

## **Correcting Thought Errors**

So how can you control negative feelings? Your thoughts determine the feelings you experience. You may not be able to change events, or tinnitus. However, the way you think about an event *is under your control*. Change your thoughts, and your feelings will change too. Next you will learn a step-by-step approach to changing thoughts.

### **Changing Thoughts - Step-by-Step:**

*Please use the Changing Thoughts Exercise form on p. 56 to complete the steps below.*

**Step 1: Event.** Identify what was going on when you started feeling bad - what happened? Sometimes it is hard to remember the event that was happening that made you feel bad until later. If this is the case for you, go to the second step and come back to this step later.

**Step 2: Thoughts.** Now try to write down a thought you had just before you started feeling bad or upset. What was the first thought that came into your mind? You may have had many thoughts just before you started feeling bad. If you had more than one thought, pick the one that made you feel the worst.

**Step 3: Feelings.** Write down any bad or upsetting feelings you are having. For example, sad, angry, jealous, or disappointed.

**Step 4: Evidence *for*.** Examine the thought you described in Step 2. Write down evidence that this statement is true where it says “Evidence For” below. Our thoughts often have some truth to them, but some have many more errors. Write down what is true about the thought in the “Evidence For” box.

**Step 5: Evidence *against*.** Again, examine the thought you described in Step 2. Identify evidence that this statement is not true. In the next box where it says “Evidence Against” write down reasons the thought may *not* be true. Can you identify any of the 12 thought errors from the list? (You can have more than one thought error in one thought.)

**Step 6: New positive thought.** Write down a new thought about the event that is more helpful. This step requires a lot of practice. With practice it will become more natural to create new positive thoughts. Sometimes it helps to say

statements that apply to many things. For example, “I am whole and complete,” or “I love and accept myself.”

New positive thoughts should be:

- *brief*
- *easy to remember*
- *thoughts you believe are true*
- *thoughts that apply to your life*
- *helpful*

**Step 7: Feelings when you think the new thought.** As you practice, pay attention to how you feel when you have positive thoughts instead of negative thoughts. Do you notice your tinnitus as much? Are your muscles relaxed?

**Step 8: Picture yourself in the future.** Look at the negative thought from Step 1 again. Think of a time in the future when you might have that thought again. Picture yourself thinking the positive thought from Step 6 instead.

## Changing Thoughts Exercise

**Directions:** Keep track of three situations when you felt bad or upset during the week. Practice changing your thoughts in each situation using these steps.

Steps	Example	Your situation 1	Your situation 2	Your situation 3
<b>Step 1: Event</b>	<i>My tinnitus isn't getting any better</i>			
<b>Step 2: Thoughts</b>	<i>Why can't anyone help me?</i>			
<b>Step 3: Feelings</b>	<i>Helpless, frustrated and angry</i>			
<b>Step 4: Evidence for</b>	<i>I've been to so many doctors and still have tinnitus</i>			
<b>Step 5: Evidence against</b>	<i>I fell asleep easily last night. Maybe using sound is helping me, even if my tinnitus isn't any quieter.</i>			
<b>Step 6: New positive thought</b>	<i>I probably can't make my tinnitus quieter. Even so, I can find ways to feel better even if the tinnitus doesn't change.</i>			
<b>Step 7: Feelings when you think the new thought</b>	<i>Happier, more confident</i>			
<p><b>Step 8: Picture yourself in the future.</b> Think of an event in the future when you might have the negative thoughts again. Picture yourself thinking the positive thought instead.</p>				

# ***The Changing Thoughts and Feelings Worksheet***

Next you will learn about the Changing Thoughts and Feelings Worksheet. You will use this Worksheet to develop a “plan of action” to change your thoughts and feelings about tinnitus. You learned three skills in this section (Part 3): (1) relaxation exercises; (2) pleasant activity scheduling; and (3) changing thoughts. You will be able to choose from these three skills when you make your “plan of action.”

Blank Changing Thoughts and Feelings Worksheets are in the back of this workbook. They are on the back side of the Sound Plan Worksheets. Steps for completing the Changing Thoughts and Feelings Worksheet are listed below. There is an example of a completed Worksheet on page 59. The example Worksheet was completed for “Joe.” “Joe” is described on page 60.

## ***Steps for Completing the Worksheet***

- 1 Use the Tinnitus Problem Checklist (p. 29) to list situations when your tinnitus is most bothersome.
- 2 For each situation that you list, use a separate Changing Thoughts and Feelings Worksheet.
  - a Write the situation at the top of the Worksheet (#1)
  - b Decide which of the three skills you will use to manage this situation (#2 on the Worksheet)
  - c Write down the details for each skill you will use (#3)
  - d Write down how you feel after doing the exercise (#4)
- 3 Try each skill you chose at least three times over the next week (#4 on the Worksheet).
- 4 Rate how helpful each trial was (#4).
- 5 At any time, write down what works and what doesn't work (#5).

## **Ongoing Use of the Worksheet**

It takes trial and error to learn what works best in each situation. Use the Worksheet on a regular basis to change and improve your action plans. Also, use the Worksheet to create new plans for different situations. Learning to change your thoughts and feelings takes time and practice. If the exercises don't help right away, keep practicing. They can become more useful over time.

Joe

## Changing Thoughts and Feelings Worksheet

1. From the Tinnitus Problem Checklist, write down one bothersome tinnitus situation My tinnitis makes it hard for me to concentrate at work

2. Check one or more of the three skills to manage the situation

Relaxation exercises

breathe
<b>Relax</b>
imagine

- Deep breathing
- Imagery
- Other meditation

3. Write down the details for each skill you will use

Plan pleasant activities

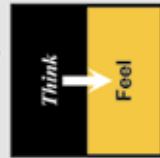
<i>golf, write, walk</i>
<b>Pleasant activities</b>
<i>dance, paint</i>

Activity 1 take a walk during lunch

Activity 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Activity 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Changing thoughts



Old thought I can't think about anything but my tinnitis

New thought There are many ways I can focus on things other than my tinnitis

4. Use your plan over the next week.

**How helpful** was each exercise?

Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A little	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderately	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very much	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extremely	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Comments

When you find something that works well (or not so well) please comment. You do not need to wait 1 week to write your comments.

This helps!

This helps a little

This feels good

It was easier for me to concentrate after taking a walk

I feel better

EXAMPLE

### **Changing Thoughts and Feelings Example: “Joe”**

Joe works in an office on a computer all day. Because of his tinnitus, it is hard for him to concentrate on his work. Using the Sound Plan Worksheet, Joe found that keeping his radio on helped him to notice his tinnitus less. The radio is all he needs to help him concentrate during normal work days. However, when he is really stressed he still has a hard time concentrating.

Joe now takes a break when he feels very stressed and cannot concentrate. He practices imagery for 10 minutes and then goes back to working. Practicing imagery helps Joe get his mind completely off of his tinnitus for a short time. That helps him relax. Once he is relaxed it is much easier for him to concentrate on his work.

When Joe is especially frustrated, he tries to identify an event that made him feel that way. He then identifies thoughts he is having about the event. He writes down more positive thoughts and keeps them on a post-it note on his computer. This helps Joe have more realistic and helpful thoughts. As a result, he feels less frustration and stress.

Joe enjoys walking. He now takes a walk during his lunch. This pleasant activity helps Joe get his mind off of his tinnitus.

### **Summary**

In this section (Part 3) you learned things you can do (skills) to change your reactions to tinnitus and to feel better. They are Relaxation Exercises, Pleasant Activity Scheduling, and Changing Thoughts. In Part 2 you learned about using sound in different ways to manage your reactions to tinnitus. Experiment with all of the ideas that you learned about in Parts 2 and 3. As you experiment you will get better at managing your tinnitus. You also will learn which ideas work best for you.

Some people may need more help dealing with their tinnitus and other problems. Contact a mental health provider right away if you feel very sad or worried. A mental health provider can talk to you about your tinnitus or any other problem. This provider can help you find more ways to deal with your tinnitus and problems in your life.

If you want to hurt yourself or are suicidal, go to your local emergency room immediately or call the **National Suicide Prevention Hotline toll free: 1-800-273-TALK or 1-800-273-8255.**