

SESSION 13: Take Charge of Your Thoughts



Welcome and Review (10 minutes)

SAY: Welcome back, everyone!

Today, we are going to talk about taking charge of your thoughts.

Before we start, let's spend a few minutes going over what we discussed last time. I will try to answer any questions you may have.

DO: Briefly summarize previous session.

DISCUSS: What questions do you have about our last session?

SAY: Let's talk about how things went with the action plan you made last time.

DISCUSS: What went well? What didn't go so well?

SAY: Now let's talk about how things went with the other things you tried at home.

DISCUSS: What went well? What didn't go so well?

Objectives (2 minutes)

SAY: Taking charge of your thoughts can help you manage your weight. Today, we will discuss how to manage your thoughts.

We will talk about:

- The difference between harmful and helpful thoughts
- How to replace harmful thoughts with helpful thoughts

Finally, you will make a new action plan.

Harmful Thoughts vs. Helpful Thoughts (8 minutes)

SAY: Let's start by talking about the difference between harmful and helpful thoughts.

Harmful thoughts get in the way of your eating and fitness goals so they make it harder to manage your weight.

Helpful thoughts help you reach your eating and fitness goals so they make it easier to manage your weight.

Let's look at an example. Please turn to "Anna's Story" in this module's handouts.

DO: Read (or ask a volunteer to read) the first three paragraphs of the story.

ASK: What harmful thought does Anna have at first?

ANSWER: "The weather is lousy. I'd better skip my walk today."

ASK: What helpful thought does Anna replace this with?

ANSWER: "It's raining, so I'll walk in the mall instead. It will also give me the chance to run some errands."

SAY: So Anna is telling herself: "Yes, it's raining out. But that won't stop me from reaching my fitness goal. I'll still take a walk. I'll just do it inside."

DO: Make sure participants understand the difference between harmful and helpful thoughts before moving on to the next section. Discuss the tips to prevent harmful thinking below "Anna's Story."

Replace Harmful Thoughts with Helpful Thoughts (30 minutes)

SAY: We've talked about the difference between harmful and helpful thoughts. Now let's discuss how to replace harmful thoughts with helpful thoughts.

Please look at "3 Steps to Replace Harmful Thoughts with Helpful Thoughts" in this module's handouts.

DO: Use the handout to discuss how to identify harmful thoughts, put on the brakes, and think helpful thoughts instead.

SAY: There are many different types of harmful thoughts. Here are some of them.

We'll start with **All or Nothing Thoughts**. That's where you see only the extremes. You don't see anything in between.

DISCUSS: What are some All or Nothing Thoughts you might have about changing your lifestyle?

DO: Write the harmful thoughts on the flip chart or white board, if you are using one.

DISCUSS: What are some helpful thoughts you could replace these with?

You don't need to cover all the types of harmful thoughts in this section. Choose the types that are most relevant to your group.

All or Nothing Thoughts and helpful thoughts to replace them with include:

I can't eat ice cream ever again.

- I can have ice cream once in a while.
- When I do have ice cream, I'll measure it.

Exercise is boring.

- I haven't found an activity that I enjoy yet.
- I'll keep trying new activities until I find one that I like.

SAY: Now let's talk about **Making Excuses**. That's where you blame situations, things, or other people for reasons why you aren't sticking with your plans.

DISCUSS: What are some excuses you might make about changing your lifestyle?

DO: Write the harmful thoughts on the flip chart or white board, if you are using one.

DISCUSS: What are some helpful thoughts you could replace these with?

Excuses and helpful thoughts to replace them with include:

It's too cold/hot outside to go for a walk.

- I will dress for the weather and walk anyway.
- I will work out indoors.

I can't meet my eating goals because my spouse keeps making cookies.

- I find the cookies tempting.
- I will ask my spouse to make something healthy instead.

SAY: Now let's talk about Filtering Thoughts. That's where you ignore the good and focus on the bad.

DISCUSS: What are some Filtering Thoughts you might have about changing your lifestyle?

DO: Write the harmful thoughts on the flip chart or white board, if you are using one

DISCUSS: What are some helpful thoughts you could replace these with?

Filtering Thoughts and helpful thoughts to replace them with include:

No one else supports my healthy lifestyle.

- My friend Shelly supports it.
- I will ask for more support.

I haven't stuck to my diet at all this week.

- I stuck to my diet four out of seven days.
- I have a plan for how to stay on track in the future.

SAY: Now let's talk about Self-Labeling Thoughts. That's where you call yourself something bad.

DISCUSS: What are some Self-Labeling Thoughts you might have about changing your lifestyle?

DO: Write the harmful thoughts on the flip chart or white board, if you are using one.

DISCUSS: What are some helpful thoughts you could replace these with?

Self-Labeling Thoughts and helpful thoughts to replace them with include:

I'm such a weakling.

- I can climb the stairs without getting out of breath now.
- I'll be a little more active each week.

I'm the world's worst cook.

- My daughter liked the stir-fry I made last night.
- I'll keep learning more about cooking.

SAY: Now let's talk about Comparing Thoughts. That's where you compare yourself with other people and find yourself lacking.

DISCUSS: What are some Comparing Thoughts you might have about changing your lifestyle?

DO: Write the harmful thoughts on the flip chart or white board, if you are using one.

DISCUSS: What are some helpful thoughts you could replace these with?

Comparing Thoughts and helpful thoughts to replace them with include:

Teo has lost so much more weight than I have.

- My weight loss has slowed down.
- I'll ask Teo for some tips.

Stella is so much stronger than I am.

- I'd like to be stronger.
- I'll try using a resistance band.

SAY: Now let's talk about Gloom and Doom Thoughts. That's where you assume the worst. This type of thinking often leads to giving up.

DISCUSS: What are some Gloom and Doom Thoughts you might have about changing your lifestyle?

DO: Write the harmful thoughts on the flip chart or white board, if you are using one.

DISCUSS: What are some helpful thoughts you could replace these with?

Gloom and Doom Thoughts and helpful thoughts to replace them with include:

I just know I'm going to get hurt. Then I won't be able to work out

- I'll take steps to work out safely.
- If I do get hurt, I'll find a different way to be active.

I just know I'm going to have a hard time losing weight, since both of my parents had obesity.

- I know a lot more about how to manage my weight than my parents did.
- I'll do what I can to manage my weight.

Setting goals: Plan for Success (10 minutes)

SAY: Please turn to your Action Plan Journal. Review the concept of SMART goals (only if needed).

SMART goals are: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound

Decide:

Specific: What will you do and where will you do it

Measurable: How will you know that you met your goal

Achievable: Is this something you can do between now and the next session

Relevant: Does this relate to your overall goals

Time-bound: When, how long and how often will you do it

Give people about 5 minutes to think about and write down SMART goals for diet, physical activity, and stress management/self-care.

ASK: Does anyone feel comfortable sharing one of their SMART goals? Then identify each component of SMART or encourage additional editing if components are missing (i.e. if the person says "I will walk three times this week" encourage them to add the where and how long to this to make it more specific and time-bound.

Summary and Closing:

SAY: Between now and our next session, I'd like you to practice taking charge of your thoughts. Follow the "3 Steps to Replace Harmful Thoughts with Helpful Thoughts". You can use "Replace Harmful Thoughts with Helpful Thoughts" for ideas.

DO: Answer questions as needed.

SAY: We have come to the end of our meeting. Today, we discussed how taking charge of your thoughts can help you manage your weight. We talked about:

- The difference between harmful and helpful thoughts
- How to replace harmful thoughts with helpful thoughts

DISCUSS: Do you have questions about anything we talked about today?

SAY: Next time, we'll talk about the things you tried at home, including your action plan. We'll also talk about _____.

Thank you for coming to this session. Remember to bring your Participant Notebook to the next session.