

## Strengthening New Thoughts

[Depression, Anger, Guilt and shame]

The best way to increase the believability of your alternative or balanced thoughts is to try them out in your day-to-day life to gather more evidence. If your life experiences support your alternative and more balanced thoughts, you will begin to believe these new thoughts more, and your improved mood will become more stable. If your experiences do not support your new beliefs, you can use this information to create different alternative thoughts that fit your experiences better.

**BEN:** Gathering more evidence and strengthening new thoughts.

Ben's sad mood on the day he visited his daughter's family improved when he realized that although his children and grandchildren didn't need him in the same ways they used to, they still enjoyed his company and sometimes asked for his advice. Although this alternative thought helped Ben feel better, his new way of thinking was not fully believable to him — even though the evidence seemed to support the new idea. One way for Ben to strengthen his belief in his new conclusion was to gather more information about his alternative thoughts. Ben decided to test his new conclusions ("They still enjoy being with me, even though they don't need me in the same ways they used to"). He called his daughter and son-in-law and offered to help them on a project. His daughter told him that they didn't have any projects that needed help. Rather than concluding that he wasn't needed any more, as he had done in the past, Ben decided to ask her if he could help them in any other way.

After thinking for a moment, his daughter told Ben that his granddaughter Amy's best friend had moved out of town. Amy had been feeling lonely, especially after school when she normally spent time with her friend. She asked if Ben would be able and willing to do something with Amy. Ben eagerly agreed to spend time with Amy two or three times a week after school.

Amy also liked this idea, especially when Ben asked her what she might be interested in doing. She said that she had recently joined a soccer team and would like to practice soccer. Ben agreed to drive her to a field where they would have room to do this. Amy was pleased because the field was too far away to walk or bicycle, and her parents were working and couldn't drive her. Ben was glad to be able to participate in this part of his granddaughter's life.

This experience led to information that strengthened Ben's alternative thought ("They still enjoy being with me, even though they don't need me in the same ways they used to"). His family's reaction increased Ben's belief in his new thought, improved his confidence in acting on this belief, and created enjoyable and positive time with Amy. With his previous style of thinking, Ben would have felt rejected and would have given up when his daughter and son-in-law told him that they didn't have any projects ("What's the use? They don't need me anymore"). Ben's alternative thoughts gave him the confidence to find new ways to feel needed, instead of giving up when his initial offer was declined.

## WORKSHEET 10.1. Strengthening New Thoughts

Looking over the Thought Records or other exercises you have completed so far, choose one balanced or alternative thought that you believed less than 50%. Write the thought and your belief rating of it here:

Thought: \_\_\_\_\_ Rate % belief: \_\_\_\_\_

Over the next week, look for evidence each day that supports this new thought. Write down whatever evidence you find. If possible, make sure you do things that will provide evidence one way or the other:

At the end of the week, rerate your belief in the new thought: \_\_\_\_\_ %

Did looking for and recording evidence strengthen your belief in your new alternative or balanced thought?

Yes  No    Why or why not?