



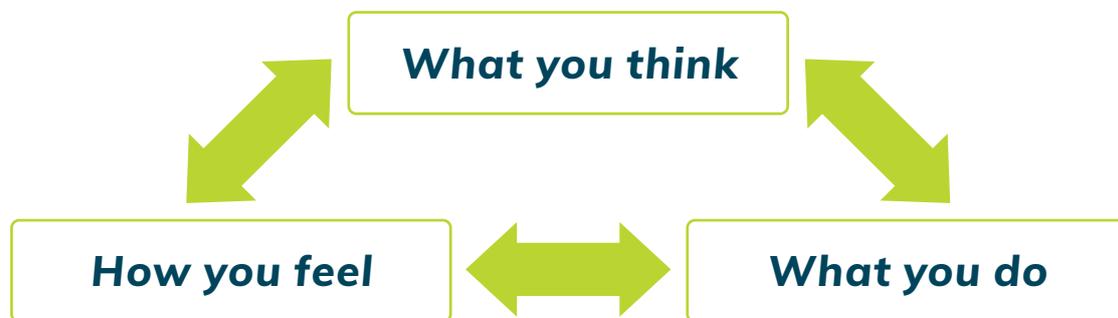
Be Pain Smart – Depression

Noticing your thoughts

Knowing what you think about your chronic pain and your depression is a big step in helping you to 'Be Pain Smart'.

You might ask, 'Why do I need to notice my thoughts when I am feeling down all the time? It only reminds me of how bad things are. 'It is hard enough to live with my chronic pain without worrying about what I am thinking.'

But knowing what you think about when you are feeling down is a big step in helping you to 'Be Pain Smart'.



How you feel impacts on what you think and changes how you act, which in turn, guides how you feel – this can be either a helpful or unhelpful cycle.

It is hard to be aware of what these thoughts are because they are often quick and habitual. Your brain can tune them out, but they are still there, and guide a lot of your feelings and actions.

Over time, the events and experiences you have in life, good and bad, program your brain to have certain beliefs about how you, other people and the world works. These beliefs or brain programs then guide the way you see the things that happen in your life.

Feelings and actions are often linked to common thoughts, for example, when people feel depressed, they commonly think their life is hopeless; when people are anxious, they commonly think that they are in danger or see situations as threats; and when people are angry and yell or lash out at others, they commonly think that the situation is unfair and unjust.

You can change these brain programs by changing the way you think about what has happened.

Thoughts come and go over the course of a day, but certain ones come up a lot. The ones that come up a lot, tend to be the same for people who are feeling anxious or in pain.



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How can you start to be more aware of the thoughts you are having?

There are a few main ways.

1. Often your **feelings** can show you – remember key thoughts tend to go with the same feelings

	IF YOU FEEL LIKE THIS...	YOUR THOUGHTS MIGHT BE...
ANXIETY 	Nervous, your heart races or you feel shaky, or you feel worried or fearful all the time.	I worry that my pain will get worse and that things will be worse in the future.
ANGER 	Angry, frustrated or mad.	People are ALWAYS out to get me. I SHOULD be able to go for a walk without getting more pain.
DEPRESSED 	Sad, down or hopeless.	I will never be able to do what I used to do. There is no point in doing anything. I am a failure.
STRESS 	You obsess over things you can't change and feeling overwhelmed a lot of the time.	Things would be better if I could get rid of my sore back and replace it with a healthy one. I am not coping.



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2. Often how you **act** can show you – remember key thoughts tend to go with the same actions

	IF YOU ACT LIKE THIS...	YOUR THOUGHTS MIGHT BE...
ANXIETY 	Avoid or pull-out of situations.	If I go out, I will embarrass myself. If I go out, then it will not go well. I will wake up tomorrow and my pain will be worse.
ANGER 	Yell at others or storm away from others.	No one ever understands what it is like for me. They deserved what I said to them because they made me so mad.
DEPRESSED 	You are staying home all the time, staying away from family and friends or not getting things done.	Everyone would be better off without me. Nothing good ever happens to me. I am not good at anything. I am a failure.
STRESS 	Restless, cannot settle down or cannot sit still.	Everything feels overwhelming. I cannot cope with anything when I have pain. It is all too much for me.

3. Use a thought diary

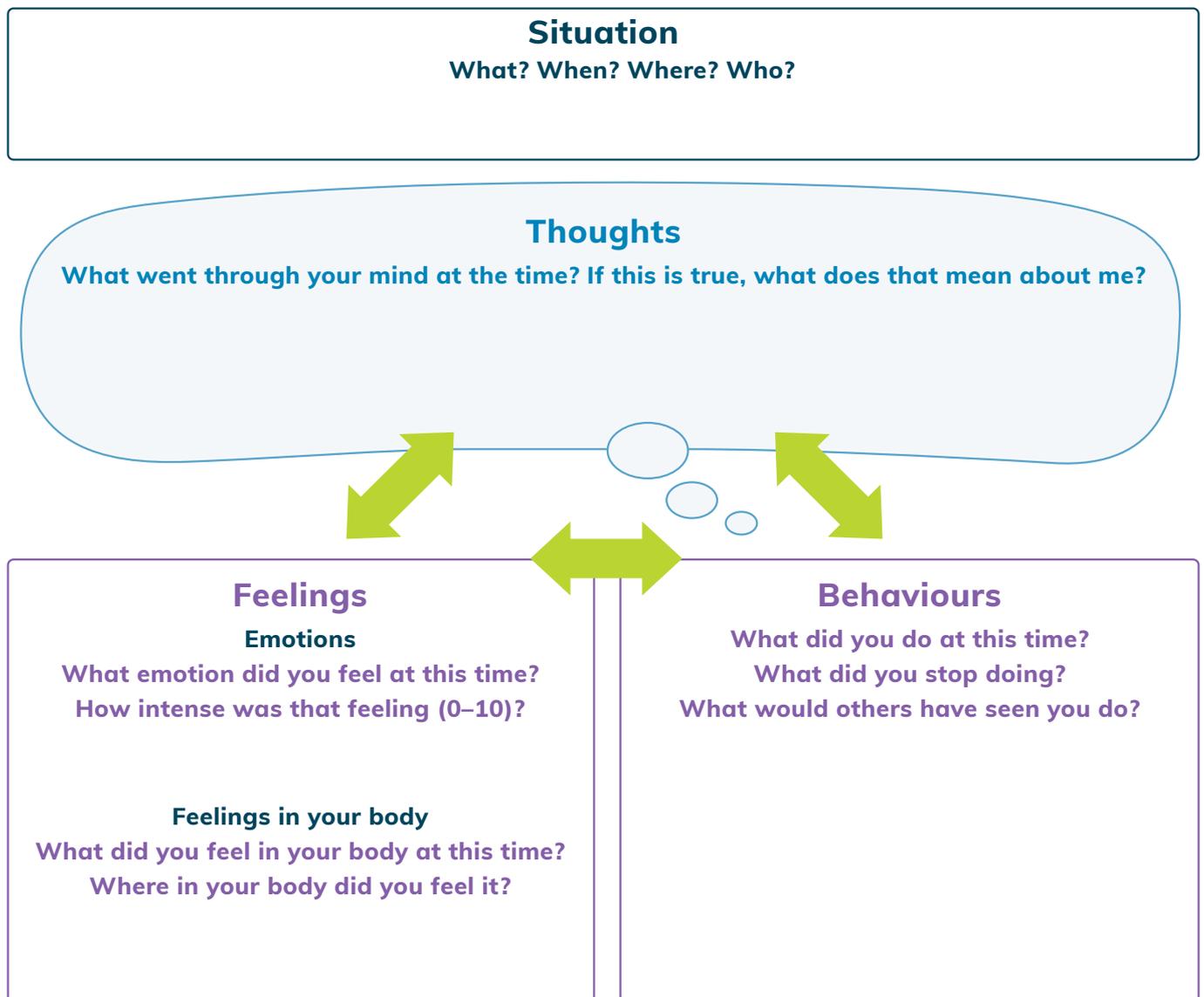


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Thought diary

This is a place where you can record what you thought, felt and how you acted during tense situations. This can help you to notice what your thoughts are and to learn how to separate them from your feelings and actions. When you can do this, it is easier to change or challenge the way you think about what has happened. This can help you to feel and act differently; but first you need to notice what those thoughts are.

Let's look at this thought record below.





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Here are the steps to filling in your thought record.

Step 1.

The situation – start by filling out the details of the situation, write down what happened, when it was, where you were, and who was with you.

Step 2.

Thoughts – this is where you can write down what you were thinking during the situation. Try to remember what was going through your mind at the time, to get down to some of your deeper beliefs. Also try to think about what it would mean about you if the thoughts were true.

Step 3.

Emotions – write down the emotions you were feeling at the time. Rate how intense your feeling was out of 10, with 0 being very low and 10 being very high.

Feelings in your body – also write down what you felt in your body and where you felt it.

Step 4.

Behaviours – this is the place to put what you did or did not do during the situation. Think about what your actions were, write down what others would have seen if they were watching you.



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Have a look at the example below from Paul. He was getting ready to go out with old friends when he started to feel anxious.

Situation
What? When? Where? Who?

*Getting dressed to go out on Tuesday night to meet old friends for dinner at a local restaurant.
 I started to get anxious about my pain getting worse.*

Thoughts
What went through your mind at the time? If this is true, what does that mean about me?

I started thinking that if I go, I will not have anything to talk about because I have not done anything. My pain started getting worse, so I then started thinking that there is not any point in going because it will only make my pain worse and I will then need to leave early. This would be really embarrassing - I do not think my friends would get it and I do not want to talk about it to them. They do not really know how hard things have been for me since my accident. I was also worried that if I went out for too long, tomorrow my pain would flare up and I will not be able to get out of bed. Then the rest of my week is ruined.



Feelings
Emotions
What emotion did you feel at this time?
How intense was that feeling (0-10)?

I felt really anxious and fearful - 8/10.

Feelings in your body
What did you feel in your body at this time?
Where in your body did you feel it?

My heart was racing, my hands were shaking and my back pain got worse. I got really hot and sweaty, and I could not focus on what I was doing.

Behaviours
What did you do at this time?
What did you stop doing?
What would others have seen you do?

A while after I was meant to meet them, I texted one friend that I was not coming. I then turned my phone off so that I could not see any messages.

The next day I saw that a few friends had messaged me to see if I was okay but I didn't get back to them.





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Now you have a go at filling out a thought record. Think of a recent time when you had a strong feeling, maybe when you felt really down or depressed. Fill in the thought record.

It can feel a bit strange to do this at first, but give it a go. To see the patterns in your thoughts, you might need to do this 2-3 times a week for a few weeks.

Situation
What? When? Where? Who?

Thoughts
What went through your mind at the time? If this is true, what does that mean about me?

Feelings
Emotions
What emotion did you feel at this time?
How intense was that feeling (0–10)?

Feelings in your body
What did you feel in your body at this time?
Where in your body did you feel it?

Behaviours
What did you do at this time?
What did you stop doing?
What would others have seen you do?