

Module 7

Detective Work and Disputation

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: Detective Work and Disputation

Previously, we established that it is our thoughts that influence our feelings, emotions, and behaviours – the thoughts and feelings connection. We also discussed and identified some unhelpful thinking patterns and styles that we frequently use. Often, a person with social anxiety will think negative thoughts that are characterised by these unhelpful thinking patterns, such as “mind reading” and assuming that people are thinking negatively of them. This leads them to feel even more anxious about future social situations. This, in turn, maintains and perpetuates the anxiety.

The key to changing the way we feel is found in challenging and changing our unhelpful thoughts and beliefs. This begins with you taking a good hard look at them. Imagine that you are a detective and a lawyer, and your unhelpful thoughts and beliefs are to be investigated or on trial.

To assess whether or not your thoughts and beliefs are valid, you need to gather and examine evidence. As such, we liken this process to that of being a detective. Therefore, “D” stands for “**Detective Work**” where you look for evidence that does or does not support your thoughts and beliefs. Like all good detectives, we need to find out the facts, and gather the evidence. Here are some helpful questions:

- What is the evidence (or proof) that my thoughts/beliefs are true?
- Is there any evidence that disproves my thoughts/beliefs?
- How do I know that my thoughts/beliefs are true?
- Are there facts that I’m ignoring or I’ve overlooked?
- What other explanations could there possibly be?
- How realistic are my thoughts, beliefs, and expectations?

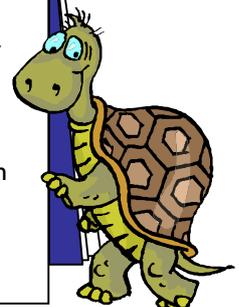
D also stands for “**Disputation.**” Remember, you are also like a lawyer, asking questions that challenge your thoughts, beliefs and expectations, ultimately testing and challenging whether or not they stand true, and whether they help or hinder you. Here are some other helpful questions to ask yourself:

- What other ways are there of viewing the situation?
- How might someone else view the situation?
- If I were not depressed, how might I view the situation differently?
- Realistically, what is the likelihood of that happening?
- Is it helpful for me to think this way?

Detective work and disputation is about trying to be objective about our thoughts. It is about analysing them, assessing, and evaluating them to see if they are indeed valid and true, as opposed to accepting these thoughts and believing them without question.

Turtle Tip

Detective Work and Disputation are a little like giving your thoughts a fair trial. It is especially important to be as honest as possible in acknowledging the thoughts you have.



In Module 5, an example of a Thought Diary was provided for you. We will continue with that example to work through the next steps of the Thought Diary, incorporating what has been discussed in this module (detective work and disputation) and the previous module (unhelpful thinking styles). In the example provided below, a section on Unhelpful Thinking Styles has been added, while sections A, B, and C of the thought diary remain the same as the example provided in Module 4.

Thought Diary (example)	
<p>A Activating Event</p> <p>This may be either: An actual event or a situation, a thought, a mental picture or recollection.</p> <p><i>At my brother's place and a friend of his drops by. He starts talking to me.</i></p>	<p>B Beliefs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> List all statements that link A to C. Ask yourself: "What was I thinking?" "What was I saying to myself?" "What was going through my head at the time?" Find the most distressing (hot) thought and underline it Rate how much you believe this thought between 0 to 100. <p><i>"I wish he wouldn't talk to me"</i></p> <p><i>"He will notice that I look like a 'nervous wreck'"</i></p> <p><i>"I won't have anything to say"</i></p> <p>Thought discovery question: "... and what does this mean?"</p> <p><u><i>"He'll think I'm an idiot" (85)</i></u></p>
<p>C Consequences</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Write down words describing how you feel. Underline the one that is most associated with the activating event. Rate the intensity of that feeling (0 to 100). <p><u><i>Anxious (70)</i></u></p> <p><i>Irritated</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Jot down any physical sensations you experienced or actions carried out. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>- Heart pounding, sweating, fast breathing</i> <i>- Avoided eye contact</i> 	<p>Unhelpful Thinking Styles</p> <p>Do you recognise any unhelpful thinking styles you might have been using? (Mental filter, jumping to conclusions, personalisation, catastrophising, black & white thinking, shoulding & musting, overgeneralisation, labelling, emotional reasoning, disqualifying/ignoring positives)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>- Jumping to conclusions - Predictive thinking</i> <i>- Jumping to conclusions - Mind Reading,</i>

Note that a section on Unhelpful Thinking Styles has been added to the Thought Diary. Look at what you have written in the **B** section and see if you can identify any unhelpful thinking styles you might have used.

The next step requires you to begin doing some Detective Work and Disputation. The example of the Thought Diary continues below.

D Detective Work & Disputation

My HOT Thought	
<i>He'll think I'm an idiot</i>	
FACTUAL EVIDENCE FOR MY HOT THOUGHT	FACTUAL EVIDENCE AGAINST MY HOT THOUGHT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Once at a party a few years ago, someone came and spoke to me, and a few minutes later asked me if I was OK because I looked a little nervous - Sometimes, people have called me an idiot when I've made a mistake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I have had many conversations where people have said that they have enjoyed talking to me, or that they have appreciated my opinion – even when I've been anxious when talking to them. - I have spoken to him before and he didn't say anything negative - People often call other people "idiots" when they are angry and upset, and most of the time they don't mean it

Disputation questions:

How realistic are my thoughts, beliefs, and expectations?

- If I was to ask people who knew me, most people would not say I'm an idiot
- Chances are, people are more worried about their own lives and aren't going to even think about how I look
- Everyone makes mistakes, so just because I make a mistake now and then doesn't mean I'm an idiot

If I were not anxious, how might I view the situation differently?

- I might remember that people have said that they have appreciated talking to me because they are interested in what I have to say

On the next page is a Thought Diary that incorporates all the steps up to this point. If you have completed Module 5, you might have filled out a Thought Diary. Continue with Detective Work and Disputation to challenge the unhelpful thoughts and beliefs from your thought diary. If you have not previously filled out a thought diary, this might be a good time to do one (see Module 5 for more details on how to start an ABC analysis).

Thought Diary

A Activating Event

This may be either: An actual event or a situation, a thought, a mental picture or recollection.

B Beliefs

1. List all statements that link A to C. Ask yourself: "What was I thinking?" "What was I saying to myself?" "What was going through my head at the time?"
2. Find the most distressing (hot) thought and underline it
3. Rate how much you believe this thought between 0 to 100

C Consequences

4. Write down words describing how you feel.
5. Underline the one that is most associated with the activating event.
6. Rate the intensity of that feeling (0 to 100).

1. Jot down any physical sensations you experienced or actions carried out.

Unhelpful Thinking Styles

Do you recognise any unhelpful thinking styles you might have been using? (Mental filter, jumping to conclusions, personalisation, catastrophising, black & white thinking, shoulding & musting, overgeneralisation, labelling, emotional reasoning, disqualifying/ignoring positives)

D Detective Work & Disputation

Detective Work: Now refer to the hot thought, and ask yourself, “What is the factual evidence for and against my hot thought?”

My HOT Thought	
FACTUAL EVIDENCE FOR MY HOT THOUGHT	FACTUAL EVIDENCE AGAINST MY HOT THOUGHT

Disputation questions:

- What other ways are there of viewing the situation?
- If I were not depressed, how would I view the situation?
- Realistically, what is the likelihood of that happening?
- How might someone else view the situation?
- Does it really help me to think this way?
- Think of some helpful self-statements

Module Summary

- Detective work is about trying to be objective about our thoughts. It is evaluating if we are tuning out valuable information that may help us feel better
- Detective work requires you to gather evidence for and against your unhelpful thoughts and beliefs, particularly your hot thought for every activating event
- Disputation is about asking yourself questions that will help you look for other information around you so that you can make an informed decision about your thoughts instead of just accepting them
- Here are some typical detective work and disputation questions:
 - ⇒ What experiences do I have that show that this thought/belief is not completely true all of the time?
 - ⇒ What is the evidence for/against my automatic thoughts?
 - ⇒ Are there other ways of viewing the situation?
 - ⇒ How might someone else view the situation?
 - ⇒ If I were giving advice to a friend, what would I say?
- Are there any strengths or positives in me or in the situation that I am overlooking?

