



## AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS QUESTIONNAIRE

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If you have experienced feelings of stress, anxiety, exhaustion, or low mood in the past, think back to a time when you felt like you were really struggling to cope with these feelings.

On the next facing page are some of the thoughts that can come to mind at such times. Do you recognise any of these thoughts? Which seem the most familiar to you?

**Put an X in column A** next to each thought that you recognize as one you've experienced when during periods of stress, anxiety, exhaustion or low mood.

For each of the thoughts that you placed an X next to in column A, go back and rate how much you believed that thought when you were really struggling with stress, anxiety, exhaustion, or low mood. **Give that thought a score in column B** from 0 (you didn't believe it at all) to 10 (the thought seemed/felt very convincing, you believed it 100%). It may be difficult to remember this clearly but do the best you can.

Next, think back to a time when you were feeling well, not stressed, anxiety, exhausted or low. Now rate how convincing these thoughts felt then, how much you believed each thought, by **giving it a score from 0 to 10 in column C**.

	A	B	C
I can't enjoy myself without thinking about what needs to be done.			
Why can't I relax?			
I mustn't let people down			
I can't give up			
Everyone relies on me			
I'm the only one who can do this			
I mustn't waste a minute			
What's the matter with me?			
Something has to change			
Why don't they just do it?			
Why don't I enjoy this anymore?			
I can't do this			
People are going to think I'm incompetent if I mess up			
I must have upset that person			
Something bad is going to happen			
They are all laughing at me			
I'm going to go mad if I don't stop feeling so anxious			
I'm just no good			
No one understands me			
Why can't I ever succeed?			
My life is a mess			
I just can't get started			
I just can't seem to finish anything			
It's just not worth it			
There must be something wrong with me			
I can't stand this anymore			
I'm a failure			
I've let people down			
I feel stuck			
Things feel so bleak			
I don't think I can go on like this			
I wish I were somewhere else			

When we feel stressed, anxious, or low, and life is frantic, thoughts like these often feel like “the truth” about us. But in fact, they are symptoms of stress, anxiety or lowering mood — just as a high temperature is a symptom of flu.

That’s why belief in these thoughts can change so much as our mood changes. Because the negative thoughts are reflections of an underlying state of mind or mood (be that stressed, anxious, overwhelmed, or depressed) - rather than accurate reflections of the truth about us— belief in the thoughts changes as the state of mind that gave birth to them comes and goes. When we can see the negative thoughts and feelings of stress, anxiety, overwhelm, and depression for what they really are—symptoms rather than “me” or the truth—we don’t need to take them so personally and we are less likely to react with aversion.

Becoming aware, through mindfulness, that these thoughts are just “the voice of stress, exhaustion, anxiety, or low mood speaking” allows us to step back from them and begin to choose whether to take them seriously or not. Perhaps, in fact, we can learn simply to notice them, acknowledge their presence, and let them go.

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