GBS Behavioral Health

Challenging Anxious Thoughts

Anxiety can be a healthy emotion–it forces us to focus on our problems and work hard to solve them. But sometimes, anxiety grows out of control and does just the opposite. It cripples our ability to solve problems. When this happens, **irrational thoughts** often play a role.

In this exercise, we will practice catching our irrational thoughts and replacing them with rational alternatives. With enough practice, this will become a natural process that can help you manage anxiety.

Describe a common situation that triggers your anxiety.

Example: “giving a speech in front of a crowd” or “driving in rush hour traffic”

Anxiety distorts our thinking by causing us to ov**erestimate the likelihood of something going wrong** and **imagine the potential consequences as worse than they really are**. Sometimes, just taking a moment to think about these facts can help us recognize our irrational thoughts.

Imagine you are faced with the anxiety-producing situation from above. Describe the…

Worst Outcome:

Best Outcome:

Likely Outcome:

Imagine the worst outcome comes true. Would it still matter…

1 Week from Now:

1 Month from Now:

1 Year from Now:

Usually, anxious thoughts focus on the worst possible outcomes, even when they aren't likely. For example, a person who is nervous about giving a speech might think: *"I am going to forget everything and embarrass myself, and I'll never live it down"*.

As an outside observer, we know that an alternate, more rational thought might be: *"My speech might only be OK, but if I do mess up, everyone will forget about it soon enough"*.

Using your own “worst outcome” and “likely outcome” from above, describe your...

Irrational Thought:

Rational Thought: