

Intrusive Thoughts Workbook

Intrusive thoughts can occur at any time, most times without any warning and can even be repetitive! They can come in the form of mental images, scenarios, words or sounds. Sometimes intrusive thoughts can include highly emotional content that can be distressing. Some intrusive thoughts may contain illegal or immoral themes however this does not reflect the thinker's inner most desires and we would never consider behaving in such a way or acting on these thoughts. Intrusive thoughts can however feel very scary, disturbing but the thought itself is enough to make us feel anxious, worried, upset and can interfere with our day-to-day life.

This workbook is to help you manage your intrusive thoughts. Intrusive thoughts are experienced by nearly everyone, many people don't realise they are having them whilst some battle with their intrusive thoughts every day. Everyone experiences intrusive thoughts differently, so you might find some tips more helpful than others.

Acceptance and Mindfulness Strategies

When you avoid your intrusive thoughts, or try to understand their meaning, their occurrence can become more frequent and distressing. These strategies are useful to promote mindfulness and acceptance of intrusive thoughts to reduce how often they happen and any feelings of anxiety or distress.

Reassuring yourself that thoughts are just thoughts, this can help you not to fear them or act on them

Recognise your thought as an intrusive thought and acknowledge it (name it)

Find an activity that you enjoy to engage your mind (e.g. walking, art, music)

Continue with your daily task or activity

Consider questioning whether it is a helpful or unhelpful thought rather than focusing on the distressing details

Practice allowing the thought to float by and remind yourself that it will pass.

Acknowledge how the thought makes you feel

Engage in meditation or a guided mindfulness video

Write down your intrusive thoughts

Distract your mind using different strategies – **5,4,3,2,1 technique**, thinking of a theme and then 5 items from each letter of the alphabet connecting to this theme, For example: Theme – Music A: ABBA, Audio, Arpeggio, Acoustic, Artic Monkeys. B: Beat, Bongos, Bluetooth, Bass, Band. C: Clarinet, Capo, Castanets.

Other strategies that work for YOU

My Thought Diary

How did you experience the thought? (E.g. verbal thought, image, other sensory experience)

What were you doing at the time that the thought occurred?

What was the thought about?

How were you feeling before and after the thought occurred?

How many times had this thought occurred?

How distressing was the thought?

(0: not at all distressing - 10: extremely distressing)



How did you manage the thought?