

Tell us what you think!



## THOUGHT CHALLENGE STRATEGY POSTCARD

Check out the evidence!

### WHAT IS THE THOUGHT CHALLENGE?

The thought challenge is a technique used to **help challenge problematic thought patterns** that have been created over time.

Our thoughts directly affect the way we respond to certain situations.



So it's important to **challenge some of our unhelpful thoughts** in order to react to difficult situations in better ways!<sup>1, 3, 6, 7, 8</sup>

View the **Managing Stress** section for **Perspective-taking!**

### RESEARCH EFFECTIVENESS

Research shows that reframing negative thoughts into more positive ones can:<sup>1, 4, 9</sup>

- reduce stress and anxiety
- help enhance performance, self-confidence & self-esteem

### HOW TO USE THE THOUGHT CHALLENGE?

When you first try the thought challenge, it's useful to **write down** your responses for each of the sections, as this makes it easier to recognize negative thought patterns.

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If a similar thought comes up in the future, you can refer back to your notes and challenge your thought.<sup>2</sup>

### WHEN TO USE THE THOUGHT CHALLENGE?

Right away when you have the thought to ensure that you are able to remember important details!<sup>10</sup>



However, if you're feeling highly stressed or overwhelmed by your thoughts, it may be difficult to use this strategy.

If so, try using other strategies to decrease your stress first:

View the **Mindfulness** resource!

View the **Progressive Muscle Relaxation** resource!

View the **Calming Breath** resource!

**Try it out!** Use the 7 steps of the thought challenge listed below to help re-frame your negative thoughts.

Try writing down your responses to each of the following questions:<sup>5, 8</sup>

**1** What situation is causing your stress?

"Oh no, I have an important exam tomorrow!"



**2** What thoughts are you having about this situation?

"I'm going to fail tomorrow's exam and never achieve anything in my life."

**3** How do these thoughts make you feel?

"I'm so stressed and anxious!!"



**4** Challenge the thoughts: What evidence supports your negative thoughts and what evidence doesn't support them?

**Supporting evidence:** "I didn't study as much as I should have."

**Alternative evidence:** "I still studied a fair bit so I'm unlikely to actually fail."

**5** What is an alternative, more balanced thought?

"I might not do as well as I would've wanted, but that doesn't mean it'll affect the rest of my life and future achievements."

**6** How does this more balanced thought make you feel?

"I feel less stressed about the exam."



**7** What do you want to do about this situation now that you have alternative ways of perceiving it?

Reflect on practical steps (e.g., plan to study more for the next exam) that you could take to change things if you choose to do so.

Note. You may already be doing everything that you can in this situation, so it is possible that no change is needed.

View another activity to help challenge and reframe your thoughts called **Socratic Questioning!**<sup>3, 11</sup>

### FEEDBACK & CONTACT INFORMATION

