



Be Pain Smart – Depression

Common unhelpful thoughts

When you have unhelpful thoughts, this can make you feel down or sad. When you have these thoughts all the time, it can change the way you view the world. When you start to notice these thoughts, you can start to swap them for more helpful ones.

In one day you have many different thoughts that run through your head. Some of them might be about what you want to do, what you are going to eat, or what has happened.

The way you think about yourself is important because it can change how you feel and the things you do. When you have unhelpful thoughts, this can make you feel down or sad. When you have worries, this can make you feel nervous and pull out of activities.

There are a few common thought patterns that lots of people have. Most people have these thoughts every once in a while, but it is a problem when you have them all the time – it becomes your brain's program. This can be the case when you have pain and the thoughts get trapped in your brain and change the way you see the world. The good thing is, when you start to notice these thoughts, you can start to swap them for more helpful ones.



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On the left side are the common unhelpful thoughts. Do any of these sound familiar?

On the right there are some more helpful **thought swaps**.

All or nothing thinking

Also called **black and white thinking**.
You see everything as either right or wrong, good or bad and there is nothing in between.

'Unless I do it perfectly, it is a failure.'

Mind reading

You think that you know what others are thinking, even when they have not told you.
You usually think it is something bad about you.

'He must think I am an idiot.'

Blaming

When bad things happen in your life, you often think you are to blame for them.

'It is my fault the party was ruined.'

Fairness myth

You think that things should work out based on what you think is fair.

'It is not fair, that shouldn't have happened.'

Labelling

You put a label on yourself or others because of one flaw or mistake.

'I always say something stupid when I go out with my old friends.'

More helpful thought

'Just because something is not exactly perfect, that doesn't mean it's all wrong.'

More helpful thought

'It does not matter what other people think of me, just what I think about myself.'

More helpful thought

'I did leave the party early, but everyone was feeling tired, so it was ending soon anyway.'

More helpful thought

'Not everything that happens to me is fair, but I now have to focus on making things work best for me.'

More helpful thought

'Everyone says something stupid every now and then, but my friends know the real me.'



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Shoulds and musts

You have made hard and fast rules about how the world SHOULD work and how you and other people MUST behave.

'I should be able to push through my pain.'

Catastrophising

This is when you expect the worst will happen.

'My pain is so bad today, I know it will only be worse tomorrow and in the future.'

Jumping to conclusions

You believe something is true just because you feel strongly or have a 'hunch' – but you don't know it is true.

'They are all talking about me and all the things I cannot do now.'

Comparing

You compare yourself to others or to the person you were before.

'I used to be able to do so much more without pain.'

Over-generalising

You make broad sweeping comments about you or your whole life based on one off, usually negative, events.

'I am always stressed. I worry about everything all the time.'

More helpful thought

'It would be good if I could push through the pain, but it does not really work for me. It helps when I pace myself and manage my pain.'

More helpful thought

'My pain is bad today, but that does not mean it will be worse tomorrow or in the future. Pain flare-ups happen. If I keep using my pain tools, there is no reason why my pain will get worse in the future.'

More helpful thought

'I do not really know what anyone is thinking, but they are all being nice and trying to help me. I will try to focus on what they are doing.'

More helpful thought

'I cannot do everything I could do before, but there are still plenty of things I can do and I can keep working to get better.'

More helpful thought

'I have been able to relax before. I can practice letting go of my worries.'

Now pick three of the unhelpful thought patterns that sounds familiar to you and see if you can make your own helpful **thought swaps**.



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Here are some examples from other people with chronic pain.

Type of unhelpful thought

Comparing

My old unhelpful thought

I used to be able to do anything I wanted to. Now I can not do any of the things I used to be able to do before.

My new helpful thought

Before the accident I could do a lot of things, and now even with chronic pain, I can still do some of the things I enjoy. Focusing on what I could do before does not help me. I need to focus on getting better at the things I can do now.



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Type of unhelpful thought

All or nothing thinking

My old unhelpful thought

Unless I can get back to what I was doing before my accident, I do not see the point in doing any exercise at all.

My new helpful thought

I might not get back to what I was able to do before the accident, but it is still worth doing some exercise. I enjoy exercising and doing something will help me build up my physical strength, and it will help me feel better about myself.

Now it is your turn – pick one of the types of unhelpful thought patterns that you have from above.



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Type of unhelpful thought

Write one thought you have a lot of the time that fits this pattern.

My old unhelpful thought

Now have a go at making a more helpful thought.

My new helpful thought

Try this with another unhelpful thought pattern.



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Type of unhelpful thought

Write your old unhelpful thought.

My old unhelpful thought

Write your new, more helpful thought.

My new helpful thought

Let's have another go with a different unhelpful thought pattern.



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Type of unhelpful thought

Write your old unhelpful thought.

My old unhelpful thought

Jot down a new thought that is more helpful.

My new helpful thought