

Group Session Three Guidance Notes

Session three aims to:

1. Find out how the goal setting and baselines went
2. Introduce thought monitoring and challenging

1. Goal Setting (10-15 mins)

Let the group know that they have a few minutes to feedback how the homework went.

Jot down any key problems on the flipchart.

- Select one or two problems and discuss them as a group. It is very important that they learn how to problem solve.

2. Introduction To Unhelpful Thoughts (10-15 mins)

Open up a conversation on unhelpful thoughts. Make sure you cover all the types of unhelpful thoughts in Table 1. Below is an example dialogue you could use:

“Has anyone here ever done too much knowing that it’s going to cause a flare-up? Or felt so fed up by the on-going pain that they don’t feel like trying and so give up on a certain activity?”

“According to research when we are faced with a task or a situation it is the thoughts that we have about the situation that produces emotions or feelings, that then determines how we act. We don’t seem to ‘act on impulse’ even if it feels like that sometimes.”

“The way that we think in any given situation is different for every one of us and depends on our own previous experiences or what we have learned from others. For example if a good friend of yours walked straight past you in passing without smiling or saying hello, you could think ‘what have I done, why don’t they like me?!’ This might lead you to feel upset and you might act on this by withdrawing yourself from their company in social situations. Another person in the same situation may think ‘they must have had a bad day’ which could make them feel concerned for their friend and they would act by calling them to check everything is okay.”

“We could say that if our behaviour has been unhelpful, then the thought behind it was an unhelpful thought. In this way, it is worth tackling unhelpful thoughts about our back pain, to prevent us managing our back pain in unhelpful ways

“We all tend to have similar patterns of unhelpful thoughts. These have been classified into the following categories (Table One, over the page), commonly called thinking errors; see if you recognise any of them!”

Table 1

Type of thinking errors	Explanations
Black and White Thinking	Things seen in B&W categories I've had one cube of chocolate I might as well eat the whole bar
Catastrophising	You exaggerate the importance of your errors or problems I always get it wrong
Should / Must Statements	I should, I must, I ought to, I have to.... I must be nice at all times
Jumping to conclusions	Draw a general conclusion based on limited experience or picking up on one aspect of an experience Exercise is unpleasant
Mental filter	Pick up on something that fits with your way of thinking and dismiss or ignore things that contradict your way of thinking White vans are always driven badly
Critical Self	Putting yourself down or blaming yourself unfairly It's my fault it went wrong

Make sure that this part of the session is light hearted – you may have to suggest what your own thinking styles are to get the ball rolling. Let the group know that our thinking style flavours the way that we think about everything including back pain. Ask the group to come up with suggestions of thoughts that would fit each of the categories for pain (make a note of any thoughts they come up with ready for the next exercise). Table 2 shows some examples:

Table 2

Type of thinking errors	Back pain examples
Black and White Thinking	If I can't do it the way I used to I might as well not bother I've started so I'll finish
Catastrophising	I can't cope with the pain anymore If this is what I'm like now – I'll be in a wheelchair by the time I'm...
Should / Must Statements	I should be able to mow the lawn in one go I shouldn't ever lift
Jumping to conclusions	It hurts when I drive other cars They think I'm making it up
Mental filter	Arthritis gets worse over time
Critical self	I got myself into these vicious cycles Even my thinking is wrong

Break at a suitable point in this session as this will take up the majority of the session

3. Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts (40-50 minutes)

Reproduce Table 3 on the flipchart.

- Write into the thoughts column any of the thoughts that the group came up with independently during the last exercise. Once you have a couple of examples of thoughts ask the group:
 - *When they would have them (i.e. the situation)?*
 - *How would having these thoughts would make them feel?*
 - *How might they then act or behave?*

Recognising which thoughts we are having about a problem (in this case back pain) is difficult in itself. What we then need to be able to do is to establish whether it is helpful or not. Use the following exercise in this session to teach patients how to do this:

Ask the participants the following questions about each of the thoughts on the table to generate discussion about the thought's validity.

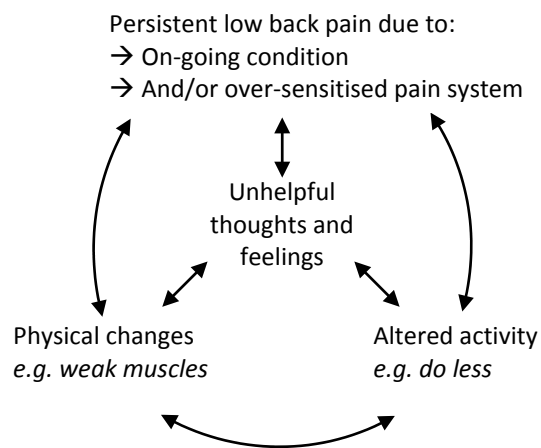
- *What's helpful about this thought?* There might not be a helpful element to the thought but it is worth asking the question
- *What's unhelpful about this thought?* Relate this to the emotion that it created for example - it's not very pleasant feeling anxious, and to the behaviour that it created i.e. taking excessive rest
- *Does this thought fit into any of the thinking styles we discussed earlier?*
- *Can we answer these thoughts back when we have them to stop us automatically acting on them?* Answer is yes hopefully
- *If a friend had the same amount of pain as you, what would you say to them if they told you these thoughts?* This will create some answer back thoughts, check which one/s might work for the participant.

Table 3

Situation	Thought	Feeling	Behaviour/Action	Answer back thought
Try to lift and get pain	I shouldn't be doing this, I've hurt myself, I need to be careful	Fear Worried	Avoid lifting Get help from someone else	Build my confidence with smaller objects; there's no reason why I can't lift
See the lawn needs doing	I should...I must...It's up to me, people will criticise me	Frustrated Determined	Do the whole lawn in one go – gets flare up	I'll do the front then do the back another day; I can try asking for help

G.P says he can't do anything to help	It must be in my head I should just push through it	Low Angry	Don't tell anyone when I'm suffering	I know that this a real problem that I need to learn how to manage
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Once you have completed a few examples, go back to the initial flow chart that you did in the first session and add in “Unhelpful thoughts and feelings” as in the diagram below. This helps the participants see why being able to challenge their **unhelpful thoughts is so important**. The diagram illustrates how unhelpful thoughts and feelings can influence all parts of the on-going pain cycle.



This leads onto setting this week’s homework.

4. Homework: Challenging unhelpful thoughts (5 mins)

Ask participants to look out for these types of unhelpful thoughts. One way of knowing if they have had a potentially unhelpful thought is if they notice a shift in their emotion i.e. suddenly feeling unhappy, angry etc. Ask them to have a go at going through the columns. There is a worksheet to help them have a go at this in their pack (pages 33-34). Let the participants know that this is usually the hardest skill to master so not to be surprised if they find it difficult.

5. Feedback (1-2 mins)

As with previous sessions.

6. Link the information given in this session to what will be given in the next (1-2 mins)

Let participants know that they will be looking at how certain types of unhelpful thinking can stop them doing certain activities long-term and how they can combat this. They will also be learning how to use relaxation as a tool for managing their pain.