If you want to change things in your life:

Thinking Matters!

Second edition

Creating better lives and brighter futures one thought at a time.

Thinking Matters is a step-by-step process for learning and practicing cognitive behavioral skills that lead to changed thinking patterns. This process leads away from harmful behaviors and toward healthier behaviors.
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

Foreword

Thinking Matters second edition is filled with updated graphics, revised content and updated information. This edition retains the same step-by-step approach as the original Thinking Matters Facilitator Manual. Some of the material has been reformatted to make it more useful and dynamic.

The original Thinking Matters approach was intended for a criminal/juveniae justice audience. Therefore, it specified that facilitators are working with “criminals. Thinking Matters second edition does not make this assumption because many people use the original version outside the criminal/juveniae justice arena. Therefore, the second edition is more useful to a range of audiences and more flexible.

Many approaches to personal change assume that participants possess a basic understanding of underlying concepts and ideas. They also assume the participants enter the program with the skills necessary to perform the program activities. Participants are regularly asked to provide a situation description that contains “no excuses and no blame”. Regrettably, the antisocial thinker does not separate the “excuses” from the “situation”. These diverse ideas appear to the antisocial thinker as a “situation package”. The thinking that leads them to trouble goes something like this: “I hit my neighbor in the nose because he is rude.” To the actor the neighbor is in fact rude. Antisocial thinkers believe their perceptions which are based upon an antisocial mindset. To them it is not an excuse—it contains no blame. Most approaches do not specifically require participants to find excuses and/or blame. Nor, do they teach participants to remove excuses and blame from their situation description as part of the curriculum.

Learning these concepts fills a gap that exists among many cognitive behavioral approaches. For example, program manuals often indicate facilitators should instruct participants to select a situation where they got into trouble and write a brief objective description. If a participant thinks “brief” consists of two paragraphs. The instructor must provide additional guidelines for the definition of brief (excuses, objective & etc.). This can often increase program duration and/or increase the session length. Facilitators, who are often held to deadlines, feel pressure to skip or gloss over essential activities as a result. Unfortunately, many program designers do not consider that logistical adaptations decrease fidelity because they are a deviation from the original design.

Thinking Matters specifically teaches these skills in a comprehensive manner. For example, most approaches teach thinking reports as a singular item—in aggregate. Thinking Matters teaches each element of thinking reports individually. Before a participant is asked to create a thinking report, they are taught how to write a satisfactory situation description. They are not assigned thinking reports until they have demonstrated the skill of writing a situation description. They are not required to look for risk thinking until they have demonstrated the requirements of a thinking report. This makes learning the skills easier and more manageable for participants and change agents.

Thinking Matters Advantages:

- Participants are better prepared to be successful in more intensive program approaches.
- Facilitators using intensive approaches can adhere to program scripts and methods with fewer deviations and “clean-up”.

Approaching these skills individually creates the building blocks for subsequent cognitive behavioral approaches. This makes it very useful for situations where time is limited by factors such as sentence length or insufficient staffing. Residential facilities and jails are examples where time limitations might be present. Thinking Matters is recommended for participants who do not have basic skills required to perform programs that are more intensive. It can also be expanded for use as a more intensive approach by adding skills or requiring participants to practice the skills for a more extended period.
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

Table of Contents

OVERVIEW .............................................................................................................................................. 1

INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................................. 3

PRINCIPLES OF COGNITIVE APPROACHES .................................................................................. 4

GROUP MANAGEMENT ..................................................................................................................... 5

STAFF INTERACTION .......................................................................................................................... 6

GROUP FORMAT .................................................................................................................................. 7

HOMEWORK REVIEW ....................................................................................................................... 7

INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION ............................................................................................................. 8

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT/DE-BRIEF ......................................................................................... 9

WORKSHEET INSTRUCTIONS ........................................................................................................... 10

WORKSHEET 1 BEING OBJECTIVE .................................................................................................... 10

WORKSHEET 2 THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES ............................................. 10

WORKSHEET 3 LOOKING FOR MEANING ......................................................................................... 11

WORKSHEET 4 LOOKING FOR THINKING PATTERNS ..................................................................... 12

WORKSHEET 5 FINDING RISK & REPLACING THOUGHTS ............................................................. 13

WORKSHEET 6 THINKING ERRORS .................................................................................................. 14

WORKSHEET 7 DECISION TREE ...................................................................................................... 14

APPENDIX ........................................................................................................................................... 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................................................................. 1
When Working With Antisocial Thinkers:
Thinking Matters!

Overview

Thinking Matters is a basic approach to teaching cognitive skills. The Worksheets are designed for an antisocial population to learn and practice skills that reduce antisocial thinking and antisocial behaviors. This is an application of cognitive restructuring theory. Thinking Matters is written at approximately a fifth to sixth grade reading level. Participants should demonstrate a fifth grade reading comprehension. Others should be considered for remedial activities or receive special tutoring or mentoring services.

Responsivity should be considered when using Thinking Matters or any other cognitive behavioral approach. It is not advisable to view all cognitive behavioral programs as alike. Factors such as session frequency, program duration and placement in a continuum should be important factors in the selection process. Emerging research points toward careful program selection, planning, development and implementation.

All of the worksheets should be completed fully for each assignment. If used as an introductory approach, all worksheets are completed one or two times and reviewed as approved by a trained facilitator. This means that all spaces have appropriate responses according to the guidelines indicated later in this manual. If program logistics permit, Thinking Matters worksheets can be repeated as necessary to accomplish increased skills and produce new thinking habits if desired by the participants. Facilitators can use multiple worksheet sets to encourage participants to look for thinking patterns that create a lifestyle. The scope of specific thinking habits throughout their lives and the significance of the role they play are topics that can support sustainable change. The worksheets can be used to target specific behaviors as determined by the program delivery staff or by the participating individuals with staff approval.

When used in a criminal justice setting the basic approach Thinking Matters is appropriate for low risk and needs individuals. When this is done it should be viewed as a skill based educational approach as opposed to a treatment program. To be appropriate for higher risk and needs individuals Thinking Matters should be viewed as an introductory program element that is followed by more intensive application of the worksheets and/or appropriate treatment modalities.

If used as a treatment model for criminal justice actuarial assessments should be performed to ensure that the level of care is responsive to client needs. For example, a COMPAS score of 1-3 in antisocial attitudes/cognition would indicate that the minimum skill set (15-30 hours) is appropriate. While a higher score of 6-9 would indicate that additional skills and/or subsequent programming is desired (200+ hours). When used with higher risk and needs participants program design should incorporate compatible relapse prevention and planning module (supplemental: not included in this manual).
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

The skill set taught in the first five worksheets are:

- **Objective Situation Description**
  - Recognizing responsibility by reducing blame and rationalization
- **Discovering and Recording**
  - Thoughts, feelings, beliefs and attitudes
- **Recognizing Risk Thoughts**
  - Discovering content & meaning- How thinking and feelings are connected
- **Recognizing Thinking Patterns**
  - Recognizing the Sequence—Decisions are made in a step by step fashion
- **Replacement Thinking**
  - Practicing Different Thinking—Thinking that will lead away from trouble

Additional skills include:

- **Understanding Thinking Errors**
  - Understanding and monitoring thinking errors in real time
- **Choosing New Behaviors**
  - Recognizing risk and replacement thinking in real time

These are the fundamental skills necessary for performance of programs such as cognitive restructuring, problem solving and social skill programs. Thinking Matters Worksheets teach skill building that incorporates antisocial thinking theory, social learning theory and adult learning theory. Antisocial thinking theory is used as a basis for teaching people how to view a situation without rationalization, excuses or blame. This approach requires participants to practice taking responsibility for decisions and behavior. They also practice over-learning by repeatedly writing and speaking about their responsibility. Thinking Matters is self-directed because the situations are chosen by participants and are real life problems for them. Change agents can exercise discretion to limit the category of behavior they choose from. For example, if Thinking Matters is to be used exclusively for substance abuse issues, participants would be instructed to choose from only situations that involved substances. The same holds true for other behaviors. Situations could be limited to sexual abuse, stealing, generalized violence and etc.

Participants are required to focus their effort upon recognizing their own thinking, feelings, attitudes and beliefs. At minimum, they will be required to perform each worksheet satisfactorily, at least one time. This demonstrates that the skill has been acquired. Each worksheet is designed to teach a skill useful for objectively observing the thinking that leads to breaking a law, rule or social norm. These skills are fundamental for all cognitive behavioral programs. Many programs that employ these skills teach them in a more aggregate form. Thinking Matters teaches these skills individually because they are a sub-set of essential competencies. This provides a more coherent approach.

These Worksheets can be used in a variety of ways. The approach is flexible and can be used for either individual or group setting. It can also be used in an open or closed enrollment situation. Thinking Matters can be expanded to a more intensive approach by requiring participants to complete additional worksheets or adding cognitive skills to the minimum skill set. Worksheets can be done for an increased number of problem situations or for a variety of target behaviors. The minimum skill set is especially well suited for shorter lengths of stay in programs. The open enrollment option is particularly useful in jails or in community settings where participants must enter a group in progress.
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

at irregular intervals. Expanded skill sets make longer-term programming possible in community settings. They are also useful in a prison setting where longer lengths of stay are available or more intensive programming is desirable.

In any application of Thinking Matters, participants will challenge participant’s antisocial beliefs and behaviors. Participants are required to examine emotive responses, exhibit pro-social behavior, and practice alternative decision making skills. These skills are prerequisite for relapse planning and real life problem solving. To perform Thinking Matters satisfactorily participants are required to practice objective self assessment, understanding other points of view and personal accountability.

Introduction

Thinking Matters is a first step toward finding the thinking that leads to trouble. Trouble is when we break the law, break rules, hurt others or hurt ourselves. It is easy to see consequences that are the result of our behavior as the “trouble”. From the Thinking Matters perspective, “trouble” is not the consequence stemming from behavior. Trouble is the behavior that leads to the consequence.

From the Thinking Matters viewpoint, thinking sets a course for a person’s decisions. Changing behavior means changing thinking. Each individual has personal responsibility for their own thinking and decision making. If a person wants to change their behavior, they must change the thinking that leads toward that behavior. In other words, “If I keep thinking the way I always have……. I’ll keep doing the things I have always done”. Taking control of behavior includes taking control of ones thinking. People can (and do) change their thinking. A person can decide what thinking to keep and not keep. For example, your thinking has changed throughout your life. Do you think the same as you did when you were 10 years old? Thinking Matters in based upon the idea that people can intentionally change their thinking to avoid trouble.

- Everyone has Personal Responsibility for Their Own Thinking
- Different Behavior Requires Different Thinking
- People Can Learn to Change Their Thinking
- Antisocial Thinking Ruins Relationships
  - Causes substance abuse
  - Leads to violence
  - Gets people fired

Thinking Matters is based upon the idea that certain kinds of thinking habits lead to trouble. This is a common theme in many cognitive behavioral programs. People who hurt themselves and/or others with their behavior need to take control of their thinking habits. This includes changing their beliefs, attitudes and feelings that support antisocial behaviors.

To accomplish this, Thinking Matters uses introspection to help participants find the thinking that leads them to trouble. They are required to report situations that cause trouble for them and others. They must describe their behavior in a manner that is self-focused and shows personal responsibility. Additional activities include reporting their thinking, attitudes, beliefs and feelings. Participants must map their own personal logic and find replacement thinking. After demonstrating the skills participants can practice using them until they get faster and more proficient. This might include additional assignments of the worksheets or placement into a compatible program.
Principles of Cognitive Approaches

Thinking Controls Behavior!

Individual thinking determines behavior. Environment and life experiences shape the way people think and how we see situations. These things contribute to the thinking a person uses in every situation they encounter. When we perform Thinking Matters we will be approaching it from the perspective that a person can decide what to think. This makes their thinking and decision making their own personal responsibility. Behavior will not be viewed through another’s responsibility.

There is a significant body of research that shows that certain types of thinking lead to antisocial decisions and behaviors. This thinking is often referred to as Antisocial Logic. It begins with a self-centered viewpoint. When things are going smoothly and there are no obstacles, this thinking helps people feel good and empowered. They see themselves as important and “in control”. When someone or something interferes with them, they have a tendency to feel very bad. As the antisocial thinker strives to feel better, they tend to ignore and disregard social norms, rules and laws. This makes antisocial (and other socially unacceptable behaviors) seem like viable options. This thinking takes many forms and is adapted individually. Below is one example of how this thinking might look in flow chart form. It is not intended to be definitive. This logic can be expressed in many ways. Sometimes anger is an important element. Other times it is not.

Thinking Matters uses this set of ideas to teach people to discover their own personal logic that leads to undesirable behaviors. Because this logic is pervasive, antisocial thinkers begin to understand their own thinking by helping others in a group setting.
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

Group Management

Participants will usually be antisocial thinkers. These individuals have practiced being troublesome for much of their lives. Certain controls are necessary for effective management of their behaviors. Facilitators must create an environment conducive to learning and assist participants to practice prosocial skills as they learn thinking skills.

- Session length 1-2 hours
- Program length 18 hours or more
- Group size 10-15 participants
- Room configuration semi-circle/horse shoe
- Materials
  - Pen/pencil
  - Chart paper & stand
  - Markers
  - Thinking Matters Worksheets
  - Chairs
  - Thinking Matters Facilitator Manual

Safety

The facilitators should have a clear view of participants at all times. Facilitators should position themselves closest to the exit. In higher security settings groups should be monitored by others. The ability to maintain communication should be considered before selecting a meeting location. When possible there should be more than one staff facilitating each group.

Orientation

Thinking Matters groups should begin with an orientation session. This can be done with the entire group, smaller groups or individually. Orientation should include information and discussion relating to:

- Program theory
- Program goals
- Staff expectations
  - Attendance
  - Homework
  - Activities
  - Format (i.e. session length, program duration, open/closed enrollment)
  - Documentation
  - Incentives
  - Successful completion criteria
- Participant questions
- Participant expectations/goals

Each participant should understand what is expected of them and what to expect from others. It is recommended that staff create a handout for each participant that clearly indicates the information covered during orientation.
It is essential for staff to set the tone for group interaction at orientation. Communication style is a very important part of this. Terms that imply subjective judgment should be avoided. Words such as, “good, bad, and positive/negative can interfere with the process. Participants will be very alert for insults and judgments by staff. This is especially true of participants at the pre-contemplation stage of change. Staff should attempt to display a helpful attitude and make group rules a condition of participation. Participants must clearly understand that non-compliance with group rules will be interpreted as having voluntarily quit. This will be seen as their choice. Termination for non-compliance with group process should never be presented as a threat or wielded with authority.

It must be made clear that full participation includes arriving on time, leaving when dismissed, reading aloud, writing and speaking (i.e. asking and answering questions, presenting their homework to the group). They will be expected to be actively involved in group discussion. During the group only relevant discussion directly related to session goals will be acceptable. Participants will be required to give feedback to the group and be prepared to receive feedback from the group and staff. Discussion must be orderly.

Participants must understand that group members have significant personal differences. It will be important for them to suspend judgment of others. Thinking Matters is self-directed learning. Self-direction will provide flexibility for this approach. Participants use real life situations. Therefore, groups can be gender specific, limited to participants with similar characteristics or widely diverse. Participants will draw upon real life situations to learn cognitive and social skills. Authority for thinking and behavior choices must be the sole responsibility of each participant. It will not be acceptable to insult or belittle one another. Accepting others viewpoints and valuing diversity is important for prosocial interaction and must be modeled in Thinking Matters groups.

Staff Interaction

Staff must also adhere to these requirements. Prosocial modeling is an important leaning tool. Antisocial thinking and behavior can be reinforced by staff if actions and ideas are counter to one another. It is important for participants to see that staff model program requirements. Each staff delivering the Thinking Matters Worksheets should attend training to practice using the materials and practice facilitation.

It is imperative that staff remain objective, consistent and clear in their interaction with participants. They must not engage in activities that are likely to encourage and support antisocial thinking and behavior. Staff can inadvertently support antisocial behaviors by:

- Insulting— Participant attention is diverted away from their own thinking & behavior
- Personalizing— Facilitator is frequently drawn into conflict
- Reacting Emotionally— Allows the participant to view staff as unworthy of respect
- Arguing— Creates an environment where antisocial thinking habits thrive
- Threatening— Indicates to participants that staff are more interested in controlling them
- Debating— Places antisocial thinking on equal terms with pro-social thinking
- Ignoring— Participants will believe that inappropriate behaviors are acceptable
Staff can support participants’ effort to learn and practice the Thinking Matters skills. Below are some guidelines for facilitators to keep in mind when facilitating group sessions:

- Acknowledge desired behavior changes when observed
- Ask participants about Thinking/Behavior/Feelings/Attitudes
- Set specific limits for acceptable behavior within the group
- Make choices & consequences clear
- Require participants to state their choices clearly
- Focus discussion upon the participants’ role and responsibility
- Require participants to be accountable for their decisions
- Maintain a clear and consistent approach
- Do not react emotionally
- Do not argue
- Do not threaten

**Group Format**

Thinking Matters is designed to be facilitated in an open or closed enrollment format. In either case, the group time will be divided into three separate segments. Each segment will have a specific purpose and goal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group time (recommended as minimum of 1.5—maximum of 2 hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Homework review—15-20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individual presentation—45-80 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Homework assignment/debrief—15-20 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Homework Review**

Recommended group size is 10-12 individuals. Therefore, homework review must be limited to 1-2 minutes for each participant. The facilitator will choose a specific segment of an individual’s homework for review. Each person must read the segment requested. It is not necessary for every participant to read his or her homework in its entirety. It is important that all portions of each worksheet assigned as homework be reviewed by a group member. Only worksheets that have been assigned and are required to be completed will be reviewed in each group meeting.

Each participant is required to read aloud the portions of the assigned homework. Participants must understand that this is a program requirement and be prepared. Arriving without their assignment is non-compliance. If a participant cannot perform this task, Thinking Matters might not be appropriate for them.
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

Examples:
- If the group is using a closed enrollment format and all participants are on worksheet #3, no review will be done on subsequent worksheets that have not been assigned.
- If 10 group members are on worksheet #2:
  - 5 participants will review: their situation, 3 thoughts/feelings and beliefs
  - 5 participants will review: their situation, 3 thoughts/feelings and attitudes
- Participants should be encouraged to pick the most significant “risk” thoughts/feelings
- All boxes on worksheet #4 must be reviewed for each participant — It is not necessary to review the entire content of each box
- Participants should be asked specific questions relating to their assignment.
- Be sure to review the written assignment. Do not allow storytelling or long explanations.

**Individual Presentation**

The purpose of this segment is to assist the presenter in understanding their thinking habits. Questions and discussion should be limited to figuring out how the thinking led toward the behavior. It is not appropriate to suggest alternative behaviors. It will not be acceptable to ask the presenter if they knew they were “wrong”. It is inappropriate to ask, “What should you have done?” The group is not intended to find alternative behaviors. On worksheet #5, it is appropriate to look for new thinking that will lead away from trouble. It is important to remember that the final authority for thinking and feelings always remain with the presenter.

Facilitators must determine a “rotation” for individual presentations. Each individual must present their homework assignment to the entire group at least one time before completion. This portion of the group will require that homework be presented in written form. Chart paper, white board or other media can be used to assure that the group can easily see the presentation. The presenter can be allowed to bring the presentation to group already completed or may be excused from homework review to prepare.

The participant will be required to read their assignment to the group. Subsequently, the group will be open for discussion. Facilitators are expected to exercise a measure of control over discussion. Only discussion relating directly to the presenter’s thinking, feelings, beliefs, attitudes and behavior is relevant. Discussion should have an atmosphere of cooperative investigation. The group should be looking for information and how various parts of the homework fit together. This segment of the group should help participants practice being objective. The focus should remain on what happened and how it happened.

The focus should not be placed on problem solving or behavior changes. The activity should have the atmosphere of putting together a puzzle. Looking for pieces and finding how the pieces fit together. Participants should focus upon discovering the thinking path the presenter traveled to make the decision they made. Questions starting with the word “why” will not normally accomplish this. Questions that explore “how” things are connected will be more productive.
Homework Assignment/De-brief

This segment of the group will focus upon assignments for the next group, helping participants with homework problems and/or reviewing assignments in more detail. Group members should be free to leave after homework has been assigned if possible. Participants who need assistance should receive help/instructions at this time. It could be helpful for facilitators to enlist (supervised) assistance from other participants. Tutoring and coaching can be beneficial for some participants if facilitators believe there is a need. It might be important to remind participants of program goals, rules or expectations during this time.

It is important for participants to leave each group with an awareness of objectives for the next meeting. Facilitators should set clear goals and limits for each participant before they leave the group setting. It is also important that participants receive performance feedback. Acknowledgement that assignments are satisfactory or need improvement should occur before individuals are dismissed.
Worksheet Instructions

Worksheets 1-5 should be considered the minimum skill set for most participants.

Worksheet 1  Being Objective

Worksheet #1 teaches participants the skill of viewing situations objectively. This includes accepting responsibility for their behavior. This is almost exactly the opposite of what comes natural to them. Situations that do not comply with the following guidelines are not acceptable. They must be returned to the participant to be done correctly. Worksheet #1 should be filled out as described below:

- Objective-no excuses, no blame, no storytelling, no “fluff”
- 1-2 sentences
- I (first person)
- Past tense
- Try to keep the situation recent to help them remember the situation and thoughts they had at the time
- Must lead to trouble (or immediate potential trouble)
- Participant must be able to remember details
- Accidental situations are not acceptable
- The situation must have risk of trouble—trouble means:
  - Illegal, rule violation, harm to self or others, get fired, lead to divorce, violent & etc

Facilitators will handout worksheet #1 to participants and the above guidelines will be explained. Participants should be given time to ask questions. Facilitators should ask the group/individual for examples and guide the participants toward refining the situation statements.

Most participants will try to excuse their behavior by describing the situation subjectively. Some situations will be described that include irrelevant material or blame others. It is imperative the situation be stripped of these items before being accepted as completed. Worksheet #1 has instructions and examples of acceptable responses near the top.

Worksheet 2  Thoughts, Feelings, Beliefs and Attitudes

Participants will select a situation from worksheet #1 and have it approved by the facilitators. This situation will be written at the top of this worksheet.

Worksheet #2 teaches participants to sort their thoughts, feelings, beliefs and attitudes. To perform this activity participants must look back at a situation described in worksheet #1. Participants often view their behavior as an extension of the situation. They usually do not see that their thinking and feelings helped to drive their behavior. This worksheet requires them to break the situation into its component parts as it happened. It is essential that the thoughts and feelings be in the context that they actually occurred at the time. Eventually, participants will be asked to find new thinking. The new thinking will happen in the “present” as well. Worksheet #2 should be filled out as described below:
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

- **Thoughts** they had **BEFORE** the behavior
- **Feelings** are generally, one word
  - There can be more than one feeling for each thought
  - There can be the same feeling for several thoughts

Note: Physical reactions can be used as “clues” to help identify emotions. (I.e. Shaky hands might indicate nervousness, anger or embarrassment.)

- **Beliefs:**
  - Broad and general that can be applied in many areas of life.
  - I believe smokers ………
  - I believe politicians ………………

- **Attitudes:**
  - Usually observable (not always)
  - Can be one word
  - Cocky/arrogant
  - Hostile/defiant
  - Can be the way one moves
  - walk, body position, gestures

Some participants might have trouble finding all of the components on their first try. Facilitators should separate this worksheet into two activities (homework assignments) if they believe it to be necessary. If this is done, it is usually productive to work with thoughts and feelings in one lesson. Beliefs and attitudes can be addressed as a separate lesson.

Participants will often want to look at their thoughts in retrospect. When this happens the facilitator will see words in the past tense (was, did, could have etc.). Participants sometimes decide that they will report what they “should” have thought. This amounts to feeding the facilitator information—showing that they have already changed and do not need to do further work. When this happens participants will need to do the work again. Facilitators will not accept work that does not have all of the elements in the bulleted list above.

**Worksheet 3 Looking for Meaning**

Participants will select a situation form worksheet #1 and have it approved by the facilitators. This situation will be written at the top of this worksheet. This should be the same situation used on the previous worksheet.

Worksheet #3 teaches participants to look for meaning in their thinking and feelings. The rationale is that any situation that has no significance would not deserve action. Therefore, if action was taken that led to trouble, **something** must have had meaning. Participants will practice finding how thinking and feelings connect. They will be required to determine how a specific thought and feeling related to each other. In addition, participants will determine what they believed they deserved or wanted. They must also decide what they thought others deserved. This worksheet helps participants explore their expectations and what thinking & feelings support these perceptions.
Facilitators should ensure that completed work accomplishes the following:

- Connects thinking to feelings
- Identifies thinking that helps one feel better
- Identifies thinking that helps one feel worse
- Identifies thinking that leads toward a decision
- Identifies expectations for:
  - Self
  - Others
  - Outcome(s)

Facilitators should review worksheet #2 while checking worksheet #3. This will help them determine if the thinking has relevant context. It would be inconsistent if the participant has demeaning thoughts for someone but expresses an expectation of good will. Participants will tend to minimize intentions of harm and overstate altruism. It will be necessary for facilitators to look closely for statements that indicate a lack of effort. Short answers and blank spaces should alert them to these potential problems. Taking the “easy way out” is often symptomatic of antisocial thinking. The exercise should indicate significant effort on the part of participants to give complete and coherent answers on the Worksheet(s).

**Worksheet 4 Looking for Thinking Patterns**

Participants will select a situation from worksheet #1 and have it approved by the facilitators. This situation will be written at the top of this worksheet. This should be the same situation used on the previous worksheet.

Worksheet #4 teaches participants that situations have a cause and effect characteristic. Further it helps them see that their thinking and feelings have a direct relationship to their decision making. This skill connects various parts of the participant experience and shows how thinking leads to a behavior.

- Placing my thinking and feelings in sequence
  - What happened first? Next? How does this fit together?
- How my thinking is connected to my feelings and behavior
- How does this thinking produce a specific behavior?
- Making connections between my
  - Thinking
  - Feelings
  - Behavior
  - Attitudes

Participants will use previous worksheets to fill in the “flow chart” of the situation previously selected for the other worksheets. The first box will be the starting point. This will be at some point before the behavior that caused trouble. The last box will usually be at some time after the behavior.
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

Facilitators should be careful to explain to participants that the consequence does not go in the first box. Participants will tend to view the situation as beginning with the consequences or at the point where they were “caught”. This will not be acceptable. The starting point must be with thinking that leads toward the behavior. The skill is to look for thinking that helped the participant decide to take action that leads to trouble (as defined above). In addition, participants should learn to identify the thinking and feelings that support these decisions. This exercise will assist the participant to gain an understanding of their motivation for some of their personal choices.

**Worksheet 5 Finding Risk & Replacing Thoughts**

Participants will select a situation from worksheet #1 and have it approved by the facilitators. This situation will be written at the top of this worksheet. This should be the same situation used on the previous worksheets.

Worksheet #5 teaches participants to evaluate thinking. This requires that they assess the thinking for risk of leading to trouble and identify any associated emotions. It also requires participants find creative and sensible alternatives to their thinking habits.

Facilitators should be alert for “risk thinking” that does not lead to a problem behavior. Participants will sometimes try to show how much they have changed since then and substitute risk thinking with “what they think you want to hear”. If this happens, have them go back to previous worksheets and find thinking that leads toward trouble. Participants might use unrealistic “new thinking”. Facilitators should question the participant to ensure that the new thinking is realistic and achievable. It will be prudent to ask, “Do you believe you could really think this? Would you really feel that way?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identify thoughts &amp; feelings that lead toward trouble</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Identify any risk of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Harming others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Harming self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Breaking laws or rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Identify new thoughts that:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Keep me out of trouble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Are realistic &amp; achievable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Role Play**

When worksheet #5 is presented to the group, it should be performed as a role rehearsal. The participant should describe the situation so that the group can visualize the setting. Another participant or a facilitator can assist by acting the role of the other person involved (if any). The participant playing the role of the main actor should point to his/her head when reporting thoughts. This will make a clear distinction between thinking and speaking.
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

Worksheets #6-7 are additional skills that can be included in a minimum skill set if participants are assessed as in need and available resources exist.

**Worksheet 6  Thinking Errors**

Participants will select a situation from worksheet #1 and have it approved by the facilitators. This situation will be written at the top of this worksheet. This should be the same situation used on the previous worksheet.

Worksheet #6 (and 6a) teaches participants to look for risk thinking during real life situations. Being alert to risk thinking as it happens can help reduce the risk of destructive behavior. Much of the thinking that leads people toward trouble happens frequently but goes unnoticed. Participants will be required to write down situations where risk thinking was present. *This behavior need not have actually become a problem.* Worksheet #6 has some common types of thinking that lead people to problem behaviors. Worksheet #6a is blank so that participants can look for antisocial thinking and write it down in their own words. Thinking like this is commonly called a Thinking Error. This activity should encourage participants to look for thinking errors in their everyday life.

Facilitators can use Thinking Errors Characteristic of a Criminal (The Criminal Personality, Vol.1 Samenow & Yochelson, Aronson Press 1976) as a starting point. It could be useful to distribute a thinking error list as a supplement to the worksheets. Participants will then have a quick reference guide to use. When completing the worksheets facilitators should encourage participants to use their own words and not simply copy the reference sheet language.

**Worksheet 7  Decision Tree**

Worksheet #7 teaches the basis for planning to avoid risk behavior. It is a summary of the previous worksheets. Participants can refer to worksheet #1 for situations that could recur. Participants should place a situation at the top of the worksheet and look for thinking and feelings before the behavior. They should use the skills learned from other worksheets. This will help participants anticipate whether certain kinds of thinking will lead toward trouble.

Facilitators should be alert for participants trying to use this worksheet to “impress” others. They will often try to claim to have already changed. It is not the facilitator’s job to decide if change has occurred. Facilitators should focus upon achievement of the skill. The worksheet should show continuity. Thinking should show similar characteristics to previous worksheets and activities. The thinking and feelings should correspond with the behavior chosen. It will be important for participants who will enter more intensive programming to learn skills relevant for relapse planning. This worksheet begins to prepare them for these new skills.
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

Appendix

Thinking Matters Worksheets

Abe French
704 Gregg St.
Nashville, MI 49073
abe@thinkingmatters.us
989-615-2806
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

**Introduction**

It is important to look for what I was thinking and feeling when I did something that did/does/could get me into trouble. The reason this is important is because my thoughts and feelings are what help me make decisions. These decisions help me choose how to act in any situation. I can learn some skills that will help me be more aware of my thinking. The first skill I need to get good at is, describing situations that might have gotten me into trouble. (Worksheet 1)

It is not easy to find my thoughts so I need to practice looking for them. Once I get good at looking for my thoughts I can do it without trying so hard. As I get better at this I will be able to do it faster. The second skill I need to get good at is recording my thoughts and feelings. The thoughts and feelings I’m looking for happened before I did something to get into trouble. (Worksheet 2)

The reason my thoughts and feelings help me make decisions is because they come from what I believe is true. This helps me figure out what things mean. For example, if I think someone hates me, when they run toward me I might think I am in danger. If I think someone likes me, when they run toward me I might think they are glad to see me. I might believe it is right to attack someone when I think they are a danger.

I already know what to do when I think I’m in danger. I don’t have to figure it out. I don’t usually spend a lot of time trying to sort out the thoughts that tell me what to do. This kind of thinking is a set of habits I learned over my whole life. I call these Thinking Patterns.

I can understand the different ways I think and feel in different situations. To do this I need to look at my thinking as if I were watching a movie. I can learn to watch for certain kinds of thinking and feelings that cause me problems. The third skill I need to get good at is finding thinking and feelings that lead me toward trouble. (Worksheet 3)

I need to figure out what some of my thinking means. I need to see how these different parts of my thinking and feelings fit together---- sort of like a puzzle.

When I put a puzzle together the first thing I do is open the box and look inside. Then I empty all the pieces out and turn them over so I can see the right side of all the pieces. After that I start looking for colors and shapes that seem to fit together. Then I start to fit pieces into the correct places until the puzzle starts to look like the picture on the box. The fourth skill is finding patterns in my thinking. (Worksheet 4)

I can use these worksheets to help me look for my thinking and feelings in a situation where I did something to get into trouble. They can also help me look for how my thinking is connected to my feelings and behavior.

I usually try to put things in the order that they happened. Sometimes I don’t remember all of the thoughts and feelings right away. At those times I fill in what is easy to remember and then go back and fill in the rest.

I can change my way of making decisions. I can change the way I act. I can take control of things that have caused me problems. To do this I need to decide which thoughts and feelings lead me toward trouble. Then I need to find some new thoughts that will lead me away from trouble. I need to make sure that the new thoughts lead me toward feeling better too. (Worksheet 5)

I can keep practicing these skills by looking for more thinking that leads toward trouble. I can look for situations where I used the same thinking over and over or I can look for new kinds of thinking (Worksheet 6). I can keep track of when I have certain kinds of thoughts and do Thinking Reports for those situations later. Other times I need to slow down and look at my thinking more clearly to decide where my thinking will lead (Worksheet 7). I can write down a situation and decide if my thinking has risk. I can try to guess if it leads to a behavior that will get me into trouble.
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

**Worksheet 1**

I use this worksheet to practice describing situations where I did something that got me into trouble (or could have). Usually these are situations where I broke the law or hurt someone. I try to keep the situation description as short and simple as I can. Here are some examples.

**EXAMPLES:**

1.) I drove home drunk from a party.
2.) I punched my neighbor in the face during an argument.
3.) I spent all of my rent money at the bar.
4.) I tore up my ex-girlfriend’s yard with my car.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.)</th>
<th>SITUATION: __________________________________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.)</td>
<td>SITUATION: __________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.)</td>
<td>SITUATION: __________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.)</td>
<td>SITUATION: __________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.)</td>
<td>SITUATION: __________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.)</td>
<td>SITUATION: __________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.)</td>
<td>SITUATION: __________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

Notes:
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

**Worksheet 2**

I pick a situation from worksheet #1 and have it approved by my facilitator. Then I write down all the thoughts I had before I did the behavior that causes problems. I need to remember my feelings and write them down too. After I do this, I need to write down my beliefs and attitude(s) that helped me think and feel this way.

**Thinking Report**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SITUATION:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THOUGHTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEELINGS:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.)_______________________________________________________________

2.)_______________________________________________________________

3.)_______________________________________________________________

4.)_______________________________________________________________

5.)_______________________________________________________________

6.)_______________________________________________________________

7.)_______________________________________________________________

8.)_______________________________________________________________

9.)_______________________________________________________________

10.)_____________________________________________________________

11.)_____________________________________________________________

12.)_____________________________________________________________

**BELIEF(S):**

1.) ________________________________

2.) ________________________________

3.) ________________________________

**ATTITUDE(S):**

_______________________________________________________________
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

Notes:
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

Worksheet 3

First I fill out a Thinking Report. Then I use it to help me fill out this form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>These thoughts helped me feel good in some way: (list the thoughts)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the time, I believed that I deserved:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the time, I thought others should:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words I used to describe how I felt at the time:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>These thoughts helped me feel bad in some way: (list the thoughts)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When I felt BAD:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When I felt GOOD:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thinking Matters, LLC 2-9-16
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

Notes:
Worksheet 4

Look at worksheet 2 & 3. Then I put the thinking and feelings where I think they belong. This will help me see how my Thinking Pattern works. I must start (box 1) at a time **before** I did the behavior that gets me into trouble. The starting point must be with thinking that leads toward the behavior. I do not want to start at a time when I was caught. Then follow the arrows through the situation.

**Situation:**
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

(1) Start here: Everything was going OK until:
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

(5) I thought everything was going OK again when:
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

(6) End here: Things went wrong again when:
____________________________________________________________________

(2) When that happened I started to feel:
____________________________________________________________________

I started to think:
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

(3) Then I wanted to do things like:
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

(4) I felt a little better when I:
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Situation:____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Thinking Matters, LLC 2-9-16
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

Notes:
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

**Worksheet 5**

Look at worksheets 2, 3 & 4. I need to look for thoughts and feelings that made it likely to get into trouble. I need to decide which thoughts and feelings were the most powerful or important at the time. I will write them down as risk thoughts and feelings. In the next column, I will write down a new thought I could use instead to lead me away from trouble.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Thoughts &amp; Feelings</th>
<th>New Thoughts &amp; Feelings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

Notes:
This kind of thinking can lead me toward trouble if I am not careful. I can watch for some of this thinking to practice looking for trouble. If I see myself thinking any of these things I will write down the date, place and situation. Then I can do a Thinking Report later to see if I can find out if this thinking leads me toward trouble.

**Situation Log: Thinking Errors**

**That’s Stupid**
This kind of thinking helps me believe I’m smarter or more important than others. It helps me not listen to what others say.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**That’s Unfair**
This kind of thinking helps me think someone is trying to get over on me. It helps me think I need to do something to get even or get back at someone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**I can’t stand it**
This kind of thinking helps me to take action quickly. It helps me to believe that I have thought about things enough and it is time for action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

Notes:
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

**Worksheet 6-A**

Some types of thinking can be used as “Warning Flags”. This kind of thinking can lead me toward trouble if I am not careful. I can watch for some of this thinking to practice looking for trouble. If I see myself thinking any of these things, I will write down the date, place and situation. Then I can do a Thinking Report later to see if I can find out if this thinking leads me toward trouble.

You might want to watch for other types of thinking too. If you find some, you can write them down and do thinking reports on the situations. You can use the back of this sheet to make a list or get a copy if you run out of room.

**Situation Log: Thinking Errors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

Notes:
I use this worksheet to help me decide where my thinking will lead me. I put the situation in the top box. Then I put the thinking and feelings in the middle box. Then I try to guess if the thinking leads me toward trouble or away from trouble.
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

Notes:
Create a brighter future by learning to change your thinking.

**Bibliography**


