Challenging Negative Self-Evaluations & Low-Self-Esteem

One way to address your negative self-evaluations is to challenge them, and develop more balanced self-evaluations. Our thoughts and evaluations are often opinions we have, rather than facts. Therefore they are open to question, and should not be something we just blindly accept if they are causing us distress. Instead, you can dispute, dissect, examine, and assess them – like a detective or lawyer would, to see how realistic they are and put things in perspective.

Challenging your negative self-evaluations isn’t something you should do in your head as this can get messy and confusing. The best way is to write it down. To help you through the process, we suggest using the worksheet Thought Diary for Negative Self-Evaluations. This helps you work through the process step-by-step, making things clearer and more useful for you.

The Thought Diary will first ask you to identify your negative self-evaluations. To do this, ask yourself:

- What is the situation I am in?
- What am I saying to myself?
- How am I evaluating myself?
- How am I putting myself down?
- How am I criticising myself?

Now you are ready to begin to challenge your negative self-evaluations, by asking yourself:

- What is the evidence for my evaluations?
- What is the evidence against my evaluations?
- Are these opinions I have of myself or facts?
- How helpful is it for me to evaluate myself in this way?
- How else could I view the situation? What other perspectives might there be?
- What advice would I give to a friend in this situation?
- Are there any positives that I am ignoring?
- What would be more helpful behaviour I could carry out?

The ultimate aim of doing this Thought Diary is for you to develop more Balanced Self-Evaluations, which takes a lot of practice. If you work through the entire Thought Diary for challenging your negative self-evaluations, it is likely that you will experience a decrease in your belief in the negative self-evaluations you were making and a decrease in the intensity of your negative emotions, particularly depression. A Thought Diary will help you see yourself in a less harsh, more positive and kinder light, rather than letting your negative opinion of yourself constantly interfere with how you live your life.