Healthy Thinking

Wellness Workshop

Student Wellness Services, University of Calgary
We acknowledge the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy (the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut’ina First Nation, the Stoney Nakoda (the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations), and Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III.

The University of Calgary is situated on land adjacent to where the Bow River meets the Elbow River. The traditional Blackfoot name of this place is “Moh’kins’tsis.”
Learning Objectives

• Identify the impacts of our thoughts

• Explore how your own thoughts influence your well-being and resiliency

• Learn practices and skills to support healthy thinking and build resiliency
Think about the last time you felt bad or something didn’t go very well.

- What happened?
- What did you experience (thoughts, emotions, physiological responses)?
- What did you do?
• Our thoughts have a big impact on our mental health and our resiliency.

• What you tell yourself about a situation affects how you feel and what you do.

• Our thinking can be faulty, and we often don’t see the whole picture.

• As a result of faulty thinking, our well-being can be impacted. We may feel sad, anxious, or stressed, and may not respond in resilient ways.
Thoughts-Emotions-Behaviours

Situation

Thoughts

Emotions

Behaviours
Role of Interpretation

Fail an exam

I see the areas I needed to study further

Review missed material
Find a tutor
Feel optimistic and committed to study

Awareness
Common Thinking Traps

• **All-or-Nothing Thinking**
  - I wanted to eat healthier, but I just ate a piece of cake. I might as well eat the whole cake now!

• **Overgeneralization**
  - You miss the bus and say to yourself, “This always happens to me, the world is against me.”

• **Mental Filter/Disqualifying the Positive**
  - You receive positive feedback on a presentation from 5 people and 1 constructive criticism, and you ignore the positive feedback and only focus on the criticism, interpreting that as the only accurate feedback.
Common Thinking Traps

• Mind Reading
  • *My friend did not stop to say hello, she must be mad at me.*

• The Fortune-Teller Error
  • *Even though I am studying hard, I know I am going to fail my exam.*

• Magnification
  • *Yes, I got the scholarship but it’s not a big deal. I’m not even sure why they gave it to me*
  • *I did not do well on this assignment, so I am going to fail the whole class*
Common Thinking Traps

• Catastrophizing/Magnification
  • Why did I use that word in that email? I’m sure I’m going to get fired

• Emotional Reasoning
  • I don’t feel very smart so I don’t deserve to be in this program

• Labeling
  • You label yourself as stupid because you missed one question on your exam

• Personalization
  • Our relationship ended because I was a bad partner

• Most people use more than one of the cognitive traps/biases described. Which one(s) seem to give you the most trouble?

• In which situations are you most likely to use this bias?

• What would be more of a reality-based way of thinking in one of the situations you have listed?
Changing Thought Patterns

The 5 C’s…

• Step 1. Catch it.
• Step 2. Challenge it.
• Step 3. Change it.
• Step 4. Cut yourself some slack.
• Step 5. Commit to healthy thinking.
Cognitive Defusion

• See thoughts as thoughts

• Become a good consumer of your thoughts and make choices related to how you think

• If you feel stuck in unhelpful thinking, TRY:
  • Adding the prefix “I am having the thought that…”
  • Repeat the thought in a funny voice, such as a cartoon character or a sports announcer
Are all negative thoughts unhealthy thinking traps?

There are times when negative thoughts are realistic.
Oprah Winfrey was publicly fired from her first television job as an anchor in Baltimore for getting "too emotionally invested in her stories."

Walt Disney was fired from the Kansas City Star because his editor felt he "lacked imagination and had no good ideas."

Thomas Edison's teachers told him he was "too stupid to learn anything."
Questions to Ask After a Setback

1. What can I learn from this?
2. What could I have done differently?
3. Do I need to work on certain skills?
4. Where can I ask for help/support?
5. What is my next step?
In Closing

• Thoughts have a lot of power in how we feel about ourselves and the actions we take

• Thinking traps are common, and they can distort our perception and negatively impact our well-being

• By catching our distorted thoughts and changing them to more realistic thoughts, we can increase our well-being and respond in a resilient way
Resources for Further Information

• University of Calgary Student Wellness Services: https://www.ucalgary.ca/wellness-services

• Realistic Thinking: http://www.anxietybc.com/adults/realistic-thinking

• Thought Awareness, Rational Thinking, and Positive Thinking: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_06.htm
Conflict management is a key skill for relationship building and achieving success.

Increase your confidence in your ability to manage conflicts at school, work and in other parts of your lives. Training within the Conflict Management Digital Badge includes learning about conflict styles, navigating conflict in relationships, and intercultural communication.

Get a virtual LinkedIn badge to show your skill development in this area!
Want More Workshops?

Check out our other wellness workshops:

• Managing Stress and Anxiety
• Motivation & Time Management
• Boosting Self-Compassion
• Pushing Past Perfectionism

For the most up-to-date information on our resources and services, visit our website!

https://www.ucalgary.ca/wellness-services
References

