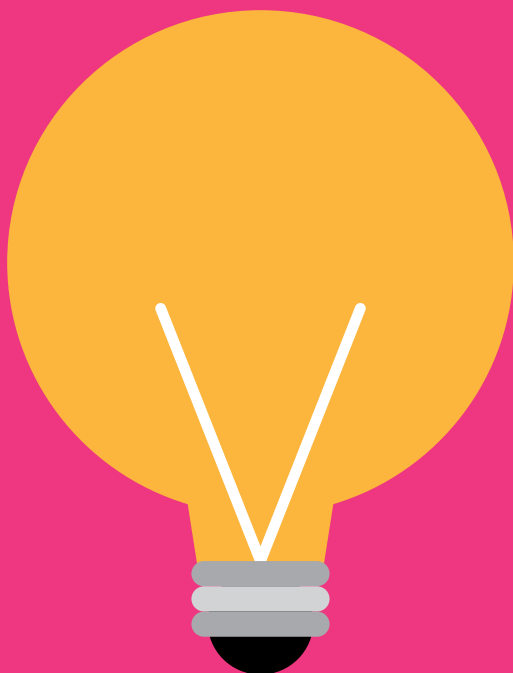


Mastering Your Thoughts



Thoughts automatically pop into our minds as a result of our previous experiences, learning and general knowledge. These thoughts can sometimes be inaccurate and leave us feeling unhappy and in a negative mindset. Frequent negative feelings can make it difficult to sustain changes in our eating and activity habits to help weight loss, so it's worth thinking about some common negative thoughts and how to overcome them when they arise.

All or Nothing Thinking

This is where we think in extreme terms, and won't settle for anything in between. For example we might say, 'I'm brilliant at this' or 'I'm a complete failure', rather than considering that we're probably somewhere in the middle.

Overygeneralisation

This is when we generalise the outcome from one situation to all other situations. For example, if you had a large piece of cake one meal time you feel that you will never be able to control your eating or lose weight, even though it was just one isolated event.

Personalisation

This process occurs when we think negative events are connected to us without any proper reason or evidence. For example, 'he's in a really bad mood today so it must have something to do with me.'

Wearing Blinkers

This is when we focus on one aspect of a situation, often a negative aspect, whilst ignoring other aspects. For example, you might successfully lose a lot of weight, have a slight relapse one day, and then decide that you have failed.

Magnification/Minimisation

Exaggerating or under emphasising the significance of an event – often minimising the positive and building up the negative – is a common thought process. For example, if someone declined an offer to go out with you, you might believe it's because you are overweight. Alternatively, a person might comment that you look good but you may write this off as them just trying to be nice and make you feel better.

Catastrophising

We can all spend time dwelling on the worst possible outcome of a situation and overestimate the probability that it will occur. For example, if someone is planning to walk to work they might start thinking that they will be too unfit to make the journey and of all the worst things that could subsequently happen.

Should/Must Statements

This is when we make absolute statements about how we believe people should be, including ourselves. For example, 'I should be a really good swimmer and I must be the best otherwise there's no point.'

Emotional Reasoning

This is when we take feelings as facts. For example, you might feel like the future is negative and therefore decide that it definitely will be, even though this is just a thought in your head.

Labelling

Labelling ourselves in ways that reflect or exaggerate our negative feelings is a thought process linked to low self-esteem. For example, if we make one mistake we might label ourselves as an idiot.

Mind Reading

Assuming that people are reacting negatively towards you when there is no definite evidence of this e.g. placing thoughts/opinions in other people's heads because you are feeling insecure. For example, if a fellow employee is particularly quiet you might think that they have taken a dislike to you.

Ignoring the Positive

Believing that positive personal characteristics, experiences or achievements don't count. For example thinking, 'It was just lucky that I lost weight last week and the changes that I'm making are not having any real effect.'

Changing Thought Patterns

There are ways of becoming more aware of and then dealing with these negative thoughts and learning to be more objective and logical in your mind.

Once you have learned to identify your negative automatic thoughts you will be better able to practice substituting more reasonable thoughts in place of them.

Gradually you'll stop automatically reacting to situations with negativity, and will learn to react to these same situations in a more reasonable way. Change biased or negative thoughts into more realistic and positive ones by asking yourself the questions below.

With every situation, there will be a logical, reasonable, non-negative way to view what is happening and how you are doing. Being more objective and logical in your thinking will help you to make better decisions in managing your lifestyle and help you on your weight loss journey.

