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Fighting Despair

During COVID-19 – CBT Tip #2

Going into months now since states of emergency were declared, we can all use tips to fight ongoing despair.



Our thoughts directly impact the plasticity, growth and development of our brain and emotions. Thinking balanced, optimistic and healthy thoughts helps us use our prefrontal cortex more to tap into creativity, planning, problem solving and happiness.

Use Rehearsed Imagery to Connect to Hope & Happiness

Dr. Judith Beck, one of the gurus of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy has developed ten techniques to help people challenge habitual thought responses when faced with certain situations. One of the ones I love to use which can help in any uncomfortable situation or situation you dislike, is the Jumping Ahead in Time Imagery Technique. During this global pandemic, self-isolation, fears of infection, business shutdowns, disconnect from the world as we all previously knew it to be, I love using this technique to connect to moments of hope and happiness.

How to Jump Ahead in Time in Your Mind



Practice reflecting on happy moments likely to happen in the future, to embrace hope and happiness now...



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- **Recognize when you need a mood boost.** Maybe you want to integrate this as part of a morning or nighttime routine, maybe you can feel when you start getting anxious or sad or overwhelmed and you can use this then. Notice your negative feelings, accept them peacefully, and choose to use this time travel technique to connect to other emotions.
- **Take a few deep breaths.** Deep breathing helps us center ourselves, ground ourselves in the present moment, and bring peace and calm to our mind and body. I find using deep breathing with this technique makes its impact more pronounced and noticeable.
- **Close your eyes if you can.** If you have a moment of solitude and can close your eyes, it can help the picture in your mind develop more and help you focus more on vivid descriptions of the image.
- **Have a few images thought of ahead of time if possible, to draw on during the moment you need them.** Typically, I put some thought to what images I want to use before the moment I need them, kind of like packing your cognitive behaviour toolkit to pull out in the moment of discomfort or distress. During this pandemic I have been drawing on images of victory, resilience, and reconnection. I have been imagining:
 - Hugging my friends and family once again, smiles on our faces, no fear of COVID-19 spreading
 - Sitting at busy restaurants engrossed in conversation with my friends, laughing and enjoying delicious food and fun surroundings
 - Seeing news articles and doing a happy dance for “1 Year COVID Free”
- **As you deep breathe, bring a forward thinking (ahead in time) happy image to mind.** Observe and describe it fully – who will be there, what expressions are on their faces, what other things do you see, what positive emotions do you feel? Embrace the image and its positive feelings and notice your breathing relax and settle. Hold onto the image in your mind for as long as you can.