

Capture and Challenge Your Thoughts

We are destroying arguments and all arrogance raised against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:5 NASB

In life, we can direct our attention to the arguments and assumptions of others, to the point that we spend time overthinking and replaying events long after an interaction has occurred.

As a result, we can neglect taking the time to focus our attention on our own arguments and assumptions. We can often assume that our thoughts, feelings, and responses to any given situation are correct and appropriate. This is not always true and sometimes they can cause us to stumble in life instead. Challenging our thoughts, feelings, and responses to a situation allows us to see things from another perspective, resulting in improved responses and outcomes, including better spiritual and mental health.

Below is a reflective exercise to help you review a challenging situation, and examine the various thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations you experienced. By practicing this exercise, you will develop the ability to challenge your thoughts, thereby improving how you view and respond to various situations in life.

STEP 1: Reflect on the situation.

What happened and when did it happen? (e.g. Who was I with? What was I doing? What were they doing?)

What was I thinking? (e.g. About myself? About others? About the situation?)

What was I feeling? (Try to use a single word to describe each emotion.)

What body sensations was I experiencing? (e.g. Jaw clenching. Chest tightness. Sweating.)

How did I respond because of all the above? (e.g. Did I become confrontational? Withdraw? Avoid?)

STEP 2: Rate your internal experience.

What was your most dominant thought? (e.g. I cannot do this. I am a failure. They are useless.). How strongly did I believe this thought? Score it out of 100.

What was the strongest emotion that you felt? Score it out of 100.

STEP 3: Identify any stumbling blocks preventing you from considering the situation clearly.

After the situation occurred, did you ruminate or replay the experience endlessly? Did you find this helpful?

Do you recognise any common thinking distortions amongst your thoughts? (e.g. Jumping to Conclusions; Labelling; Over-Generalisation; Black-and-White Thinking). If so, write them down.

STEP 4: Take your thoughts captive and challenge them.

Take the main thought you identified in Step 3 and write down the evidence for and against.

For	Against

What are some different ways of viewing the situation? (e.g. If I felt differently, how would I have responded differently? What would Jesus do? Are my thoughts an accurate reflection of myself or others?)

STEP 5: Reflect, respond, and plan.

Take your main thought and positively re-frame it. How strongly do you believe it? Score it out of 100.

After re-reframing your main thought, how do you feel now? Score it out of 100.

Upon reflection, is there anything you feel you need to do in response? (e.g. Forgive someone. Apologise to someone. Practice grace towards yourself. Practice mindfulness.)

Write down your plan for how you are going to move forward in response.