

Workbook



for Metacognitive Training for Depression in Later Life (MCT-Silver)

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Group Information Handout

Metacognitive Training for Depression in Later Life (MCT-Silver)



Dear Patient,

Metacognitive Training for Depression in Later Life (MCT-Silver) is a group training developed specifically for people age 60 years and older with depressed mood.

This information sheet provides relevant information about the MCT-Silver group, as well as some basics of the training. Please read through this handout before your first meeting.

Where and when does the group take place?

When:

Where:

Contact person:

What is metacognitive training about?

“Meta” is the Greek word for “about”. “Cognition” can generally be translated to “thinking”. Together, they result in the word “metacognition”, which translates to “thinking about thinking”. This phrase describes how thought processes are observed from a distance in Metacognitive Training – from a satellite position or a “bird’s-eye view” so to speak (Ill. 1). Specifically, we mainly focus on thought patterns that play a role in the onset and maintenance of depression.

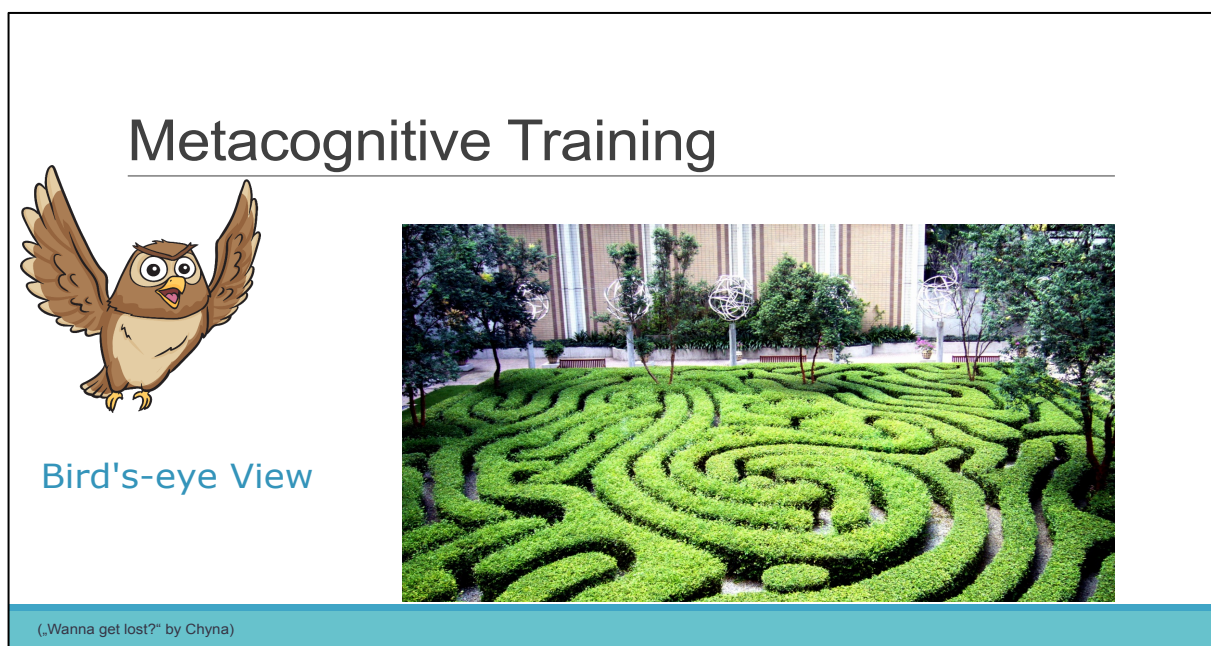


Illustration 1: Bird’s-eye view

How does thinking relate to depression?

To illustrate how thinking is associated with depressive emotions and behavior, we would like to present an example: Imagine that a good friend doesn’t call you on your birthday. Four different people might react with very different emotions in this situation: One person reacts angrily, the other calmly, the next is afraid and the last is sad (Ill. 2).

One event – many possible emotions...

A good friend does not call you on your birthday.

Possible reactions

angry	calm	afraid	sad

Illustration 2: Four different emotional reactions to the same situation

How do you think the person who is angry would behave? Maybe he/she sends the friend a mean E-mail or decides to cutoff contact with the friend. How might people who feel calm, afraid or sad react?

The person who reacts calmly probably celebrates her birthday undisturbed, whereas the person who is afraid might worry that something happened to her friend. The person who is sad might cry and start to ruminate (Ill. 3).

One event – many possible emotions...

A good friend does not call you on your birthday.

angry	calm	afraid	sad
Send a mean mail	Celebrate birthday	Worry	Cry and ruminate

Illustration 3: Four different emotional and behavioral reactions to the same event.

Why is it that people react to the same situation with such different feelings and behave so differently? What could be the cause of this? Exactly – those people think differently about the same situation. They attribute the event to different factors and, therefore, draw differing conclusions (Ill. 4).

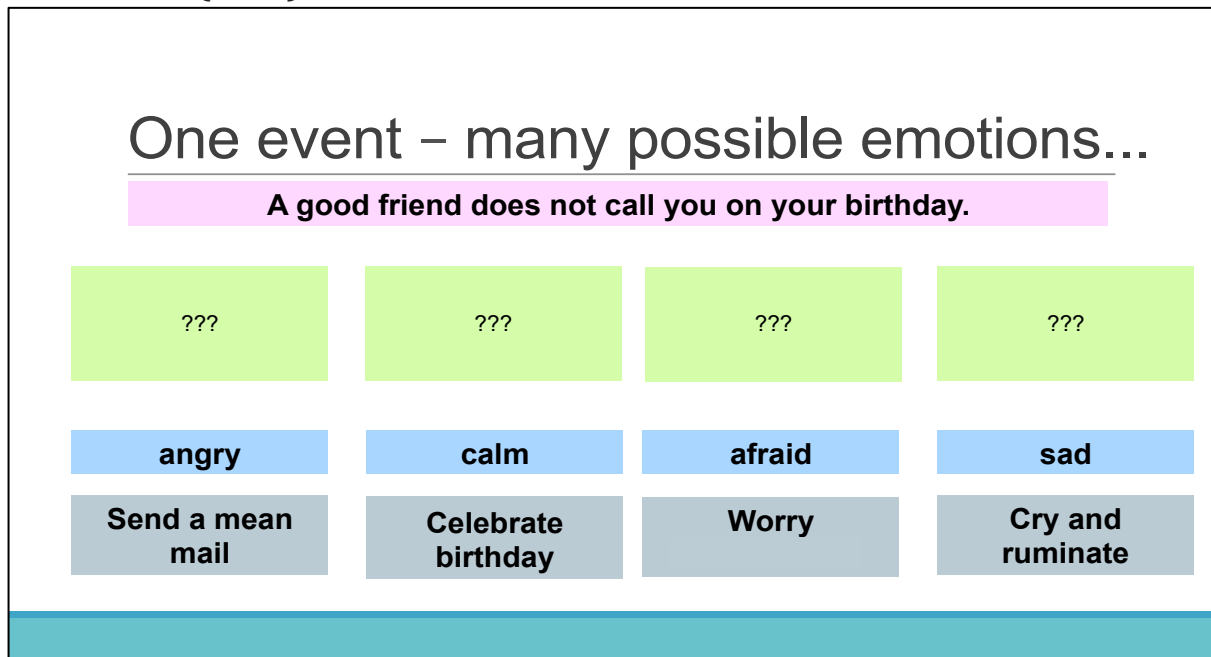


Illustration 4: Different thoughts, attributions and conclusions can lead to different emotions and behaviors.

What could a person who is angry think in this situation? What about someone who is calm, afraid or sad (Ill. 5)?

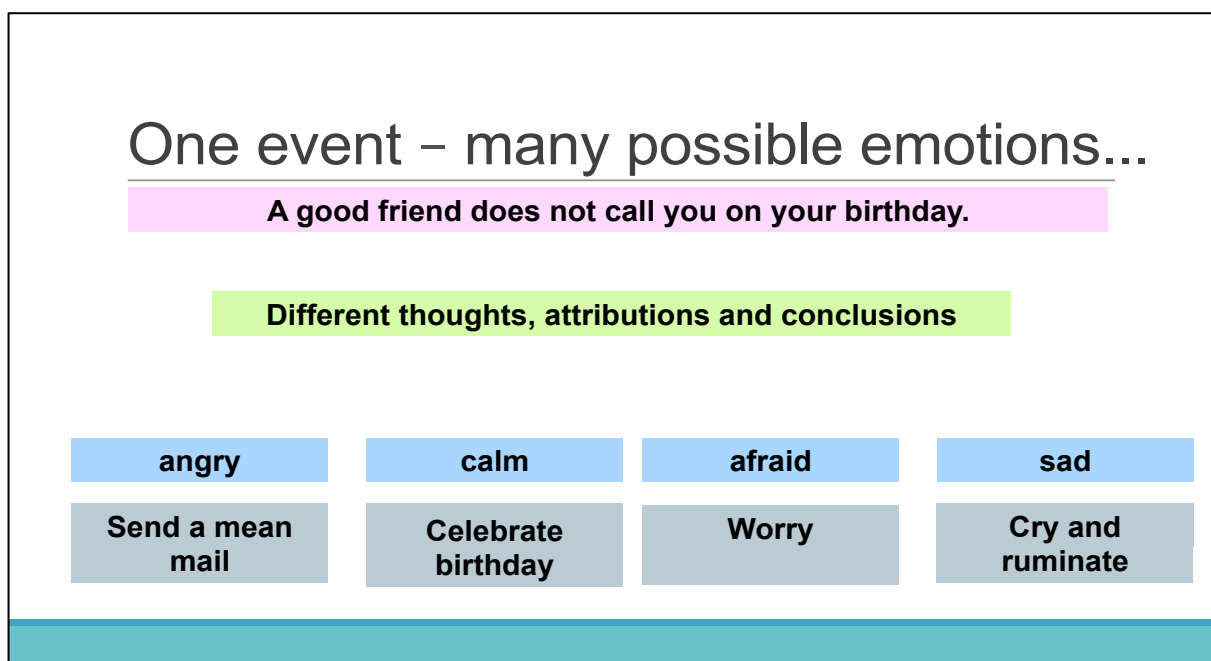


Illustration 5: Which thoughts could fit with the corresponding reaction?

The angry person might think, “That jerk! Always thinking about himself and never of others. I don’t want to be friends with him any longer.” Whereas the person who reacts calmly probably thinks there is a simple explanation, “Maybe his phone battery died, he wrote down the appointment incorrectly, he is on vacation or is under a lot of stress.” The person who is afraid might think, “Something terrible must have happened!” And the person who is sad might think, “He forgot about me because I am not important to him” (Ill. 6).

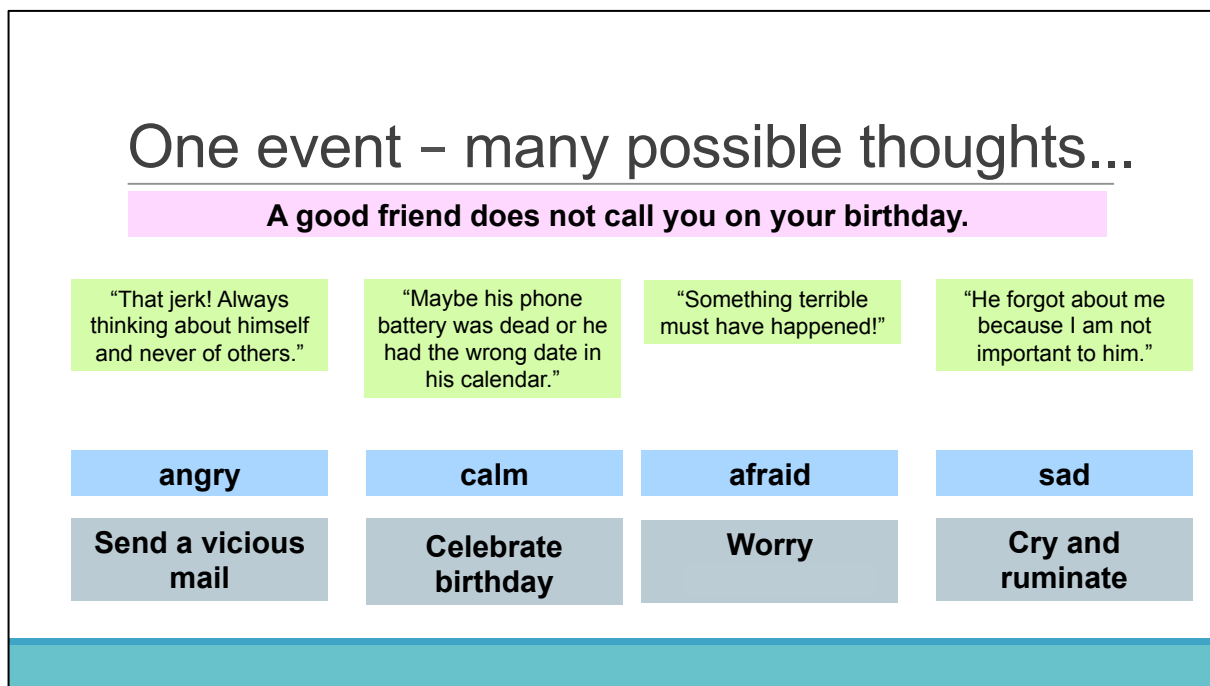


Illustration 6: Four possible thoughts, and emotional and behavioral reactions to the same situation.

Taken together, our thoughts influence our emotions and our behavior. However, our emotions also influence our thoughts. That’s why it is difficult for most people to have positive, happy thoughts when they are in a negative, sad mood. Likewise, a negative mood leads to having increased negative thoughts. Behavior can also influence thoughts: e.g., pleasant activities are accompanied predominantly by positive emotions. Emotions, thoughts and behaviors influence each other reciprocally (Ill. 7).

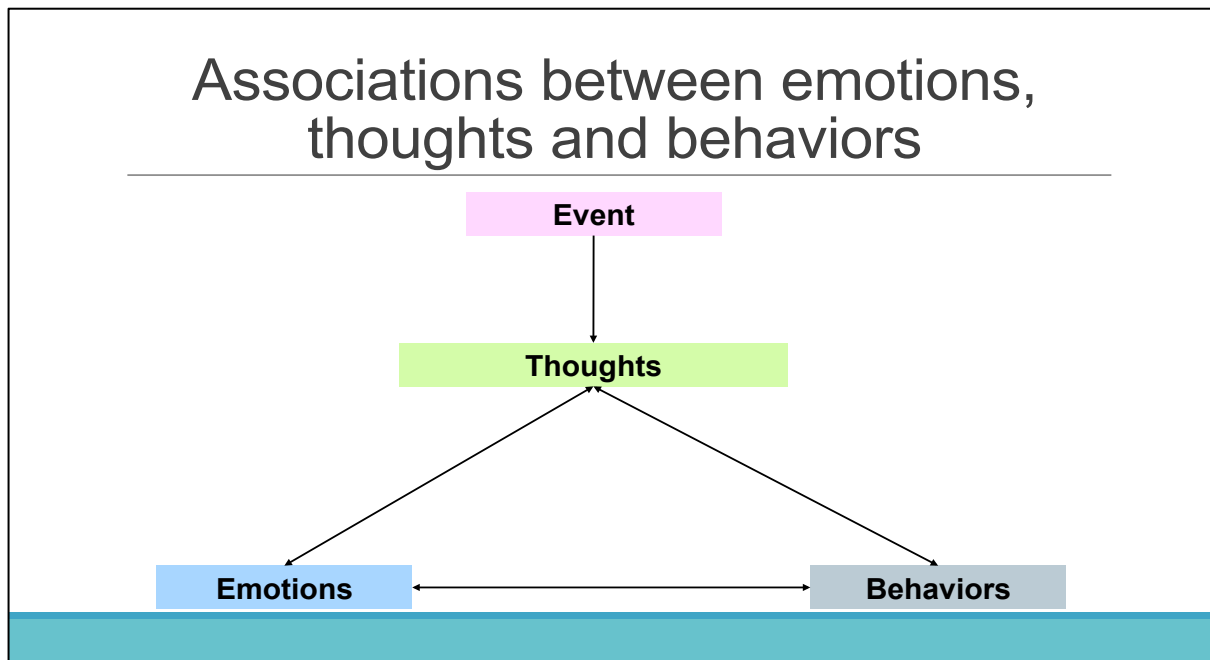


Illustration 7: Reciprocal relationships between thoughts, emotions and behaviors.

Why is it that different people have differing thoughts, attributions and conclusions despite having experienced the same situation? The kinds of thoughts that go through our heads in any given situation depend a lot on how we are used to thinking; or our “thinking style”. Furthermore, thinking is characterized by certain “core beliefs” that develop throughout the lifespan (e.g., “I must be perfect”, “I can’t make any mistakes”, Ill. 8).

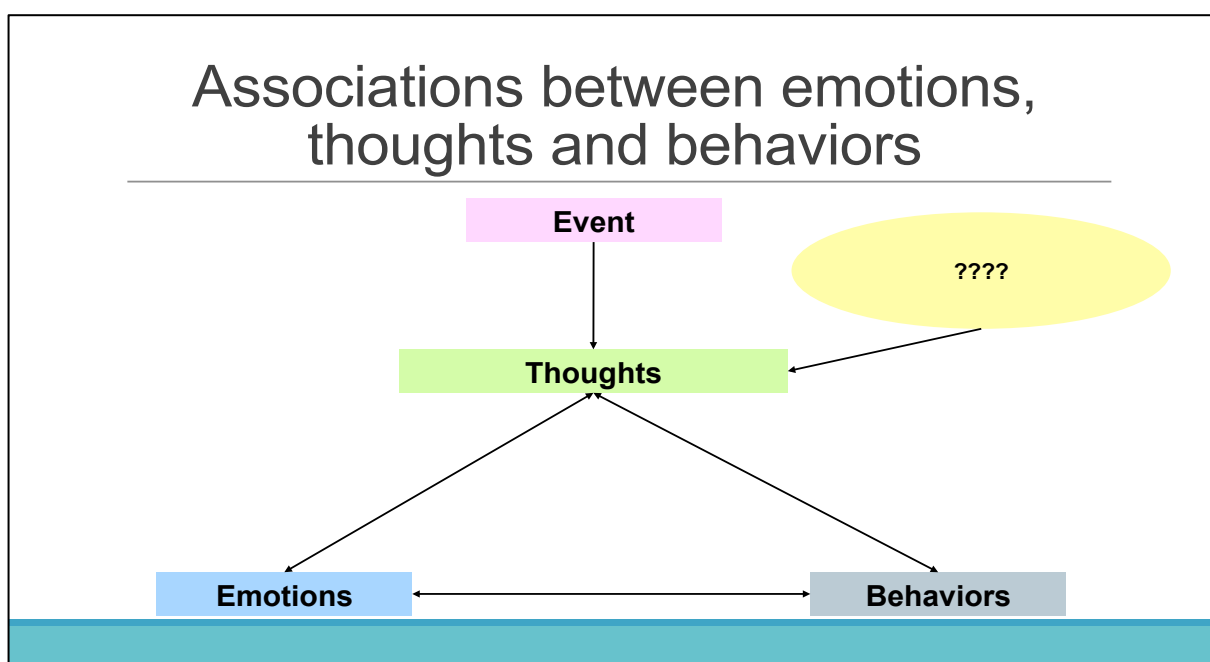


Illustration 8: Thoughts are influenced by thinking styles and/or core beliefs.

Generally, thinking styles and/or core beliefs can be distorted, one-sided and not based on reality, thus leading to thought distortions (Ill. 9).

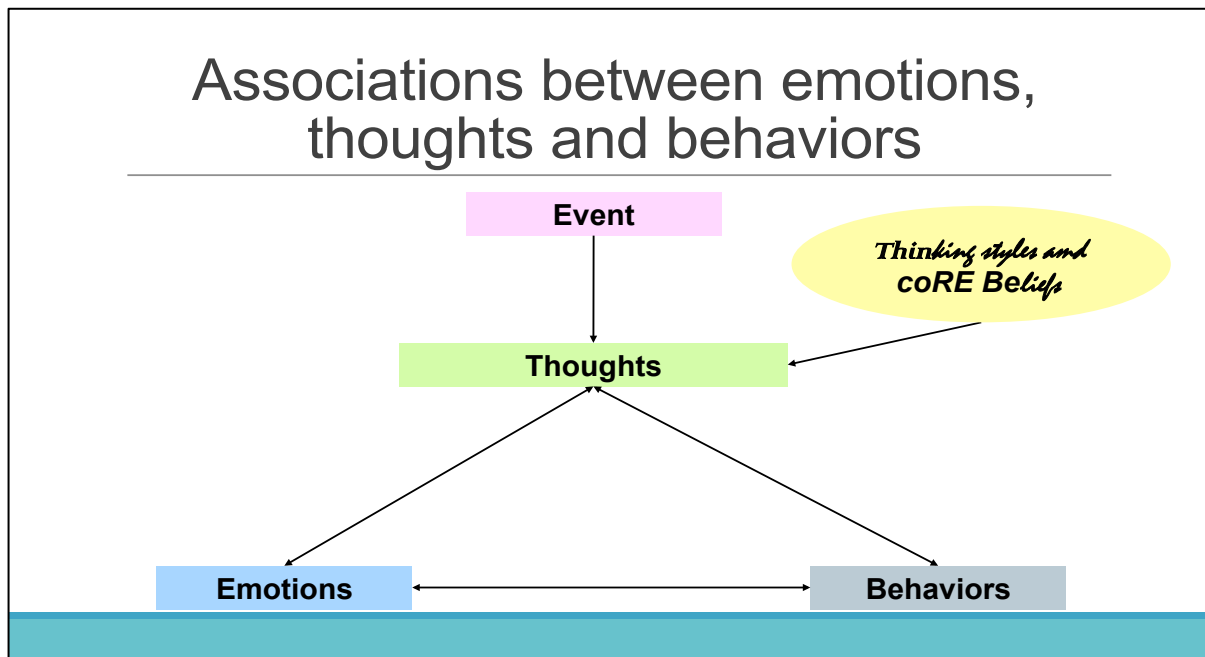


Illustration 9: Thinking styles and/or core beliefs can be distorted.

Many specific thought distortions that play a role in the onset and maintenance of depression have been identified. MCT-Silver seeks to educate participants about typical depressive thought distortions. In the group, it will be discussed how thought distortions function in everyday life and how they can be identified and modified. Furthermore, behaviors and assumptions that can strengthen depression in the long run will also be discussed.

Although the development and maintenance of depression in later life is similar to depression earlier in life, MCT-Silver focuses mainly on issues of aging (e.g., retirement, loss of friends/family members). Although the group trainers are here to lead you through MCT-Silver, it is important to emphasize that you are your own expert. Over the years, you have already gained a lot of experience and know what is good for you. Of course, your symptoms will not disappear in an instant just because of a single exercise or session - it takes time and practice. However, we would like to encourage you to try the exercises in the session and practice them at home. Later you can decide for yourself whether you want to continue with the exercises or not.

Over a total of eight MCT-Silver meetings, you can expect the following topics to be covered: At every other meeting, more details on Thinking and Reasoning and typical depressive thought distortions like mental filter, black-and-white thinking, and jumping to conclusions will be presented. In the other four meetings, topics like memory, self-worth, acceptance of age-related changes, values and behaviors that strengthen depression (e.g., withdrawal, rumination) will be presented.

We welcome you to join the next meeting of MCT-Silver! Please note the group rules. If you have any questions regarding this workbook, the trainers will be happy to answer them.

Group Rules

... for Metacognitive Training for Depression in Later Life (MCT- Silver):

- (1) Please be on time so that the group can start together.
- (2) Participants and therapists agree to keep all personal information discussed in the group confidential: Everything that is discussed within the group, stays in the group!
- (3) Everyone has the right to talk or remain silent. Everyone can decide for him/herself if and when they want to say something, and how much they would like to share.
- (4) Please treat each other with respect and respect the opinions of others! If you want to criticize, focus on the specific behavior or point of discussion, not on the individual.
- (5) Please listen and let others finish!
- (6) Don't be afraid of making "mistakes". Mistakes are welcome in the group and are a great learning opportunity!
- (7) If you can't attend a meeting due to other obligations or have to leave early, please tell the trainers before the start of the meeting.
- (8) In case of a crisis (e.g., feeling that you may hurt yourself or someone else) or open questions, please talk to the trainers after the session (or sooner, if necessary).

Module 1

Thought Distortion 1: Mental Filter

- Filtering out and paying attention only to negative details.
- Perceptions of reality are clouded, like a single drop of ink that clouds an entire glass of water.

Thought Distortion 2: Overgeneralization

- A single negative event is seen as part of a never-ending series of failures.
- In describing such events, words such as “always” or “never” are often used.

Overview

Summary of learning points:

- Pay attention to the discussed depressive thought distortions (“mental filter”, “overgeneralization”) in everyday life!
- Generate more helpful appraisals, for example:
 - Make concrete, situation-specific statements that refer to the here and now.
 - Change your perspective (“What would I say to a good friend if they experienced the same or a similar situation?”).
 - Gain distance by deliberately exaggerating a situation (e.g., make a scenario more ridiculous or funny).

Exercises

Mental Filter

Over the next week, pay attention to situations in which you perceive reality through a “mental filter”. Describe one of these situations on the following pages. The example already completed may help get you thinking:

Example

Mrs. Miller and her husband have planned and organized a party to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary. At the party, Mrs. Miller receives many compliments from the guests. However, one of the guests says that he finds the chairs to be uncomfortable.

Mental Filter: “My guests are annoyed and don't feel comfortable here!”

Your situation:

Your “mental filter”:

What are the consequences of this mental filter? How did it influence your feelings and actions?

Example

Mrs. Miller’s mood sinks. She’s worried that the guests are annoyed and, therefore, she can’t really enjoy the party.

Based on your situation:

Is this thought justified? NO! Therefore: What could be a helpful alternative thought?

Example

"I've received many compliments from the guests, and everyone seems to be enjoying the party. Just because a single person finds the chairs uncomfortable, doesn't mean that all the guests think that and that the celebration is a disaster. Besides, the guests don't have to sit the whole time."

With regard to your situation?

What are the consequences of this alternative thought for your feelings and actions?

Example

Mrs. Miller can still enjoy the party. Perhaps she can ask if there is an alternative seat for the guest who complained.

With regard to your situation:

If others you trust were also present during this situation:

Find out how others may have perceived the situation. Ask a person you trust if they evaluated the situation the same way.

Example

"One guest finds the chairs uncomfortable. Do you think so too? Do you think all of our guests feel uncomfortable?"

Who was present during your situation? What could you ask that person?

What could be his/her answer? (Sometimes it's enough to play the scenario out in your imagination).

Overgeneralization

During the next week, pay attention to situations in which you are overgeneralizing, and try to reach a more helpful appraisal.

The following examples are meant to aid you with this task:

Example

If you forgot a friend's birthday, instead of generalizing

"I'm a bad friend."

... try to make concrete statements about a specific situation. For example:
"This year, I forgot their birthday. That's somewhat embarrassing, but I can still send her a belated birthday wish! In the future, I will make sure to write down her birthday in my calendar. It doesn't mean I'm a bad friend because I forgot it this one time."

In what situation do you use the words "always" or "never"?

What would you say to a good friend in the same situation?

What would be a more concrete statement with regard to this specific situation?

*Example***Deliberate Exaggeration:**

Try to deliberately exaggerate the situation in an amusing way.

Situation: You baked a cake, which did not turn out well.

You tell yourself: "I'm a failure; I can't do anything right. I can't expect my family to eat this."

Imagine the scenario in an absurd or funny way. Have a little fun with your own thought distortions. This can help to gain some distance from these thoughts:

"My kids say that the cake is the best they've ever had. They love its unique taste and ask me to bake more cakes like it for an upcoming party. At the party, an employee of Betty Crocker tries the cake and likes it. They quickly develop a new baking mix based on this cake, which is available in every supermarket."

Your own example of a distorted thought (e.g., a time when all the positive was overshadowed by a single negative aspect):

Deliberate exaggeration:

Notes

Space for remaining questions, problems that occurred, or experiences, that you would like to report in the next meeting:

Other notes:

Module 2

Why are we concerned with “memory” during depression?

- Many individuals with depression complain of having problems with concentration and memory.
- Decreased concentration is a diagnostic criterion for depression.

Is it theoretically possible to remember everything?

- **No!** The storage capacity of our memory is limited!
- Not everything we remember really happened the way we remember it! Our memory does not function like a “video camera”!
- It is normal to forget things.

Does getting older mean my memory will get worse?

- During the normal aging process, some mental processes are not affected at all or even improve (e.g., vocabulary, life experience-based knowledge). These changes occur gradually and begin already around age 40.
- These changes are usually not dramatic!

Example

If a list of 15 words were read aloud five times, after 30 minutes, a 20-year-old would remember about 13 words, whereas a 65-year-old would remember about 11 words.

Overview

Summary of learning points

- Age-related changes in memory are to a certain extent normal. How well you can think at a certain moment depends on many factors (e.g., concentration, rumination, energy level).
- In general, memory is deceptive! Memory is prone to bias and is especially dependent on your current mood.
- Use memory aids during periods of depression (e.g., calendars, post-its).
- Nobody's perfect: We all forget things – whether “young” or “old”. This is normal and sometimes a good thing!

Memory and Concentration

- Attention works like a spotlight; only one object on the stage at a time can be illuminated.
- We can only correctly remember things that we have previously focused our attention on!
- It is impossible to focus our attention on all things in our environment at the same time.
- How well we can remember something also depends on how well we can concentrate at the moment.

How do memory and concentration problems occur during depression?

- During strong ruminations, circling thoughts often claim all of one's attention.
- There is hardly any attentional capacity left that can be focused on other (more important) things in the environment. The spotlight is focused virtually "inward".
- As a result, those affected by ruminations can later barely remember some details in their environment.

What can I do to improve memory for positive events?

Example

"While taking a walk, I will consciously pay attention to the pleasant things that I encounter. I will try to find at least five things that are pleasant – such as the warm air against my skin, the smell of freshly cut grass, the beautiful blue sky, the birds chirping, etc."

False Memories

- Our brain fills in and combines current impressions with memories from past, similar events. Many memories are supplemented by "logic" (in the beach scene in the last session, perhaps you remembered seeing a beach towel even though it was not pictured)!

Memories and Depression

- Depressive moods often lead to remembering more negative experiences — pleasant or neutral experiences are not so easily remembered.
- Events are experienced and remembered not through rose-colored, but much more often through gray-tinted glasses!

Example

During a visit to a museum, the few seats available for Mrs. Behrens to take a rest on were occupied. Her back began to ache and then she was developed a bad mood. After the visit, Mrs. Behrens remembered the lack of seats and not the beautiful exhibition!

Are you familiar with this? Have there been times when you remembered only the negative aspects of a situation?

My example:

False memories and Depression

- The emotional “coloring” of memories also relates to false memories!
- Particularly negative emotions lead to distorted views of the world and encourage depressive processing of information (therefore, providing additional “evidence” in the sense of depressive processing).

Does this mean that I can no longer trust my own memories?

- **No!** False memories are normal and affect all people.
- Keep in mind that (like everyone else) you can make errors because memory does not function like a video camera.
- Consider that negative situations might be remembered through gray-tinted glasses.
- In everyday life, train yourself to remember positive events more frequently, and keep a joy journal in which you write down the pleasant events that happen each day.

Memory and Mood

What can I do to improve my memory of positive events? You could try out keeping a joy journal. How do you do that?

Think about the positive aspects of the day, such as particular situations or enjoyable moments that you experienced. Small things also count! Try to find at least three examples.

Write these down in your joy journal

Example

1. Today I happened to meet an old friend I haven't seen in a while.
2. I heard my favorite song on the radio.
3. I really enjoyed reading my new book.

What positive things have you experienced today?

What helps with memory problems in everyday life?

1. Try to incorporate as much structure into your daily schedule as possible. The more routine your behavior is, the less risk there is of forgetting something.
2. It is also helpful to maintain the best possible “external order”. You can find items more quickly and remember better when everything has a specific place.
3. Post helpful notes in strategic places (i.e., medication schedules to the refrigerator; items to remember to take with you on the front door, etc.)
4. Use appointment calendars or other memory aids (ex: from a Smartphone or E-mail program).
5. Make it a habit to always carry a notebook and a pen so that you can note down important things (such as To-Do lists).
6. When you are not at home and want to remember something but have no way to note it down, try to anchor it by linking the idea to an object (i.e., tie a knot in your handkerchief, put a rock in your pocket; put your wedding ring on the other hand).
7. If you are uncertain of someone's name – ask again! Repetition and application of information also improves recollection. Repeat the person's name either out loud or to yourself.
 - Connect the name with an amusing image (e.g., Mrs. Fox with bright orange fox fur for hair; Mr. Knight with knight's armor).
 - Write the name down.
 - Use their name several times during a conversation.
 - Tell friend about this person.

Which of the presented memory strategies would you like to try out this week (see the list above: “What helps with memory problems in everyday life?”)?

Example

“This week I will choose a place where I can always put my house key: I will mount a hook in the entry way where I can always hang my keys.”

What would you like to try out?

Notes

Space for remaining questions, problems that occurred, or experiences, that you would like to report in the next meeting:

Other notes:

Module 3

Thought Distortion 1: “Should-statements” or “excessively high standards that we place on ourselves” – What do we mean by that?

- Trying to push yourself by using “should”, “must” or “have to” statements.
- Setting rigid rules and standards allows little room for deviation!

Thought Distortion 2: “Black and White Thinking”

“Black and White Thinking” or “All or nothing” – What is meant by that?

- When something is not perfect (demands are not 100% fulfilled), we are convinced of total failure!
- Like an inner critic, which only sees “black” or “white”.

Acceptance

What is that?

- The willingness to accept changes in life over which one does not have control — and to possibly even welcome them (“The course of life.”).
- Accepting who you are in this phase of life. Not worrying about what (you) could have been or the things that you wanted to do but cannot do anymore.

How can I practice willingness?

(1) Identify and describe the feelings you want to allow yourself in the future.

(2) Remind yourself that the reality is as it is. Say to yourself: “It is how it has to be (for now).”

(3) Say out loud or to yourself: “I am ready to accept my situation – even when I don’t particularly like it or when I find it to be frustrating.”

(4) Practice opposite action – pretend that you accepted the feelings / situation a long time ago.

(5) Imagine what it would be like if you could accept the situation / feelings. What could you do or enjoy again? What would your life look like?

*Overview***Summary of learning points**

- Pay attention to “should” statements and Black-and-White Thinking in everyday life!
- Find the right measuring stick for your goals – be fair to yourself so that you have the chance to meet your own demands!
- This also means forgiving yourself when you find yourself falling into one of those cognitive traps.
- When you notice that it is difficult for you to cope with a situation, which you cannot change (e.g., you’re having a lot of negative feelings), consider practicing willingness. What would it look like if you could accept the situation?

Exercises**Thought Distortion: “Should Statements”**

Are you familiar with such statements? During next week, pay attention to situations in which you hold overly high expectations for yourself. The example below serves as a suggestion:

Example

“I should always be on time to every appointment.”

Does this sound familiar? What overly high expectations do you hold for yourself?

Example

It's just not right to be late. It is impolite to keep people waiting. They might think they are not important to me or they could assume that I am someone who is unorganized and not reliable.

Why do you think it's important to you to always maintain these expectations?

What are the costs and benefits of overly high expectations?

*Example***Benefit:**

"I am perceived by others as very reliable and receive recognition for it. I enjoy the fact that others feel that they can rely on me."

Cost:

"I am tense because before every appointment I have to keep a close eye on the clock. I have a bad conscience if I am late to an appointment, even if the other person doesn't mind."

Based on your own expectations:

Benefits:

Costs:

What would be a more lenient stance / a fairer standard?

Example

“It’s not equally important to be on time to every appointment. It would be more important to be on time for a doctor’s appointment, for example, than for a meal with friends. I will try my best to be on time; if something comes up, I can’t change that and will give notice or apologize when I get there.”

Based on your own expectations: What would be a more lenient stance / a fairer standard?

Encouraging Willingness

Over the next week, pay attention to moments when you are ruminating or brooding. What things in the past or future are you ruminating about?

Example

Future: “I am worried that my family will not be there for me when I need them.”

Past: “I’m angry with myself that I did not make an effort to see my family more often.”

What do you ruminate/worry about?

Sometimes rumination or worry can be so consuming that it is difficult to accomplish other things in life. This predominant focus on negative thoughts and feelings allows less space for positive activities, which can improve mood and increase the likelihood of having more positive thoughts.

Example

“I’ve been so caught up in worry that I haven’t prepared for the upcoming holiday season. By now I’ve usually bought all the presents for my family and made at least one batch of Christmas cookies.”

“Every time I start thinking about how my life might be in the future, I want to crawl under a blanket and hide from the world. I just can’t motivate myself to do anything the rest of the day.”

What things do you avoid or not do because you are ruminating or worrying?

Instead of focusing on these thoughts, what can you do now to create “willingness” to deal with the negative feelings associated with the rumination and worry? Maybe practicing willingness means an internal change in your thoughts. Maybe you could do something active to change the negative feelings and thoughts.

Example

“Instead of spending so much time worrying about whether my family will be there for me when I need them and being angry with myself for not putting more time into my relationship with them in the past, I’m going to see if they want to spend more time together now.”

“Instead of getting upset about what could happen in the future, I will start collecting information about elder care and senior centers. Then I will have at least some information and maybe I will also feel that I have more control over my situation. Better to get the information now than to worry for the next years – perhaps needlessly!”

Are you currently able to participate in your desired alternative activity? What stands in your way? Think about whether you can go in search of alternatives! What can you do so that you can still participate in this activity or something similar?

Example

“I could invite my family to bake the Christmas cookies with me – they’ve said before that they love eating them. My son even asked me for the recipe once. If my family does not have time, maybe I could ask some friends if they would want to bake together. It’s usually more fun to do such activities with other people and it would still help get my mind off my worries.”

Your own example:

Notes

Space for remaining questions, problems that occurred, or experiences, that you would like to report in the next meeting:

Other notes:

Module 4

What are values?

- Values help you to make choices based on the directions you want to go in life.
- Like a compass when sailing, values provide orientation in life.
- A different direction can always be chosen by changing values, defining new values, or by weighting current values differently.

Characteristics of values:

- *Have to do with behavior* – values are reflected in the way you treat yourself and others.
- *Freely chosen* – you decide which values you would like to live by.
- *Flexible* – values can change over time.

Values are not:

- *Goals* – Goals can be reached, whereas values guide behavior and are actively chosen in each moment. The focus is not on “achieving” goals, but rather on overall behavior and ways of living.
- *A guarantee of happiness* – living by your values does not automatically guarantee happiness, but it does increase the chances of being satisfied with yourself and your life because you have prioritized things that are important to you.
- *External* – values have little to do with others but have a lot to do with one’s own behavior.

What does this have to do with depression?

- Individuals with depression are often preoccupied with negative thoughts and depressive behaviors (e.g., brooding, withdrawal).
- Changes in life, such as the loss of important relationships or physical limitations, can make it more difficult to live by previously established values.
- During a depressive phase, there is a danger that those affected can lose sight of what is important to them in life. Depression can make it difficult to find the “right path” again (similar to when sailing through a storm, which makes it much harder to arrive at the right destination).

Overview

Summary of learning points

- Try to formulate personal goals according to your values. In doing so, you can consider what you might want to add to your life and how you can be more “alive”!
- Think about what small steps you can take today to live more in harmony with your values. It can also be something very small – perhaps even unnoticeable to others! As a Chinese proverb says: “Every long journey begins with the first step.”
- Individuals with depression are often preoccupied with themselves and are more focused on the negative. They tend to forget what is important in life and their own good qualities.
- Values are freely chosen and flexible. They can change over time. In addition, how we live according to our values may also change in various stages of life.

Exercises

What do I enjoy doing?

To determine your personal values, it is sometimes helpful to think about which activities or hobbies you like to pursue, would like to pursue or (previously) have pursued. People with depression often report a lack of interest and sometimes find it difficult to get motivated to start an activity. Some also have a physical or mental disability that hinders them, or they no longer have friends or acquaintances to do activities with. Think about what you would like to do if no obstacle stood in your way (e.g., physical fitness, social contacts, sufficient energy). Then consider whether you can take a small step to (re)integrate this activity, or something similar, into your current everyday life.

Please write down activities/hobbies/interests in the table below. To help you get started, two examples are provided.

Activities / Hobbies / Interests I would participate in if there were no barriers?	Am I currently able to do this activity? If not, why not?	Small step I could take in my everyday life to pursue this activity, hobby or interest (again). Please consider possible barriers!
Going dancing	Not as much as I would like – my walker makes it difficult.	Listen to my favorite dance songs; “dance” using my walker, or go through the dance steps in my mind
Working in the garden	No, I no longer live in my own home and the facility I live in does not have a garden for residents.	Plant potted plants that will grow well in my room; treat myself to a bouquet; help my son in his garden

How do I find my values?

Now it is a matter of identifying specifically what your values are. The following list of values can help you with this:

- To have a comfortable and inviting home
- To be informed about current events
- To have contact with my grandchildren
- To feel fulfilled sexually
- To keep an open ear
- To help others
- To be creative
- To travel
- To help animals
- To take care of the environment

- To further my knowledge about art
- To discover a new hobby
- To lead a religious life
- To take care of my health

What are your values?

Look at your list above. Can you make a list of personal values based on this?

Example

My value: To be creative and physically active (Hobby: dancing)

My value: To enjoy nature (Hobby: working in the garden)

Now think about what your values could be. Keep the points from page 1 in mind (What are values?; Characteristics of values; What are values not?). It is best to start with just three values.

My values

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

How can I live my values?

Now that you have determined your values, you can consider how you want to implement them in your life. Look again at your values and consider which “small” step or “bigger” step you can take to change your current behavior and live in accordance with your values.

Example

My value: To be creative and physically active

What would I like to do in order to live according to my values?

“Every Saturday I will listen to my favorite dance music and “dance” using my walker.”

How would you like to live according to your values?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Notes

Space for remaining questions, problems that occurred, or experiences, that you would like to report in the next meeting:

Other notes:

Module 5

Thought Distortion 1: Magnification or Minimizing

Magnification or Minimizing – What does that mean?

- Magnification of the extent and severity of your mistakes and problems
- Minimizing your own abilities or seeing them as unimportant

Thought Distortion 2: Attributional Style

Attributional Style – What does that mean?

- Attributions = your own explanation for why a situation occurred (i.e., blame)
- We often overlook that similar situations can have completely different causes. Moreover, often there are several co-occurring factors involved. However, many people tend to focus solely on one-sided explanations.

Example

You get into a car accident

Possible attributions ...

Self	→	“I am a bad driver.”
Others	→	“The other driver was distracted.”
Situation/ Coincidence	→	“Due to the heavy rain, the streets were slippery.”

→ **These are all one-sided and not balanced!!!**

What does this have to do with depression?

Many individuals with depression tend to make one-sided appraisals of complex events and tend to attribute such events to very general causes.

- People with depression are more likely to blame themselves for failure.
- When things go well, people with depression tend to attribute this to the situation, good luck or others, or they view it as “nothing special”.

This attributional style is not particularly realistic. It can also reduce self-worth and promote unhelpful behaviors!

Pay attention to situations in your everyday life in which you make one-sided attributions. Try to avoid making global (generalized) attributions:

- Consider the different possible causes for a situation (i.e., myself, others, situation)! With negative events, begin with the situation and with positive events begin with yourself!
- Try to take another perspective (What would you tell someone else in a similar situation?).
- Consider the short- and long-term consequences (on behavior, mood, self-esteem) of the causal attributions you make.

Overview

Summary of learning points

- Pay attention to times when you may magnify your own mistakes and minimize your own strengths and successes!
- Try to avoid one-sided appraisals and overgeneralizations in everyday life!
- Try to assess everyday situations realistically: You are not always to blame when something goes wrong! Think about other factors that may have contributed to the occurrence of a situation.
- Think about what you would tell someone else in a similar situation.
- One-sided appraisals of events may promote unhelpful behaviors and lower self-esteem.
- Before reaching a final decision, consider the consequences (on behavior, mood, self-esteem) of the attributions you make!

Exercises

Thought Distortion 1: Magnification or Minimizing

Over the next week, pay attention to situations in which you tend to magnify or minimize certain situations. Describe one of these situations on the following pages. The completed examples are provided to help you generate your own examples.

1) Magnification:*Example*

You get lost while on vacation. You have to stop and ask for directions. You think to yourself: “I am incapable of reading maps and have a horrible sense of direction. Without help, I would be totally lost. I must be getting Alzheimer’s.”

Are you familiar with such thoughts? Are there situations in which you have magnified a problem or overexaggerated the consequences of a mistake you made?

What are the short- and long-term consequences of these thoughts? How do they influence your feelings and behavior?

Example

“I feel incapable, am angry with myself and am in a bad mood when I finally get to my friends’ house. In the future, I will feel less certain, when I have to drive by myself.”

With regard to your situation:

Example

“The drive went totally fine. There were no problems or issues other than having to stop one time to ask for directions.”

Were there any clues in your situation that indicated that your appraisal was exaggerated (e.g., magnified)?

Could you come up with a more helpful/realistic appraisal?

Example

“It took longer because I had some difficulty reading the map. It’s good that I asked someone for help who knew the way. There is a reason why many people use a GPS.”

Based on your situation: What could be a helpful alternative thought?

Now change your perspective! What would you tell a friend who was in this situation?

1) Minimizing:

Example

You helped a friend fix a zipper. He admires you for your ability, but you think “Anyone can do this. It’s meaningless.”

Are you familiar with such thoughts? Can you recall a situation in which you viewed your abilities as unimportant or “nothing special”?

What are the short- and long-term consequences of these thoughts? How do they influence your feelings and behavior?

Example

“My self-confidence remains low. I can’t really appreciate the complement or remember it to help me in the future because I don’t believe myself that it is true.”

Based on your situation: What are the possible consequences of your thoughts?

What evidence is there that these thoughts have to do with minimization?

Example

“I have often been told that I am good at mending clothes and over the years, I have gained a great deal of knowledge and skill at doing this. I have often observed people who are less skilled.”

Were there any clues in your situation that indicate that you minimized your appraisal?

Could you come up with a more helpful/realistic appraisal?

Example

“I’m good at repairing zippers. I don’t need any help with this and, in fact, I can offer others help. Zippers tend to be especially hard to repair.”

Based on your situation: What could be a more helpful thought?

Thought Distortion 2: Attributional Style

Pay attention to situations in your everyday life in which you tend to make one-sided attributions.

The completed examples below can help you generate your own ideas:

2) Negative event

Example

A neighbor doesn’t greet you as they pass by.

One-sided attribution:

“Look, they see that there is something wrong with me. Why should they care what I think? My walker makes me look so old.”

Your own situation:

One-sided attribution:

Which short- and long-term consequences does this one-sided attribution have for your mood and behavior?

Example

"I feel rejected. I withdraw from my neighbor and other acquaintances. I have fewer social contacts. My assumption that I am going to be rejected by others remains confirmed."

Based on your example: What are the consequences of this attributional style?

Balanced attribution – oneself, others, and the circumstances all contributed to the situation:

Example

"Maybe he did not recognize me right away or was deep in his own thoughts and did not notice I was here."

Based on your example:

What short- and long-term consequences does this attributional style have on your behavior?

Example

"I do not feel rejected and maintain contact with others. The next time I see this neighbor, I will be sure to actively greet him. During the conversation, I will see if my negative one-sided assumptions are true (Assumption: That I will be rejected)."

Based on your situation: What are the consequences of this attribution?

Notes

Space for remaining questions, problems that occurred, or experiences, that you would like to report in the next meeting:

Other notes:

Module 6

Why are we concerned with “Behaviors and Strategies” in depression?

- Certain behaviors (primarily rumination and withdrawal) strengthen rather than reduce depression!

Rumination

- Many people with depression complain of endless ruminating, brooding and worrying. Ruminating is often not helpful, especially depressive rumination.

Qualities of depressive rumination:

(1) Content

Ruminating over ...

- why something happened (e.g., the cause of a sickness).
- past events that can't be changed.
- the fact that you are ruminating.

(2) Manner and type

While ruminating ...

- It's hard to find an end and thoughts go around in endless thought
- there exists a risk of losing insight
- there is usually no “solution” (different from problem solving)
- rarely followed by actions (different from planning)
- thinking is usually more abstract, generalized and not concrete

What helps against ruminations?

... suppressing negative thoughts? – **No!**

- It is not possible to suppress unpleasant thoughts.
- Trying to consciously not think about something can result in strengthening these thoughts (e.g., “For the next minute, do not think about an elephant!”).
- The effect is even stronger when trying to actively suppress negative thoughts about ourselves (e.g., “I’m a loser”, etc.).

Social Withdrawal

How can you recognize social withdrawal? There are different forms...

- Not leaving the house
- Reduced contact with family and friends (e.g., calling them less often)
- Not actively participating in conversations

Do you recognize these signs of social withdrawal in yourself?

During depressive phases...

- ...interacting with others can be stressful.
- ...those affected often feel misunderstood by other people or unimportant (“They don’t care about my problems.”).
- ...the drive to do things is reduced.
- ...physical limitations or medical illness can make it especially hard to maintain social contact.

Sometimes people hold unhelpful assumptions that can strengthen the tendency for social withdrawal...

- “I am no longer interesting to others.”
- “Other people are only interested in their own problems.”
- “I don’t even know what I would talk about with a person I’ve never met before.”

*Overview***Summary of learning points**

- Certain behaviors (e.g., social withdrawal) strengthen rather than reduce depression!
- Rumination/worry does not help to solve or avoid problems, and rather makes negative thoughts or feelings worse.
- Attempts to suppress negative thoughts make them stronger. Therefore, this strategy is not helpful.
- Practice perceiving thoughts without judging them (breathing exercises, relaxation exercises, Tai Chi, etc.).
- There are several factors that contribute to withdrawal (e.g., changes in relationships, physical limitations, etc.).

Exercises

Are you familiar with rumination? Which issues do you tend to ruminate over?

Does ruminating help to ...

- ...solve problems?
 - ...avoid problems in the future?
 - ...organize things in your mind?
-
-
-

The following exercises are meant to help you find a better way to cope with ruminations:

(1) Practice perceiving thoughts without judgment – distance yourself, e.g. acknowledge your thoughts, but don't actively judge them:

View a thought for what it is ...

- A thought! Not reality!
- An “experience” in your mind. Attempt to register the thought, but not to judge it.
- Observe the thought without interfering or devaluing yourself (“I’m an idiot, I am ruminating again”).
- Look for a fitting picture to perceive the thought and to describe it, but don’t “engage”.

Example

“I imagine myself at a train station. Just like trains, the thoughts come and go. I see where they are going - but I don’t board every train!”

Which image or picture could be helpful for you?

(2) Connect the judgment-free acknowledgment and perception of thoughts with a three-minute breathing exercise:

Try to regularly practice short breathing exercises (similar to the breathing exercise in the MCT-Silver session):

- Sit in an upright position and focus your attention on your breath.
- Notice how the breath flows in and out of your nose. You perceive thoughts and sensations, but you don’t judge them.
- Increasingly expand your attention and feel the breath in your entire body.

Implementation in daily routine: When do you plan on doing the breathing exercise? Try to be as specific as possible!

Example

“I will do the exercise every morning after breakfast.”

When do you want to practice the breathing exercise?

Social Withdrawal

Which assumptions regarding social contact do you have? Observe this over the next several days and write them down here.

If some of these assumptions are negative or unhelpful, can you develop more helpful alternative thoughts?

Example

“I don't find every person I meet interesting. But I'm sure there are some people I share interests with.”

“Not everyone I meet has to like me. But I've had some interesting encounters.”

Your own more helpful thoughts?

Especially during depressive phases, it is important to maintain contact with important others and to continue to participate in activities (small steps).

Every beginning is difficult!

- **But:** Overcome yourself and take a small step forward.
- **Important:** Plan manageable activities!

Which long-term activities do you intend to do?

What could be the first step forward and when, exactly, will you take it?

Take care of necessities...

...but also do things that make you happy (e.g., listening to music, going for a walk). Keep your life in balance!

Example

“Today I will take care of the shopping. That is important, but afterwards I will drink a relaxed coffee at my favorite café. Maybe next time I can ask a friend if they want to meet briefly for a coffee.”

Your own example:

Work against the tendency to withdraw and to give in to your low motivation and bad mood:

- Think of many concrete behaviors (small steps) and determine when exactly you will take them.

Goal	Description of steps (What, when, with whom, how)
Maintain contact with my family.	“Even if I'm not feeling well, I can send my sister a nice greeting card this week to say hello. I'm sure she'd love the beautiful painting on the card.”

Notes

Space for remaining questions, problems that occurred, or experiences, that you would like to report in the next meeting:

Other notes:

Module 7

Thought Distortion 1: Jumping to Conclusions – What does that mean?

- Drawing negative conclusions although there are no clear facts to support the conclusions.
- Typical depressive thinking strategies include:
 1. mind reading
 2. fortune telling.

Mind Reading

- ... or: “projecting your thoughts and/or feelings onto others”
- “Reading into” or assuming negative thoughts.
- Thinking that someone disapproves of you, without checking if this is true.

Is it helpful to try to read the thoughts of others? Benefit?

- If we are correct, we can adjust our behavior if necessary (i.e., stay away from “enemies”).

Danger?

- When wrong, this may cause unnecessary worry and stress.

Can I know what someone else thinks?

- What suggests you can and what suggests you cannot?
When I know someone well, the probability is higher. However, I can never 100% know what someone else thinks.

Thought Distortion 2: Fortune Telling

What does that mean?

- Anticipating that things won't go well – making “gloomy” forecasts or predicting a catastrophe (“worst case scenario”).

Overview

Summary of learning points

- Pay attention to the tendency to jump to conclusions in everyday life (mind reading, catastrophizing, fortune telling).
- Remember, quick decisions often lead to errors.
- More information and potential explanations should be gathered. For example, positive and neutral thoughts should also be considered instead of only negative thoughts.
- If you believe that a catastrophe is likely, try to develop alternative predictions as well.

Exercises

Mind reading

During the next week, pay attention to situations in which you **read the negative thoughts of others** and describe an example of one of these situations on the following pages. The completed example serves as a suggestion:

Your situation:

Example

People stand together and laugh. They look over at you.

Assuming negative thoughts of others:

“They’re laughing at me because they don’t like me.”

Assuming negative thoughts of others:

What are the consequences of this perspective? How does it affect your mood and your actions?

Example

“I feel excluded and worthless. I will avoid these people in the future.”

With regard to your situation: What are the consequences of this perspective?

Can you be 100% sure, that your interpretation is correct?

No! Therefore: What alternative interpretations are there?

Example

“There is no way I can know what they were talking about. Perhaps someone just told a funny joke. Maybe they’re happy to see me. I could always ask someone in the group what they were saying.”

Based on your situation: What could be a helpful alternative perspective?

What consequences does this alternative interpretation have for your feelings and actions?

Example

“I will stay in a positive mood and be relaxed. When I have a chance, I will ask someone in the group what they were talking about.”

Based on your situation: What are the consequences of this perspective?

Fortune telling

Over the next week, pay attention to situations in which you predict catastrophes and describe an example of one of these situations on the following pages. The completed example serves as a suggestion:

Example

“I would like to give my brother a special gift for his retirement, which he will really appreciate.”

Negative prediction:

“Good gifts cost a lot of money. I don’t have enough money to give him something special. My gift will not be that great and he will be disappointed.”

Your situation:

Your negative prediction:

What are the long-term consequences of this perspective? How does it affect your mood and your actions?

*Example***Behavior**

“I start feeling anxious. I only come up with ideas for gifts that I can’t afford. I am convinced that I am going to disappoint him and feel overwhelmed. I decide that without a suitable gift, I will not go to the party at all.”

Long-term consequences:

“The party is coming up. I withdraw my brother and avoid his calls. My brother is confused and sad because I did not go to the party.”

Based on your situation: What is your behavior?

Based on your situation: What are the consequences?

What perspective would be more **helpful** in this situation?

Example

“I will find a nice gift. It may not be easy, but the gift doesn’t have to be expensive. Maybe I can make something special to contribute to the potluck – maybe his favorite cake that only I have the recipe for. He would appreciate that. He does know that I am on a tight budget right now.”

What perspective would be more helpful in your situation?

What consequences does this alternative interpretation have for your feelings and actions?

*Example***Behavior:**

“I am a little on edge because I still want to give my brother a great gift. However, I am open to ideas for inexpensive ways to give him something special.”

Long-Term Consequences:

“I bake his favorite cake. I am satisfied and believe that my brother is very pleased about this gift. I attend the party and celebrate his achievement with him.”

Based on your situation: How would you like to ideally behave?

Based on your situation: What would be the consequences of this behavior?

Notes

Space for remaining questions, problems that occurred, or experiences, that you would like to report in the next meeting:

Other notes:

Module 8

Self-Esteem: What is that exactly?

- The value that a person attaches to him- or herself
- Subjective appraisal of one's self
- It does not have anything to do with how others experience you

How do you imagine yourself?

- What picture would you choose to describe yourself?
- If you think of a negative image (e.g., an ugly blob fish), try to clearly imagine this image and then transform it (with the help of the instructions below)

What does this have to do with depression?

- Not only life experiences and thoughts determine how we feel, but also the mental images associated with these.
- Many individuals with depression report that they associate certain inner images or metaphors with depression.
- These mental images can have negative effects on one's self-perception.

Self-Esteem and Aging:

- During depression, those affected tend to make comparisons with their "more attractive" or "better" younger selves.
- As a result, often only the negative aspects of aging or one's current self are taken into account.
- Moreover, the aspects of later life and aging that are actually positive and beautiful are also overlooked!

Overview

Summary of learning points

- Self-worth is the worth that a person places on him- or herself.
- Think about the mental images you have of yourself. Try to find a positive, strong image of yourself.
- Practice a more balanced self-perception, for example, by keeping a joy diary.
- When you notice that you are comparing yourself with others or with your former self, try to be fair! Also remember the positive aspects of getting older.

Exercises

Tips to improve self-esteem

- 1) Make a life long joy list. Go through your life year for year and think about what you can be proud of or what wonderful things you experienced.
- 2) Think about what you could offer others. What skills do you have or what knowledge have you gained throughout your life?
- 3) In difficult situations or when you notice that you are being overly critical of yourself, think what others would say about you. What would your best friends or partner say about you?
- 4) Get together with others! Do something with another person that is fun for you.
- 5) Listen to your favorite “good mood” song!
- 6) If it is helpful for you – look at old photos. While doing this, you can think about what challenges you have already overcome in life.
- 7) Daily Joy Diary: Jot down things every evening that went well. Go through them in your mind.
- 8) Get moving! If you can, try to do some form of exercise each day (it should not be torture!). Try to find something enjoyable, like taking a short walk or dancing to music.

What would you like to try this week to increase your self-esteem? On the lines below, write down what you would like to do. It could be one of the tips above, or the imagination exercise, or something else you've thought of yourself.

Imagination exercise

Self-talk and self-image influence each other. This happens in two ways: first, directly, in that people with depression imagine themselves as inferior and weak. Secondly, indirectly, in that people with depression attribute negative images to themselves and attach associated negative labels to in the form of negative self-talk. To counteract this, an imagination exercise can help. The exercise takes place in the following three steps:

1) Choose an image that you may have used when you think of yourself.

Example

What images do I have of myself?

“I see myself as an ugly blob fish on the bottom of the ocean floor. Everyone looks down on him and despises him for his ugliness.”



How do you picture yourself? Take a few moments to think about this.

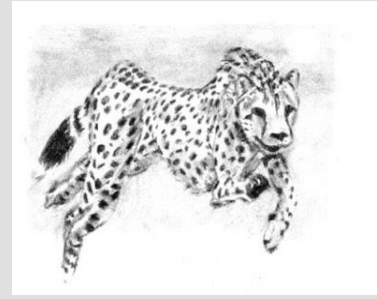
If you wish, you can either draw a picture here (or on the back of the page) or paste a photo (e.g., from a magazine or the Internet) here.

2) Now try to transform this image in your mind's eye by changing it into something beautiful, uplifting and proud - your “ideal self”, so to speak. To do this, think of an image that represents how you ideally want to see yourself. How do you want to feel and present yourself to the world?

Example

What is my ideal self?

“I would like to be proud of myself. I would like my positivity to be a sign of my acceptance of myself that I project throughout the world. Maybe a jaguar would be a suitable mental image for my ideal self.”



What does your “ideal self” look like? What symbol could you use? Let your imagination run free. Now think about it for a moment.

If you want, you can either draw a picture or paste a photo here of your “ideal self”.

3) As you imagine your new “ideal self”, push your shoulders back. Stretch upwards! You may also want to say a positive statement, such as: "I am a strong Jaguar", or "I can be strong and proud".

What can you say to yourself about your “ideal self”? Try to find a few positive sentences that you can use.

Practice it now! Think of your negative self-image (e.g., Blobfish). Then transform the image in your mind's eye into your “ideal self” image (e.g., Jaguar). Stand or sit upright and say your positive, affirming sentences (“I can be strong and proud!”). You can rise from the ashes like a phoenix!



Notes

Space for remaining questions, problems that occurred, or experiences, that you would like to report in the next meeting:

Other notes:
