Selfimprovecoach

CATCH THE AUTOMATIC THOUGHT

Five gentle steps to notice what went through your mind

Automatic thoughts are quick thoughts or images that arise in a situation.
You do not need to change or challenge them yet. Just try to notice them.

1 ANCHOR

What was happening in one specific moment?

Think: Where were you? Who was there? What had just happened?

Example: My manager asked me a question during a meeting.

My situation (what happened, where and when):

2 EMOTION

What did you feel? How strong was it?

Examples: anxious, sad, embarrassed, angry, guilty or worried.

Example: I felt anxious and embarrassed, around 7 out of 10.

My feelings and intensity (0 = none, 10 = very strong):

Tip: An emotion is a feeling (e.g. anxiety). A thought is a sentence or image in your mind (e.g. "They think I am foolish").

CATCH THE AUTOMATIC THOUGHT

Capture the thought, then explore its meaning

3 THOUGHT

What went through your mind just then?

Ask: What did I say to myself? What was the first thought or image?

Example: "I am going to get into trouble. I have made a mistake."

My automatic thought (use my own words):

4 MEANING

What did you predict or think it meant?

Ask: What did I fear would happen? What did this say about me?

Example: "My manager is unhappy with me and I might lose my job."

What I thought it meant or what I predicted:

It is fine to be uncertain. You can write "I am not sure" and return to the question with a therapist or when you feel ready.

CATCH THE AUTOMATIC THOUGHT

Check the wording and reflect on what you noticed

5

CHECK

Do these words capture your thought?

Ask: Is this a thought, rather than a feeling or a fact?

Example: "Yes, I was thinking I would lose my job, not just feeling anxious."

My thought in the clearest words I can find:

REMEMBER

Situation is not a thought. Feeling is not a thought.

OPTIONAL REFLECTION

What did I notice about how the thought affected my feelings or actions?

My reflection:

One thing I would like to remember or explore next time: