



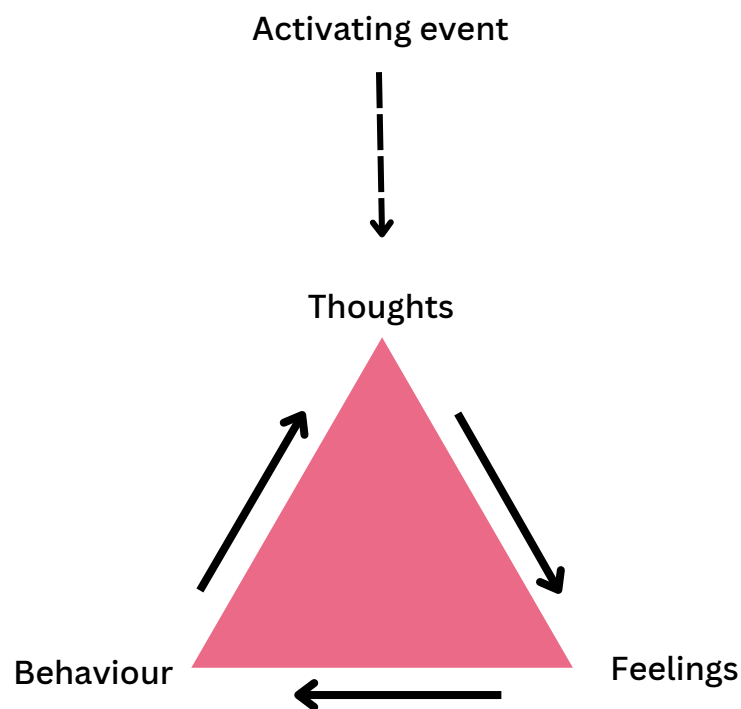
Negative thoughts



Negative thoughts occur when we are feeling anxious and/or low. It is normal to have some negative thoughts throughout our week but constant exposure to these thoughts affect our everyday thinking leading us to think in distorted ways. They can lead us to have unhelpful views of the world, ourselves and others and change the way we feel and behave.

Vicious cycle

The 'vicious cycle' or 'Negative thought cycle' is a way of explaining and visualising how negative thoughts can impact us



1. An **activating event/trigger** happens - being told you have to give a presentation
2. **Thoughts** surrounding the event begin to happen - "What if I look stupid"
3. You start to have negative **feelings** - feeling overwhelmed and nauseous
4. Your **behaviour** is then affected- You start to procrastinate to avoid this feeling

Snow balling - The event then carries on to another day

1. **Event** - Leaving presentation preparation to last minute
2. **Thought** - "I am going to fail this"
3. **Feelings** - Sense of doom and breathing becomes rapid leading to a panic attack
4. **Behaviour**- unable to complete presentation which makes you feel worse

Negative thoughts resonate with us longer than positive thoughts as we tend to spend more time over-analysing them. This may be thoughts about the past and what you should have changed or thoughts about the future and what you ‘need’ to change.

Categorising thoughts

Should and ought – Comparing yourself to others e.g. “I should be as successful as them”.

Catastrophe - Only imagining the worst-case scenario or blowing things out of proportion.

Emotional reasoning - When a person insists that something is true even with no evidence, but they feel strongly about it.

Mindreading - Guessing what others might think and say about you in a scenario.

Disqualifying the positive-rejecting the positive by insisting they “don’t count” for some reason or other.

Jumping to conclusions- You make a negative interpretation even though there are no definite facts that convincingly support your conclusion

All or nothing: You see things in black-and-white categories, either really good or bad with not grey area. If your performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself as a total failure

Activating event	Thought	Feeling	Behaviour	Category

Challenging thoughts to change them

Challenging our thoughts can be hard. Breaking down the thought into more manageable sections can help us look at the facts and evidence towards the thought and help us move past it.

Using the thoughts you have identified above, fill in the table below to break down the thoughts.

Thought	Evidence for	Evidence against	Another way to look at it	New thought

Trying to break down our thoughts can be hard when we are already feeling low. When we feel that we can't challenge these thoughts, it is best to come back to them when we are feeling better to help us reflect and move forward.

Distraction techniques

When we are experiencing negative thoughts or starting to feel overwhelmed, it is good to have distraction techniques to help us. Distraction techniques can also make us feel calmer making it easier to reflect our thoughts later on.

5-1 method

5 things you can see

4 things you can touch

3 things you can hear

2 things you can smell

1 thing you can taste

Counting backwards

Counting backwards in awkward numbers such as 7's

100

93

86

79

Making use of hobbies

Making use of hobbies or taking time to try a new skill you would like to get into is a good distraction as it allows us to concentrate on the skill we are using and not the negative thought we are experiencing.

Learning a new skill can help us feel that we have accomplished something and take pride in our work.

Worry time:

It is not always helpful or healthy to push out negative thoughts. The harder we try to ignore them more they seem to appear.

Worry time is an allocated time which we allow ourselves to think about these negative thoughts and worries. This can either give us time to action them or just to simply acknowledge them, and let us carry on the rest of the day

Take into consideration when you feel you can have time to worry about these thoughts safely. Before bed is not a good time as it allows us to have more time to ruminate on them causing us to feel more anxious which can lead to poor quality of sleep. It is usually best done before we are about to use a distraction technique.