

Module 8: Managing Stress (Thinking Differently)

REACT online Toolkit info sheet

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **8** Managing Stress (Thinking Differently) 9 10 11 12

Managing Stress— Thinking Differently

“People are not disturbed by things,
but by the view they take of them”

EPICETETUS
(GREEK BLOKE WITH A BEARD)



Here's what he meant...



Exactly the same event
can lead to very different
feelings, depending on the
view you take of it.

This is also true with
situations you are likely to
face supporting someone
with psychosis or bipolar
disorder.

There is no right or wrong
• it's just a different
perspective.

The important thing is that
the way you think can
have a big impact on the
way you feel.

There are some common
thinking traps that we can
all fall into, which make us
see the negative side of
things.

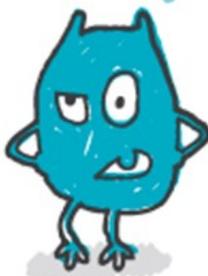
Event

You come home from work late afternoon and your
son/daughter is watching telly in their pyjamas.

Thought One

I can't believe (s)he is
not even dressed. I have
done a full day's work.

Feeling



Thought Two

Its ages since (s)he has
come downstairs to watch
telly with the rest of the
family. Maybe things are
getting slowly better.

Feeling



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Common Thinking Traps

1. All or Nothing Thinking (Black and White Thinking)

A tendency to see things in extremes e.g. *'everything is absolutely awful and always will be'* vs *'everything is resolved and there will never be any more problems'*. The reality for most is somewhere in between i.e. pretty grey. Usually there are some things going well, and some things not. e.g. *'Some things have improved a bit, but there are still challenges ahead'*.

2. Jumping to Conclusions

This happens when we assume something (usually the worst) is true without real reason to do so e.g. *'the last medication / therapy didn't work so this new one isn't going to be of any use either'*. In fact it often takes many attempts to find the most appropriate treatment for each person.

3. Mind Reading

None of us can really read minds but we spend a lot of time pretending we can. We guess what other people are thinking all the time: whether they like us, whether they are interested in what we are saying etc. This is generally very useful as it helps us to communicate. It can also lead to errors when we assume people are thinking things that they are not e.g. *"He just lies in bed all day. He doesn't want to get better."* He might be in bed with a temperature, or really struggling with anxiety that makes it difficult to go out, even though he really wants to go outside.

4. Personalising

It's easy to blame yourself for everything that goes wrong. Many relatives blame themselves for causing psychosis, e.g. *'If I'd been a better parent then she wouldn't have got ill.'* There is no evidence that this is the case. There is also lots of evidence to support the role of many other factors such as genetics, trauma, drugs and stress. Many people with mental health problems have excellent parents and family carers.

We hope you found this useful—for more information go to www.reactnhs.uk

www.reactnhs.uk

Department of Health Disclaimer:

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