 0-100.

STEP 2: Identify the thoughts and beliefs ("B")

Now that you know what you are feeling it is necessary to identify what you are saying to yourself or thinking. These are your beliefs, and you usually need to slow down your thinking and look at what's going on beneath the surface thought to get a good idea of how your thinking is influencing your feeling.

- ☛ Use the unhelpful thought discovery questions to get at the underlying thoughts (eg "what is bad about that?")
- ☛ In the thought diary, underline the "hot thought" – the thought that relates most to the strongest emotion – and rate how much you believe the thought between 0-100.
- ☛ Identify any unhelpful thinking styles that relate to the unhelpful thoughts.

STEP 3: Do some detective work and disputation to weigh up the evidence ("D")

Okay, so now you have identified the beliefs, and the "hot thought" that is producing the intense feeling. Now the next very important step is to do some detective work and disputation, examining the evidence for and against what you are thinking.

- ☛ Identify what evidence there might be for the hot thought
- ☛ Ask yourself the disputation questions, such as looking at things from a different perspective, assessing the realistic probability of things, and making sure you're not missing the positives.
- ☛ Challenge the unhelpful thinking styles

STEP 4: Replace the unhelpful thought with a balanced thought ("E" and "F")

Now that you have thoroughly examined all of the evidence, you are in a position to generate a more balanced thought. Rather than being unrealistically positive, a balanced thought is a thought that takes into consideration the evidence that does and does not support your hot thought.

- ☺ Incorporate aspects of the evidence for and against the hot thought that can contribute to a helpful, balanced thought.
- ☺ In the thought diary, re-rate what was your most intense emotion between 0-100.
- ☺ In the thought diary, re-rate how much you believe in your hot thought between 0-100.
- ☺ Try to strengthen your new balanced thought by using thought cards or finding ways to turn your thoughts into actions.

Module Summary

- After completing A to D, ask yourself, “How can I revise my hot thought to take into account all the evidence I have listed?” Then, write out an alternative explanation, which becomes your new, balanced thought
- A balanced thought or belief is one that takes into consideration all the evidence, objective information, and alternative viewpoints
- Replace your original, unhelpful hot thought with this new, balanced, and helpful belief
- Integrating balanced beliefs into your system takes practice and repetition
- You could write out your balanced beliefs on cards and refer to them regularly and in situations where you may become upset or distressed
- Integrating helpful and balanced thoughts into your belief system also requires you to act on them – applying them to your life and translating them into action

Stay Tuned ...

In the next module, we will discuss how to challenge strongly-held thoughts and beliefs that seem particularly hard to let go of.