

*Coach*  
SCHOOL

# Module 10

## Cognitive Focused Coaching

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- Part 1.2: Changing cognitions
- Part 1.3: Controlling thoughts

## **Learning Outcomes**

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Upon completion of this module you will be able to:

- 1.1** List 5 cognitions and the activating feeling that is created toward them
- 1.2** List 5 behaviors which activate either a feeling or cognition
- 1.3** Discuss 3 beliefs, how they were formed and how they shape your life and perspective
- 1.4:** Discuss and highlight your emotions and understand why you feel them

## Part 1.1

### An introduction to Cognitive Focused Coaching

'At the very heart of the CT (Cognitive therapy model) is the view that human mind is not a passive receptacle of the environmental and biological influences and sensations, but rather that individuals are actively involved in constructing their reality.' (Clark, 1995:156)

Commencing in the 1950's, behavioral psychology emerged in the United States of America. The premise was that behavioral problems came about due to faulty learning. It used the rewards and punishment system to encourage people to change their behaviors. This was successful to a degree; it largely helped people with anxiety disorders or childhood problems. It did not contribute to solving many other problems.

It was Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck (Both clinical psychologists trained in psychoanalysis) that pioneered the modality called Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Both psychoanalysts rejected Freud's theory, the theory that one needs to remember past experiences in order to heal and transcend them. Albert and Aarons' premise was that people's problems could be understood and solved by thinking in a more rational manner. They called this model Rational Therapy initially which evolved to become Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy.

As it evolved so too did the contributors that added various techniques and approaches. Aaron Beck made his first influential contribution to Cognitive Behavioral Coaching particularly in the area of working with and treating depression. CBT is now a relatively varied modality with the techniques ranging from important contributors such as Aaron Beck and Albert Ellis, Joseph Wolpe, Arther Freeman, Jidth Beck, Paul Salkovskis and much more.

#### CBT Approaches

There are two main strategies for the CBT model:

1. Cognitive Strategy – For this strategy we learn about the cognitive functions we hold that do not serve us. We learn how to reframe them into something more rational and uplifting. Cognitive functions include the way we think, what we believe, and our attitude.
2. Behavioral Strategy – For this strategy we look at what behaviours we need to change in order to get the desired change to our cognitive functions. In changing behaviours we must be willing to undertake different behaviours, willing to risk failure and be willing to adjust to them also.

Since we are going to be applying the CBT modality in a coaching context we will now shift the name to Cognitive Behavioural Coaching (CBC).

When we work with the CBC approach we are working with the present situation and what we can solve/heal now versus looking at past experiences and their current effects. The CBC approach is very present-centred.

Dr Ellis created an easy and effective model that illustrates the chain effect that can happen due to activating events. It is important to remember that sometimes these events might have been immediate but more often they have come about from a series of events from the past.

**A = Activating event**

What happened. (Example: You are made redundant at work)

**B = Beliefs or thoughts**

Beliefs about A. (Example: I am worthless without my job)

**C = Emotional & behavioural consequence**

How I felt, and the consequences. (Example: Go on benefit, withdrawal from social activities).

But just as our activating event also affects our emotions and behaviours so too does the reverse hold true.

Cognitions affect our feelings: What we think/ belief or our attitudes affect our feelings.

Example:

<u>Cognition</u>	<u>Feeling</u>
This person might attack me	Anxiety
I don't deserve to reach my goals	Self-loathing
I don't deserve to do good things	Guilt

Behaviours affect how we think and feel

Example:

<u>Behaviour</u>	<u>Feeling OR Cognition</u>
I must do everything perfectly	If it is not perfect I feel unworthy
I dislike most people	I do not feel accepted
I will play it safe	I always get hurt

## Part 1.2

### Changing Cognitions

Certain activities can make us feel good, think of those behaviours that you enjoy doing, think of the feelings that they evoke. If we think that an activity feels good we will believe that it feels good and keep doing it. The same is true if we do not enjoy an activity. The activities that we do not enjoy we will try and avoid, thus we will not change our cognitions about it.

By actually doing certain things that we keep putting off, we will be able to begin changing our feelings and cognitions about them.

Our cognitions play such large roles in our lives, they are formed from a young age, and over time many factors influence and contribute to the moulding and shaping of them. They are largely influenced by things such as our upbringing, people we have met, our knowledge gained through education, our personal life experiences, our achievements and imparted information from friends, family and the media. Biological factors have also been known to affect our cognitions.

Certain beliefs that have been imparted to us may also not hold true for us. We may have been taught to look beautiful, have a high paying job and stay young and attractive. However, these beliefs may not be our highest value. Recognising faulty beliefs will allow us to be alert to developing more realistic thinking and beliefs centred around what we truly value. There is nothing wrong with wanting certain things, but if these things are not of our highest value, or if we are attached in believing that we must hold onto them despite any cost we will cause ourselves unhappiness.

Your client is an active participant in the coaching process using the CBC modality. Your role is to help the client to understand alternative ways of thinking and behaving.

Sometimes distinguishing between what is a thought, feeling and an action can be challenging. They can easily overlap.

#### Feelings

There are both appropriate and inappropriate feelings. Appropriate feelings are those that occur due to something that is out of our control. Example: losing a loved one, your house burning down, or losing your job. Feelings like this are natural and would occur to the majority of the population. Sometimes these emotions can occur and not go away for a year or several years. However, if something happens, to us regardless of what it is, we have a tendency to blame the situation for our unhappiness. We fail to see that it is not the event but our response to the event that actually matters. Ellis realised that it was not events or people but our responses to the stimulus that make us feel certain ways.

#### Disputing Thoughts

So how do we recover and heal how we feel? Instead of looking toward the situation for our salvation we look toward ourselves; what we think, feel and act. We can dispute and change our cognitions firstly by being aware and secondly by challenging them.

It is not the situation that makes us feel the way we do, it is our response to the situation. It is important to recognise our thoughts, particularly those thoughts that are 'tough' or 'challenging'.

Thinking inaccuracies occur for a number of reasons. There are a number of different ways that we can create inaccuracies.

These are the most common ways that individuals distort their thinking:

- Personalisation – I am to blame for...
- All or nothing thinking – If I cannot do it all the way then I won't try at all
- Mind reading – I know what you want...
- Magnification/ minimization
- Emotional reasoning – I know I am a success because I feel like one!
- Labelling – I am not skinny and attractive therefore I will never be popular
- Discounting the positive – No matter what you say I will always be a failure
- Fortune telling – This happened before and it will happen again
- Overgeneralization – Jumping to conclusions based upon little evidence
- Catastrophizing – I believe that the worst will happen-- it always does
- I should AND I must. – If I don't then who will?
- Mental filter – Discarding the positive and only focusing on the negative.

### Understanding Core Beliefs

Core beliefs are formed early in our childhood and adolescence; they shape how we respond to situations as we grow and become adults. Our core beliefs lie dormant but emerge when situations arise which trigger them. They then activate a number of offsetting thoughts, which can lead to any of the above-listed distorted thinking. When a thought occurs that does not serve you, you can use the If & Then Technique (Listed below). Using it several times at a rapid pace you can uncover what belief is hidden behind the thought. Once you know the belief you can then challenge its distortions and uncover the truer and more logical belief.

If \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_

If: (THIS IS YOUR CORE BELIEF) Then: (THIS IS THE ASSUMPTION THAT YOU HAVE BASED UPON YOUR CORE BELIEF)

Examples:

If I don't get along with my boss then he will not respect and promote me.

If I don't help people then no one will like me.

## Part 1.3

### Controlling Thoughts

Recognising our thoughts and being able to control them is a central part of CBC. When we take control of our thoughts we learn to become conscious of them and interrupt them in different ways. You can do this by using any of the following techniques.

- You can control the visual images you have in your mind.
- Interrupt your thoughts using numbers or coping words such as “stop”.
- Being present and in the now is one of the best methods to transcend any faulty thinking.
- Changing negative thinking to affirming and survival thoughts.
- Balance thoughts against reality and practicality – How true is this thought/ belief?
- Search for the positive thoughts/ other situations that you have to be grateful for.

Every day is different; we wake up and feel different things. Some feelings make themselves easily apparent while others remain hidden waiting for the right time to surface and make them apparent.

Feelings don't suddenly happen, they happen due to something causing them to shift.

#### Assisting clients with their thoughts

##### The tyranny of 'should'

This phrase was created by Karen Horney, an American psychiatrist. Horney believes that the word “should” (and its associated meanings) is the rule or beliefs by which we live our lives. Most of us have a lot of “shoulds”, things that we believe we should do. These beliefs are inflexible and can prevent us from moving forward on a better and more positive path.

I should ...

I should...

I should ...

##### Working with clients that have faulty thinking

Socratic questioning was developed in order to help challenge people's underlying assumptions. Socrates the Greek philosopher created the questions to identify their assumptions and come up with evidence that did not support them.

## Socratic questioning

Socrates was one of the greatest educators who taught by asking questions and thus drawing out (as in 'ex duco', meaning to 'lead out', which is the root of 'education') answers from his pupils. Sadly, he martyred himself by drinking hemlock rather than compromising his principles. Bold, but not a good survival strategy. But then, he lived very frugally and was known for his eccentricity. His pupils, by the way, include Plato and Aristotle. Plato wrote much what we know of him. Here are the six types of questions that Socrates asked his pupils. Probably often to their initial annoyance but more often to their ultimate delight.

The overall purpose, by the way, is to challenge accuracy and completeness of thinking in a way that acts to move people toward their ultimate goal.

Don't waste time by doing it for your own gratification. Get your kicks vicariously, from the movement you create.

## Conceptual clarification questions for clients

Get them to think more about what exactly they are asking or thinking about. Prove the concepts behind their argument. Basic 'tell me more' questions that get them to go deeper.

- Why are you saying that?
- What exactly does this mean?
- How does this relate to what we have been talking about?
- What is the nature of...?
- What do we already know about this?
- Can you give me an example?
- Are you saying ... or ...?
- Can you rephrase that, please?

## Probing assumptions

Probing of assumptions makes them think about the presuppositions and unquestioned beliefs on which they are founding their argument. This is shaking the bedrock and should get them really going!

- What else could we assume?
- You seem to be assuming...?
- How did you choose those assumptions?
- Please explain why/how...?
- How can you verify or disprove that assumption?
- What would happen if...?
- Do you agree or disagree with...?



### **Probing rationale, reasons and evidence**

When they give a rationale for their arguments, dig into that reasoning rather than assuming it is a given. People often use un-thought-through or weakly understood supports for their arguments.

- Why is that happening?
- How do you know this?
- Show me...?
- Can you give me an example of that?
- What do you think causes...?
- What is the nature of this?
- Are these reasons good enough?
- Would it stand up in court?
- How might it be refuted?
- How can I be sure of what you are saying?
- Why is ... happening?
- Why? (Keep asking it -- you'll never get past a few times)
- What evidence is there to support what you are saying?
- On what authority are you basing your argument?

### **Questioning viewpoints and perspectives**

Most arguments are given from a particular position. So attack the position. Show that there are other, equally valid, viewpoints.

- Another way of looking at this is... does this seem reasonable?
- What alternative ways of looking at this are there?
- Why is it necessary?
- Who benefits from this?
- What is the difference between... and.?
- Why is it better than ...?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of...?
- How are ... and ... similar?
- What would ... say about it?
- What if you compared ... and ... ?
- How could you look another way at this?

**Probe implications and consequences**

The argument that they give may have logical implications that can be forecast. Do these make sense? Are they desirable?

- Then what would happen?
- What are the consequences of that assumption?
- How could ... be used to ... ?
- What are the implications of ... ?
- How does ... affect ... ?
- How does ... fit with what we learned before?
- Why is ... important?
- What is the best ... ? Why?

**Questions about the question**

And you can also get reflexive about the whole thing, turning the question in on itself. Use their attack against them. Bounce the ball back into their court, etc.

- What was the point of asking that question?
- Why do you think I asked this question?
- What does that mean?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Socratic questioning sourced from Changing Minds <[http://changingminds.org/techniques/questioning/socratic\\_questions.htm](http://changingminds.org/techniques/questioning/socratic_questions.htm)>.

# Worksheets

## CBC Thought Log

Below is a thought record based on the CBC modality. Take your time and complete it throughout the course of a week. Discuss your thoughts, illustrate which thoughts you had that were challenging and how they made you feel. Outline whether you took any action due to these thoughts and what further thoughts followed.

Situation	
My first (automatic) thoughts	
What I was feeling	
What did I do (my behavior)	
My thoughts after my behavior	

Situation	
My first (automatic) thoughts	
What I was feeling	
What did I do (my behavior)	
My thoughts after my behavior	

Situation	
My first (automatic) thoughts	
What I was feeling	
What did I do (my behavior)	
My thoughts after my behavior	

## Understanding Core Beliefs

Core beliefs are formed early on in our childhood and adolescence; they shape how we respond to situations as we grow and become adults. Our core beliefs are dormant but emerge when certain situations arise which trigger them. They then activate a number of offsetting thoughts, which can lead to distorted thinking. When a thought occurs that does not serve you, you can use the *If & Then Technique* (Listed below). Using it several times at a rapid pace you can uncover what belief is hidden behind the thought. Once you know the belief you can then challenge its distortions and uncover the truer and more logical belief.

This is an excellent technique to also use with your clients. You go through the “if” and “then” with them answering it until they reach the bottom and can go no further.

If \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_

If. (*This is your Core Belief*)

Then. (*This is the assumption that you have based upon your Core Belief*)

Examples:

If I don't get along with my boss then he will not respect and promote me.

If I don't help people then no one will like me.

**Now it's your turn!**

If \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_

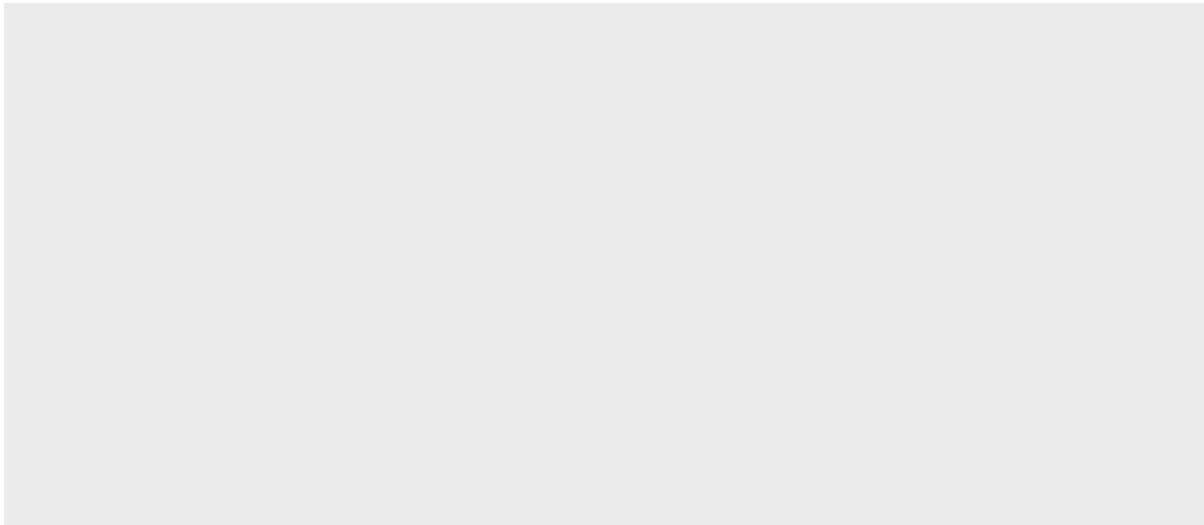
If \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_

If \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_

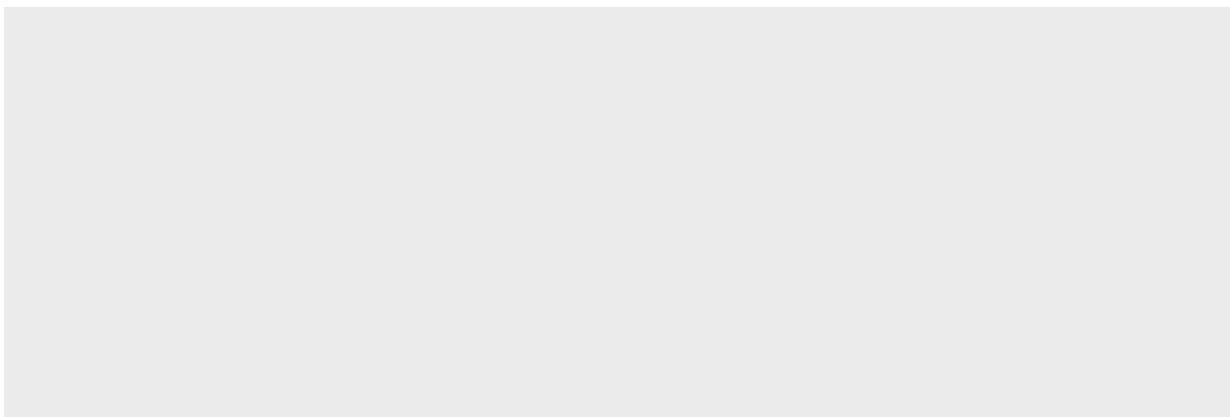
If \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_

## Externalising Thoughts

1. Using the space below creatively draw or design positive thoughts you have toward yourself and your future. – *If you have already created a pinterest board for this purpose please include the link below.*

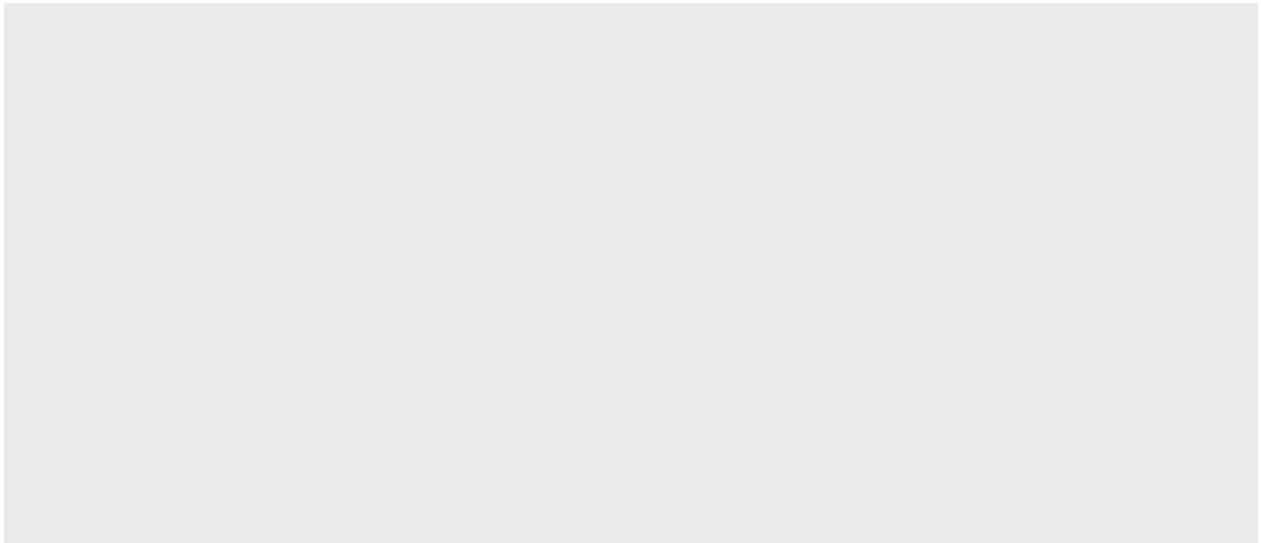


2. Using the space below creatively draw, or design challenging thoughts you have toward yourself and your future.

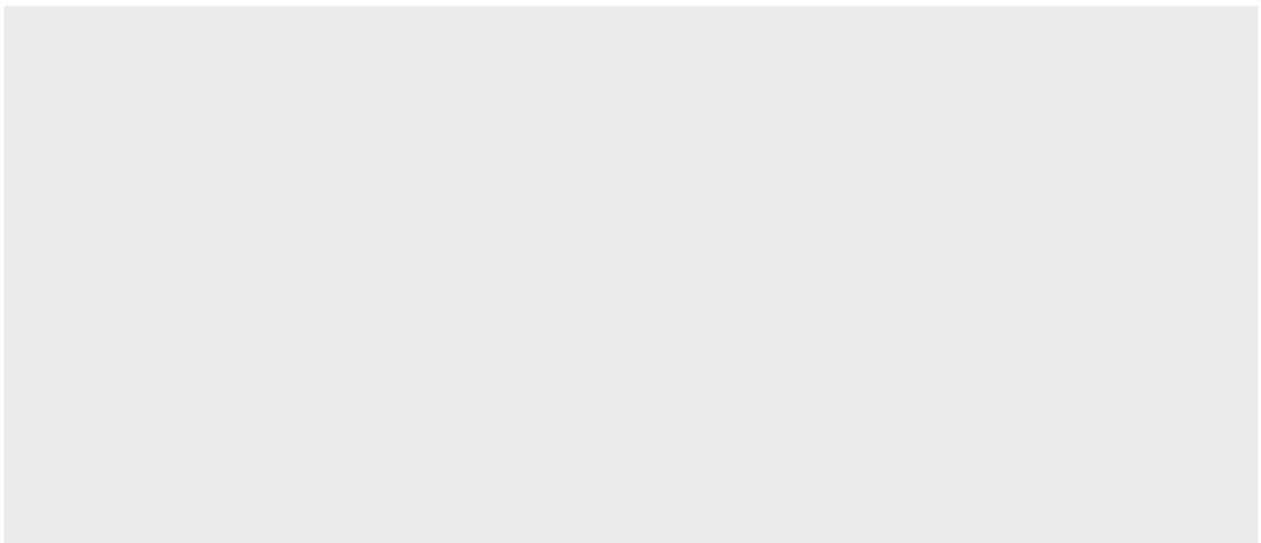


## Repeated Thoughts

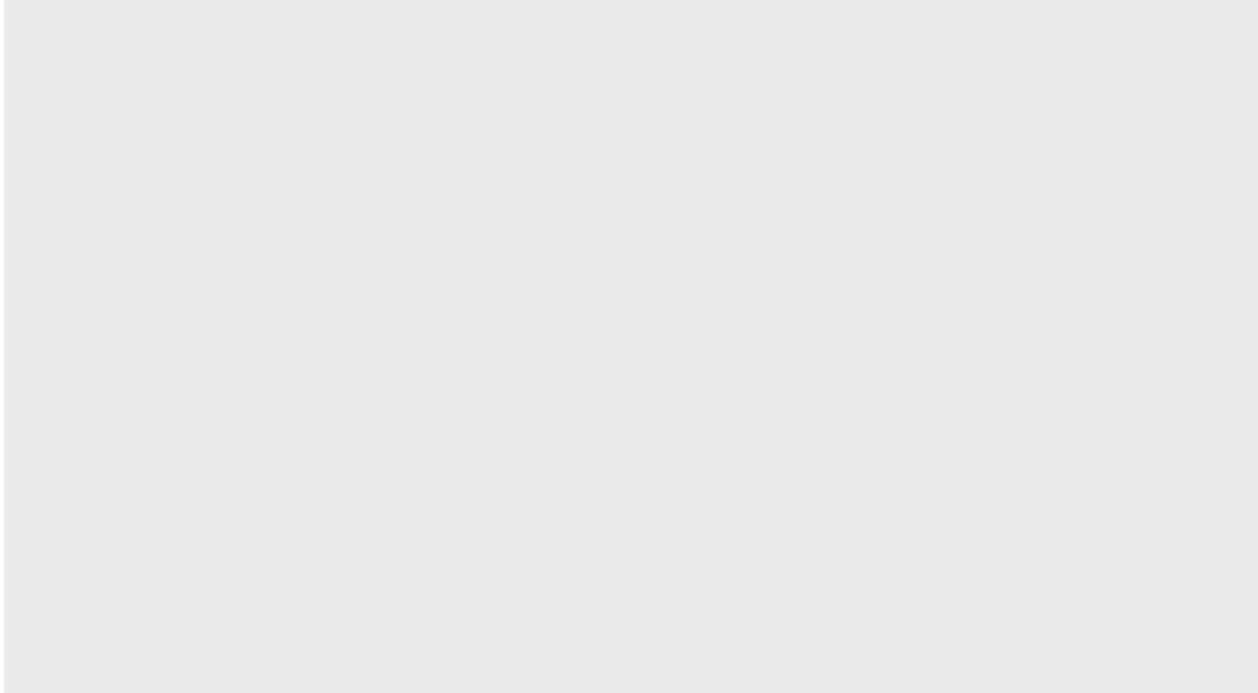
1. What repeated thoughts do you have on a daily basis?



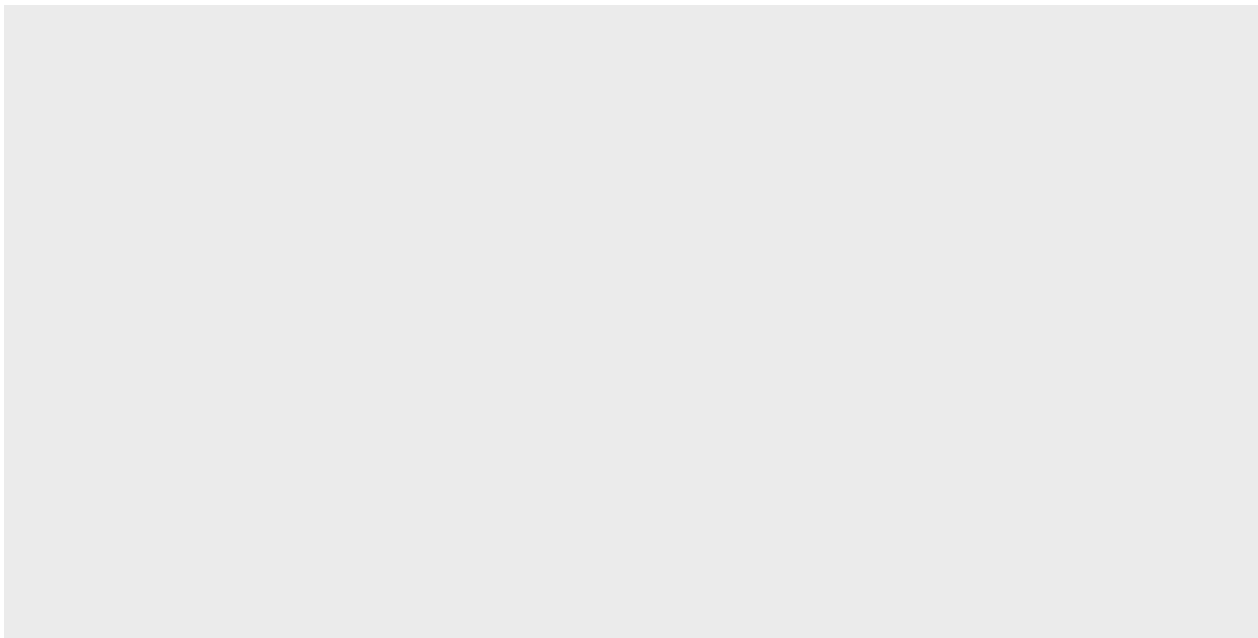
2. Looking closer now at your thoughts (beliefs) write a description of how your repeated thoughts might limit you



3. Choose two repeated thoughts/ beliefs that you hold and list them below.

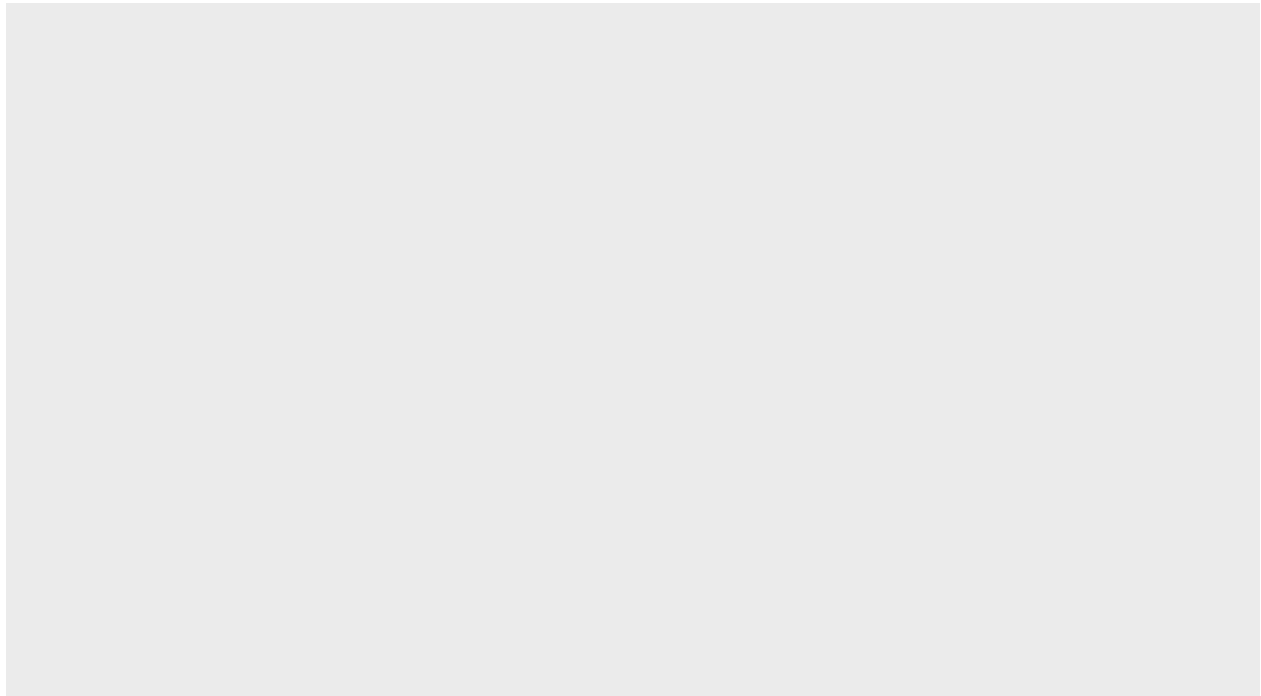


4. If each of these beliefs were absolutely 100% true, what would that mean for you?

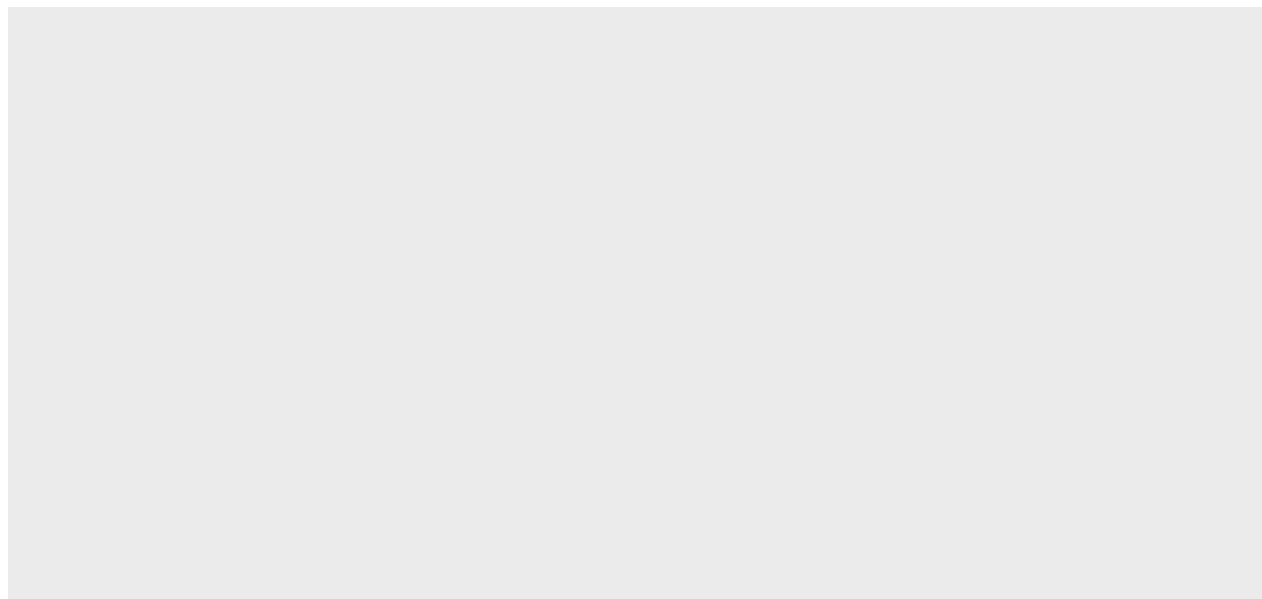




5. If that were true, what would that mean for you?



6. What evidence in your life do you have to contradict the thoughts/ beliefs you have written above?



## Repeated Emotions

1. Discuss what makes you feel angry, and why:

How much of the time do you feel angry?

Never

Sometimes

All day/ Everyday

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

2. Discuss what makes you feel sad, and why:

How much of the time do you feel sad?

Never

Sometimes

All day/ Everyday

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

3. Discuss what makes you feel happy, and why:

How much of the time do you feel happy?

Never	Sometimes						All day/ Everyday		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4. Discuss what makes you feel irritated, and why:

How much of the time do you feel irritated?

Never	Sometimes						All day/ Everyday		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

5. Discuss what makes you feel frustrated, and why:

How much of the time do you feel frustrated?

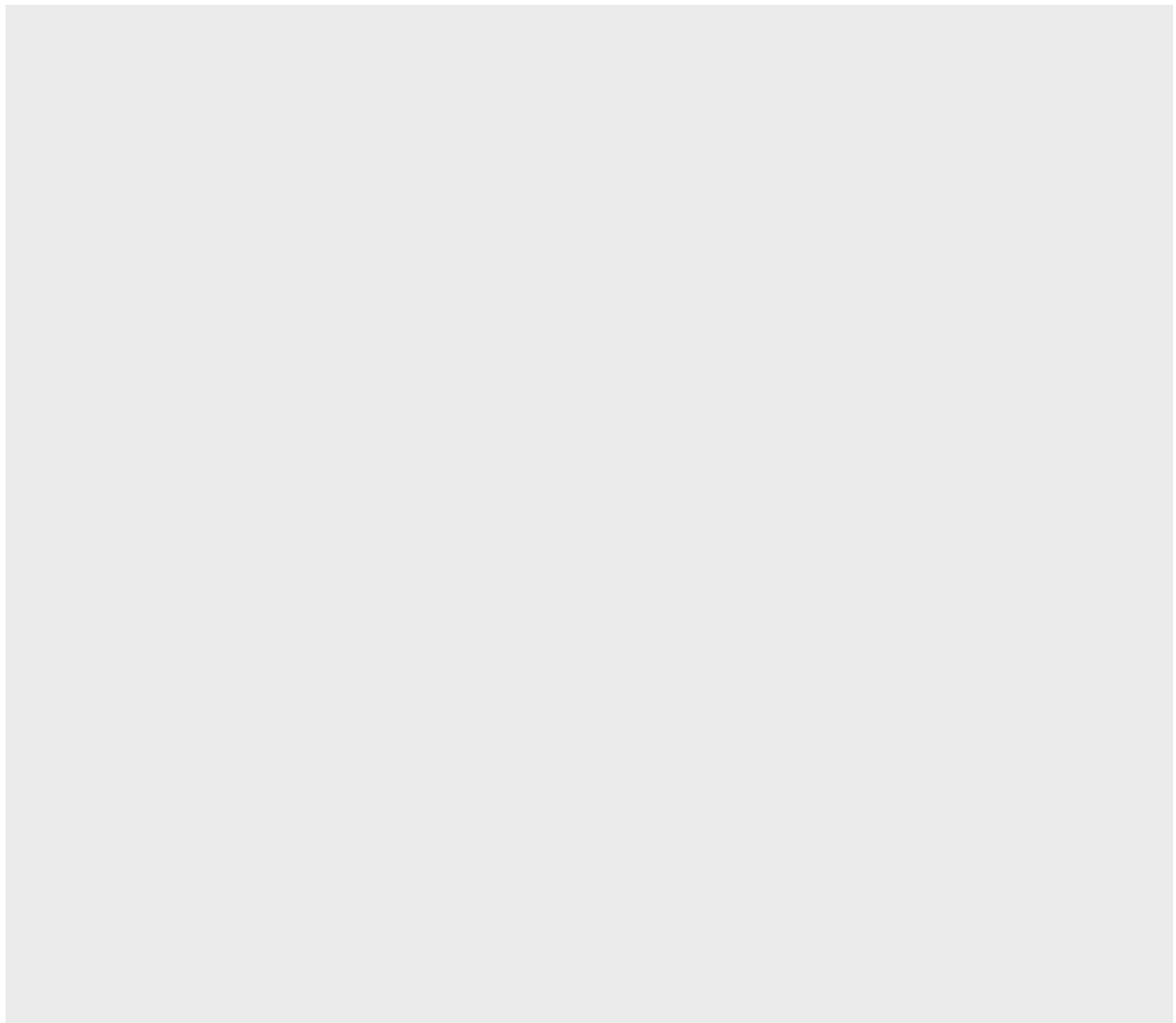
Never					Sometimes					All day/ Everyday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

6. Discuss what makes you feel ecstatic, and why:

How much of the time do you feel ecstatic?

Never					Sometimes					All day/ Everyday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

7. Discuss how your emotions change your thoughts (and vice-versa)



## Goal Attainment

Think of an area in your life where you would like to achieve more than what you are currently achieving.

What do you think about the situation?

What do you believe?

Are your thoughts and beliefs in alignment with your goal?

How are you acting?

What other actions or behaviors can you try in order to achieve a higher result?

Test these actions out for a week and write a reflective response below of what you learnt.

## Notes

