

## 106 (D) Thoughts are not Truths

Anxiety can cause one to overestimate, the chance of a negative outcome, in a rather normal situation. This anxiousness can be counteracted, by critically examining the evidence for & against the distorted beliefs. e.g. what's the worst that could happen if you ignore the anxious thoughts & feelings?

Many often give thoughts, which are just thoughts, more value than they are worth & allow intrusive thoughts to hold more meaning than they have, falsely allowing them to define oneself negatively, with the key here being "falsely" as thoughts & even beliefs, are not necessarily true, or truths.

We all need to realize that thoughts are not as powerful, or meaningful as we may think. e.g. Try buying a lottery ticket & think over & over "I am going to win" , or start flapping your arms & say, I am going to fly, or breathe in & out really fast, or jump up & down until you increase your heart rate & temperature & think, I am going to die, or lose control; so does thinking any of these thoughts make what you're thinking about happen, or make any of it true?

Good, or bad, happy or scary, or other thoughts & beliefs, do not make things happen & do not equal truth. Truly understanding this should help one to open up ways in ones thinking, to counteract the lies that your thoughts & feelings would try to have you believe, about being able to change your physical & mental health through the harmless thoughts that are attacking you.

You can call yourself worthless, over & over & can make yourself feel worthless, but again, feelings are not truths & no one is worthless, regardless of what any say or think about them. Just because you believe something, does not make it so.

Those with panic disorder can counteract these errors in thoughts, by questioning themselves, the predominate thoughts & the possible outcomes e.g. examine the very low probability of a heart attack, or going insane, or acting crazy; due to a racing heart, mindful fear, sweating, or any other normal physiological feelings, just happening at the wrong time. Think about how many times you have experienced panic symptoms? How many heart attacks have you experienced from fear? How many deaths? Have you seen a Dr.? Did they run tests? Any medications given? Did it help with anxiety? Could it have stopped a heart attack? What does this tell you about the chance of a medical emergency from panic, or anxiety? In the last 40 yrs.

I have had 10's of thousands of panic attacks where I thought I would lose my mind & yet I never have & never will & yet I still waste time thinking about it?

When what causes anxiety is avoided, it prevents the brain from testing & modifying the error in thoughts & then you cannot prove that you could & would survive it, by just doing it, afraid if need be, so that your brain can experience the truth that feelings of fear are not harmful & can be walked through victoriously.

Along with over-estimating negative thoughts, many overestimate how bad the outcomes can be. There may be real consequences to choices & the goal is to see that though unpleasant, they are usually not as bad as imagined. We must examine the validity of anxious thoughts & what's the worst thing, that would happen, even if the false thought did occur? How might that actually impact your life?

It's time to see that even if the thoughts & feared outcomes were true, you can learn to accept & go along with them, without allowing them to be a problem.

We can guide & change our thinking with probing questions, such as- Are these thoughts actually true? Are the thoughts consistent with evidence? What is the worst, best, most likely outcome? Could you survive the outcome & would it really be a such a severe problem? Are there other ways to think about the situation? What resources do you have, or think you need to help you face this situation & how could these help?

Life is uncertain & we need to accept that things do happen & change, for everyone & we can relearn how to cope with changes & consequences, without turning them into problems.

We also need to be using coping statements to counteract negative thinking. These should be in your own words & need to apply directly to your concerns & need to be realistic, not unrealistic such as, e.g. I'm not going to be anxious, or, I will be calm, I won't say anything stupid, which are completely unrealistic, as you can't expect to eliminate anxiety, or to be perfect.

Statement should remind us that it's okay to be human & every single person alive has awkward & anxious moments, that they learn to walk through without giving them any extra attention.

Writing & carrying a brief & easy to remember (index card?) coping card statement, can help through difficult moments.

Write this one down; Most people will accept me, thoughts, issues & all, even if something does happen, as everyone is battling inner issues, so even if when starting out, if my hands shake a lil, or I stumble, or studder or whatever? just keep going forward & also remember that you can cope with the disapproval of judgmental people, as you're not here to impress them, so their thoughts are not that important.

Coping cards start with a reminder that the probability of disapproval, or being judged is lower than your fear says it is & reminds you that you are capable of dealing with disapproval & that the consequences of such are not as severe, as your fear would lead you to believe.

Example coping card. Most will accept it if I make a mistake during my speech & I can cope with disapproval, as it's really not that bad, making mistakes is natural & will happen & can be survived, positively. There is power in reading coping cards & filling your mind with positive coping thoughts & truths all day, every day.

Coping cards can be as detailed as need, e.g. When I need to speak in public, I'll be anxious, my heart will race, I might sweat & be shaky etc. but I will still do my best & even if nervous, I can get through it. I will remember that anxiety is uncomfortable, but it will pass. I don't have to be perfect, I'm only human & I will be happy with myself for facing this. When I face my fears, that's what helps me get over them. Most of all, I will remember that any kind of disaster is unlikely, even if I run into some disapproval, it's not the end of the world. The people that I truly care about the most will love me no matter how I feel.