

# Challenging Unhelpful Thinking



# Unhelpful Thoughts

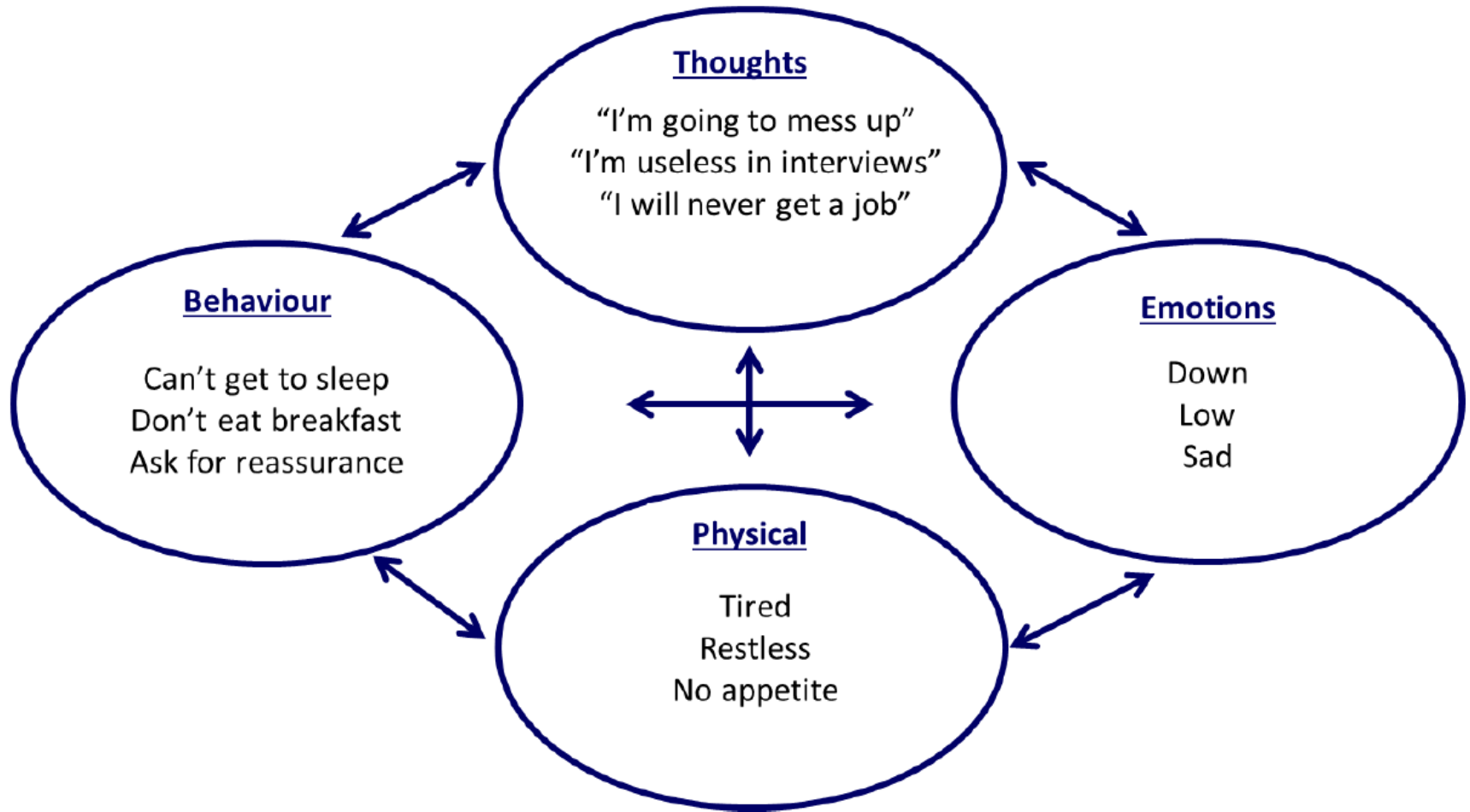
## Thoughts

“I’m going to mess up”

“I’m useless in interviews”

“I will never get a job”

# The Vicious Cycle of Unhelpful Thinking



# STEP ONE : Identifying Unhelpful Thoughts or Images

## **Stop**

Stop what you are doing and take a moment.

## **Time to breathe**

Pay attention to your breathing.

## **Overview**

Ask yourself some questions to get an overview of what is happening.

## **Perspective**

Record the thought going through your mind to get a better perspective.

# Useful Questions to Identify Unhelpful Thoughts

*"What am I telling myself right now?"*

*"What is making me feel this way?"*

*"What bad thing am I predicting will happen?"*

# WORKSHEET ONE

## Thought Diary

Situation	Thought	Emotion	Belief in thought (0 -100%)	Intensity of emotion (0 -100%)

# WORKSHEET ONE

## Thought Diary

Situation	Thought	Emotion	
<i>At a job interview</i>	<i>I'm going to mess up</i>	<i>Anxiety, Fear</i>	

# WORKSHEET ONE

## Thought Diary



Situation	Thought	Emotion	Belief in thought (0-100%)	Intensity of emotion (0-100%)
At job interview	I'm going to mess up	Anxiety, Fear	60%	90%
	I'm useless in interviews	Sadness, disappointment	70%	75%

Hot Thought....



# STEP TWO : Gathering Evidence

I can't see the  
wood for the  
trees



# WORKSHEET TWO

## Thought Diary



<b>Situation</b>	<i>At job interview</i>
<b>Thought</b>	<b>Emotion</b>
<i>I'm going to mess up</i>	<i>Anxiety, Fear</i>
<b>Belief in thought (0-100%)</b>	<b>Intensity of emotion (0-100%)</b>
<i>60%</i>	<i>90%</i>

# WORKSHEET TWO

## Thought Diary



Situation	<i>At job interview</i>
Thought	Emotion
<i>I'm going to mess up</i>	<i>Anxiety, Fear</i>
Belief in thought (0-100%)	Intensity of emotion (0-100%)
<i>60%</i>	<i>90%</i>

Evidence for	Evidence against

Alternative thought	Emotion
Belief in alternative thought (0-100%)	Intensity of emotion (0-100%)

# Helpful Questions to find Evidence

*Have I confused a thought with a fact?*

*What would I tell a friend if they had this thought?*

*What would a friend say about my thought?*

*How many times has it happened in the past?*

*Am I confusing a possibility with certainty? It may be possible, is it likely?*

*If I was not feeling low or anxious would I see the situation differently?*

### Evidence for

I don't always get it right and sometimes say things that come out wrong

I have done interviews in the past where I haven't got the job

### Evidence against

I have a lot of experience and the skills to do the job

I have done interviews in the past where I have received good feedback

I have prepared for this interview

People can get nervous in interviews – the interviewers will know that

# STEP THREE : Increasing Balanced Thinking



## Alternative thought

*I have done my best to prepare for this and I'm going to give it my best shot - I don't have to be perfect*

# WORKSHEET TWO

## Thought Diary



Original  
Thought

Situation	At job interview
Thought	Emotion
<i>I'm going to mess up</i>	Anxiety, Fear
Belief in thought (0-100%)	Intensity of emotion (0-100%)
60%	90%

Alternative thought	Emotion
<i>I have done my best to prepare for this and I'm going to give it my best shot - I don't have to be perfect</i>	Anxiety
Belief in alternative thought (0-100%)	Intensity of emotion (0-100%)
75%	40%

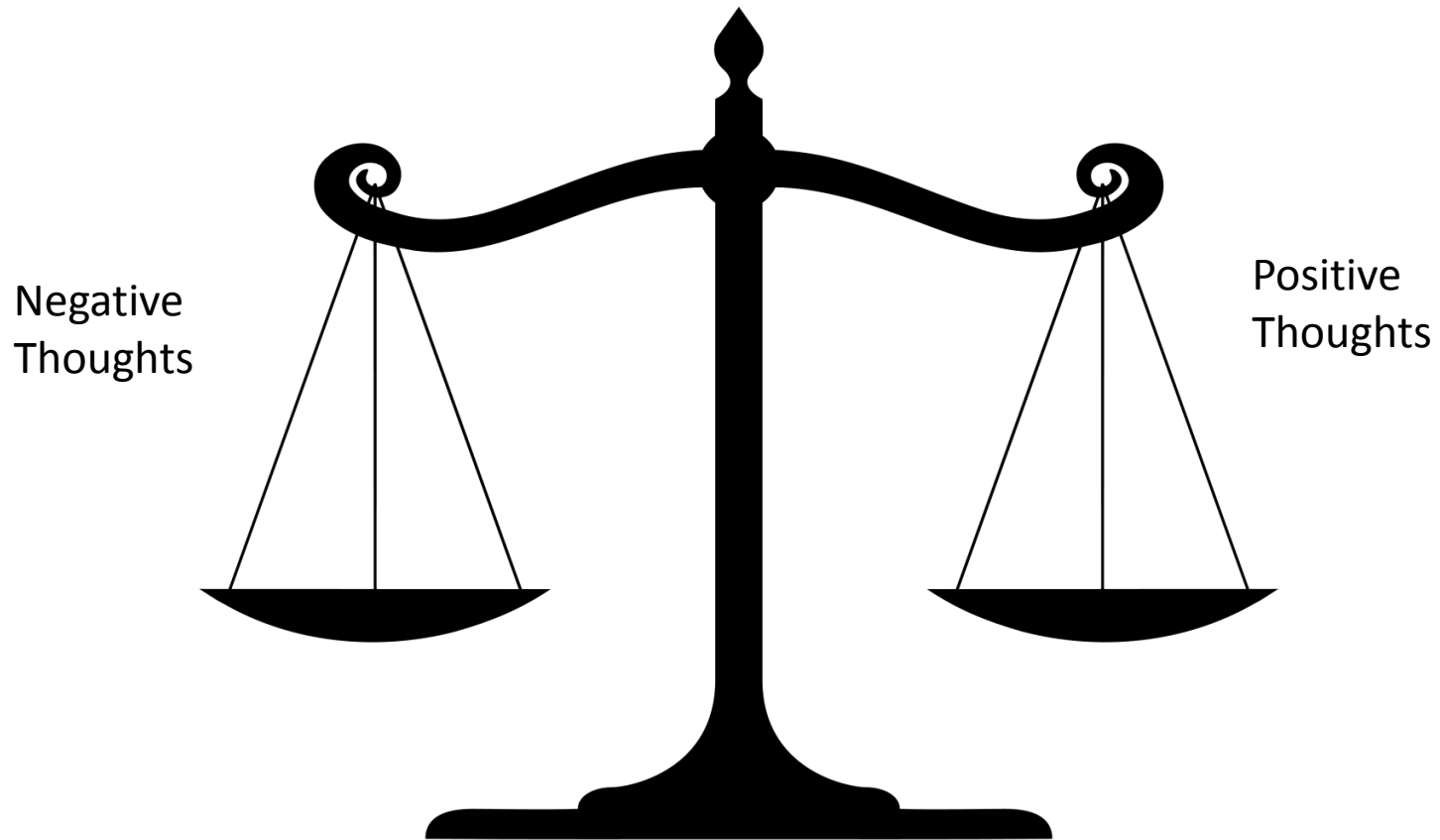


# Troubleshooting

- Use a very specific situation to capture your hot thought
- Try to capture the thought as soon as you can, as it can be difficult to remember what went through your mind in difficult situations
- We want to generate a balanced, realistic thought, not a “positive” one – the aim is to make a shift in your thinking
- What’s the worst that could happen – could you cope with it?

# Take Home Message

Thinking in a more balanced way can  
improve your mood



# Next steps

- Practice
  - If you think thought challenging could help you we suggest you try it out on a negative thought today
- Make thought challenging a habit
  - Set time aside for thought challenging on a regular basis

# Next steps

- Tell someone else about this technique
  - Teaching someone is a great way of learning things yourself – and helping them
- All worksheets and a PDF are freely available at <https://www.talkplus.org.uk>