

Cognitive, or thinking, distortions are the stories we believe about ourselves and our lives. Often, they are not very helpful and they hold us back or make us unhappy. This little guide gives some ideas for identifying and challenging the unhelpful stories we tell about ourselves so that we can get on with life!



Labelling

When we label ourselves as being something, it makes it hard to do anything different. We say “I am this” so I must do “this”. We often choose unkind or unhelpful labels for ourselves.



Mind reading

We think we know exactly what everyone is thinking about us... and in our imaginations it's usually something bad!

This can leave us feeling isolated and like everyone is against us



All or nothing

If we can't do something perfectly, it's not worth doing at all. This thinking can talk us out of trying all sorts of things we might enjoy, or sticking with something that feels hard at first. It can also make us feel like we've failed a lot of the time.

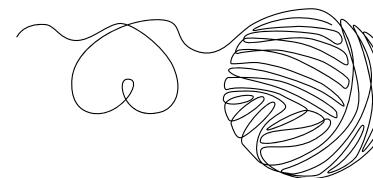
Filtering

We often forget when things go right, and focus on when they go wrong. This makes us feel like everything is wrong, all the time.

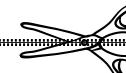


Spinning a Yarn
community mental health project
SCYO 230
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Mental Health Helpline
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Country 24 hour Urgent NHS
Call **111** for NHS advice
or an urgent treatment centre
health please contact Your GP
urgent help with Your mental
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If You need help right now...

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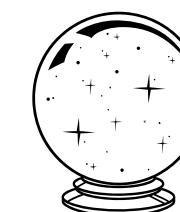


Once you're feeling stressed or anxious, doing something creative can really help you find calm and focus. Crochet or knitting, drawing, singing,
knitting, drawing, singing,
stitching, knitting, writing, baking or
gardening are all great ways to connect with your feelings and thoughts and take a moment of “me time”.



Reset with creativity

Before we go into a situation, it can be useful to think about what might go wrong. But if we're always certain that everything we do will end in disaster or failure that only adds to our stress and makes it harder to plan for success. We get double the stress just by thinking about things going wrong.



Do you recognise some of those types of distorted thinking?
Are they things you do yourself?

Challenging the story

Once you learn to spot them and label them, it makes it easier for you to choose whether or not to believe them. Try saying to Yourself...
“Oh, that's not true, it's just my brain filtering...idealising... mind reading...” or whichever unhelpful thought pattern you've identified.

Idealising

We all know that what we see people sharing on social media or talking about in public isn't the full story of their lives. But we can get drawn into thinking everyone is living a perfect life and we're the only ones left out. Idealising others lives and comparing them unfavourably with our own can make us feel like we'll never be good enough.





thinking and feeling.
idenify and understand what we're
the past or future and help us to
This can help reduce anxiety about
your body.

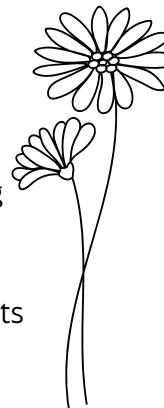
Midfulness is a way of connecting
with what's happening right now,
with sensations, feelings, thoughts and
your body.

What is it?



More about mindfulness...

It's not about emptying your mind
It's not about avoiding your feelings or thoughts
It doesn't have to be all about breathing
You don't need to close your eyes
You don't need to sit still or take time out
You can do it while you're doing other things
You can use all your senses



Mindful practices

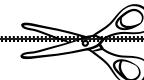
There's lots of things we can do in everyday life to be more mindful.

Think of it as taking an intentional break from all the noise, information and demands that are put on us.

When we do these practices, we're not trying to "think about nothing". The aim is to be completely present with our feelings, thoughts and sensations, whatever they are.

Let your thoughts go where they want, observe them and try not to filter what comes up.

6pm to midnight every day
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Using your senses

Take a moment to notice what you can smell, taste, touch, hear and see right now.

Try slowly eating something, noticing the tastes and textures.



Light a scented candle and enjoy the fragrance, noticing you feel.



Listen to bird song or running water, outdoors or on a recording.



Mindful while you work

Being in nature

Getting out into nature is a great way to enjoy a mindful moment.

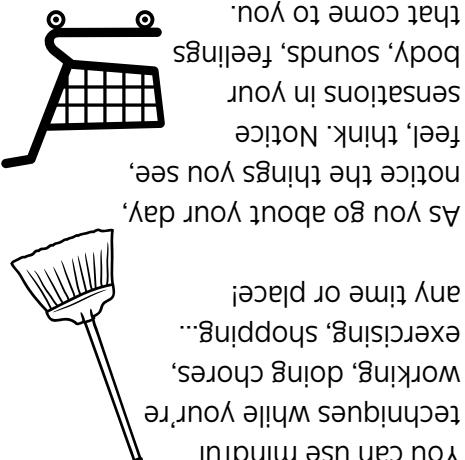
Go for a walk or sit in a garden or park, just being.



Open a window and enjoy the feeling of cool air or sunshine.

Find a leaf, pebble, branch or flower and focus on every detail, the colours, textures, shapes.

Watch animals or birds going about their day.



As you go about your day, notice the things you see, notice the things you hear, feel, think. Notice sensations in your body, sounds, feelings come to you. You can use mindful techniques while you're working, doing chores, exercising, shopping... any time or place!

Try to be fully in the moment, not thinking about the past or future plans.

