

# Session 5

## Thoughts, mood and relationships

In this session we will explore how trauma affects our:

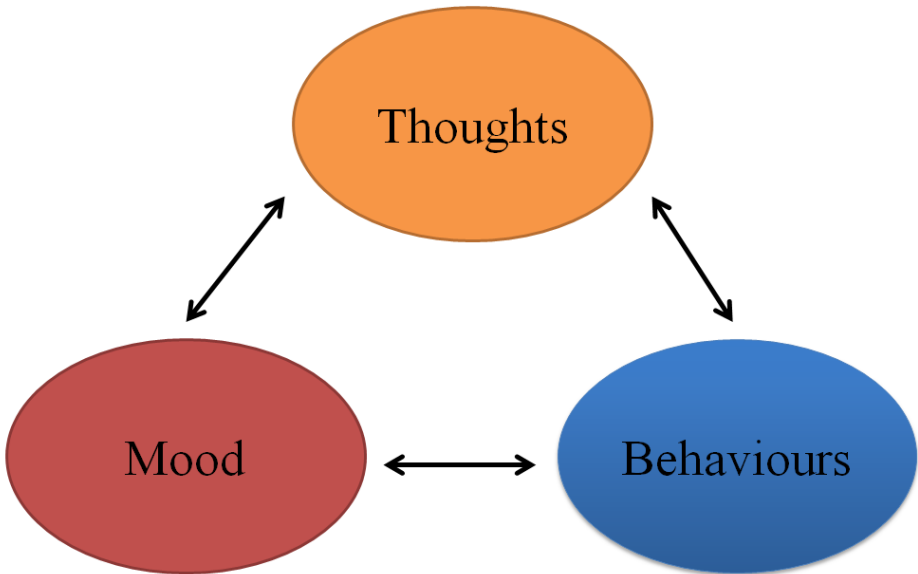
- Thoughts
- Mood
- Relationships

This booklet explains each of these and offers different strategies to help and the videos will provide further explanation.

Let's start by listening to the **place of calm** imagery track.



## Vicious Cycle



What we *think* can affect our *mood* and what we *do*.

After a traumatic event, this cycle can turn into a negative spiral.

## **Emily's negative spiral of unhelpful thoughts, her mood and behaviours**

Emily has been feeling down, tired and struggling to find the motivation to do anything within the house. She used to enjoy drawing and sketching but nowadays she can't bring herself to do this.

Emily feels disconnected from her friends and feels like she's been abandoned, as her friends haven't been to see her recently.

Emily also thinks a lot about what the nurse at discharge said "*you were incredibly lucky*". She spends long periods of time imagining *what if* she had died, and how that would have affected her partner and son.

Emily has noticed that she's becoming more frustrated with her partner, they're arguing more often and that she's been pushing him away emotionally.

## Unhelpful thoughts

You may blame yourself for what happened, even if you know logically that *it was not your fault*.

You may have negative, unhelpful thoughts about yourself, others or the world, such as:

*I'm a bad person*

*Others can't be trusted*

*The world is a  
dangerous place*



You may also find yourself going over and over the same thought and feeling quite *stuck*.

## Emily's thinking traps

<b>Unhelpful (but common) thinking styles</b>	<b>Some of Emily's unhelpful thoughts:</b>
<b>Jumping to conclusions</b>	<i>"I'll lose my job because I can't drive anymore"</i>
<b>Over-generalising</b>	<i>"I won't be able to sit in a car, let alone drive one ever again"</i>
<b>Focusing on the negatives</b>	<i>"I could have died"</i>
<b>Discounting positive things</b>	<i>"Since the accident, nothing good has happened"</i>
<b>Catastrophising</b>	<i>"Any time my partner/son is in a car, they'll be in accident"</i>
<b>Unrealistic personal rules</b>	<i>"I should be better by now"</i>
<b>Blaming</b>	<i>"It was my fault"</i>

## Your thinking traps

<b>Unhelpful (but common) thinking styles</b>	<b>Some of your unhelpful thoughts:</b>
<b>Jumping to conclusions</b>	
<b>Over- generalising</b>	
<b>Focusing on the negatives</b>	
<b>Discounting positive things</b>	
<b>Catastrophising</b>	
<b>Unrealistic personal rules</b>	
<b>Blaming</b>	

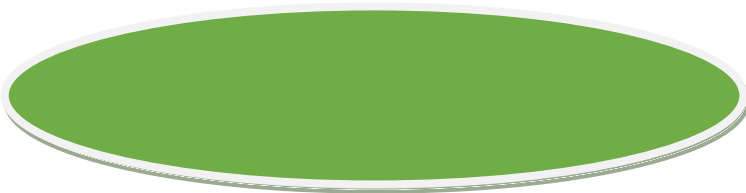
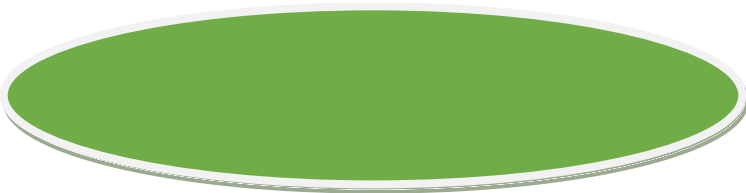
## More balanced, calming and helpful statements

We may think our thoughts are facts. However, this isn't the case and we can easily fall into *thinking traps*!

To help, we can come up with *alternative statements*:

- *I am a good person going through a rough time*
- *I can handle this and I will get better*
- *This feeling will pass*

*My own calming statements:*



## Mood

Feeling depressed, withdrawn and less interested in things often happens after a traumatic event(s).

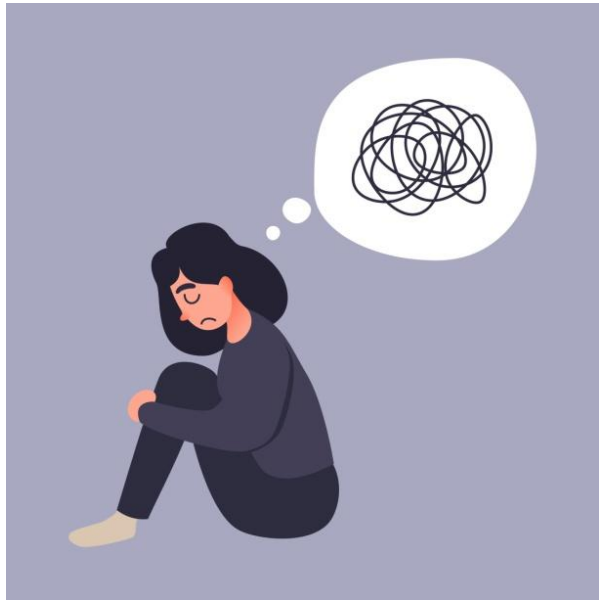
You may feel less able to engage in activities you previously enjoyed, which trigger a **‘vicious cycle’**:

### An example of Emily’s vicious cycle:

Emily has thoughts such as *“I’m going to lose my job”*.

She feels sad and empty.

She doesn’t feel worthy of being with her son and partner.



This leads to her feeling frustrated, which causes more arguments. Emily feels sad and alone.



It's important to recognise the *impact* of unhelpful thoughts on your mood, behaviours and relationships.



As you use the strategies introduced so far, you will hopefully notice some *improvement* in your symptoms.

You may have less flashbacks and nightmares, or feel less distressed when you do have them.



Practicing *helpful* strategies can *improve your mood*.

You may feel more *in control* or *empowered*, which can also help improve relationships.

# Behaviours

There may be some things that you do or no longer do following your traumatic event.

Some of these may have already been covered in previous sessions:

- Being on high alert



- Feeling and acting angrily



- Self-medicating



- Self-harming



- Avoiding people/situations etc.



Please watch the next video on *thoughts, mood and behaviours* before we move on to consider how a traumatic event(s) can affect our relationships.

## Relationships

After a traumatic event(s) you may distance yourself from others.

Especially if you've been hurt by another person/people, it can be difficult to *trust* others.

You may want to try to protect yourself by:

- *Attacking*: being rude, aggressive, or unfriendly
- *Submitting*: always meeting other's demands, even if they are unreasonable
- *Hiding*: not forming or maintaining friendships, declining all invitations

These behaviours may make sense, *however*, they can make you feel *lonely*, especially if you're experiencing difficult trauma symptoms, like flashbacks, nightmares and dissociation (zoning out).

If there are people in your life that *care about you*, beginning to *reconnect* with them can be helpful.



As part of your recovery journey, you may also need to begin to develop trust in services.


If you don't have others in your life, try to think about gradually expanding your social network. You can also explore these options:

- The Orchard Centre, Bonnyrigg, 0131 663 1616
- Anam Cara (*for women*) [www.anamcara.scot](http://www.anamcara.scot)


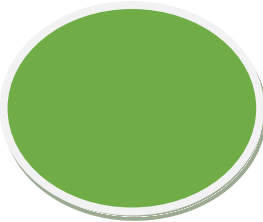
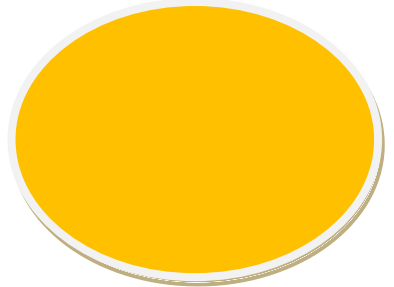
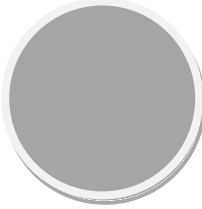
Please watch the video on *relationships* to hear more about how relationships can be affected after trauma.

## Reconnecting with others


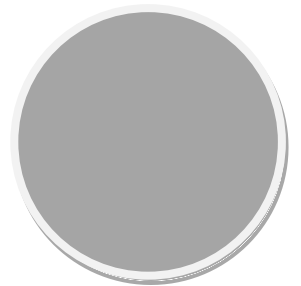
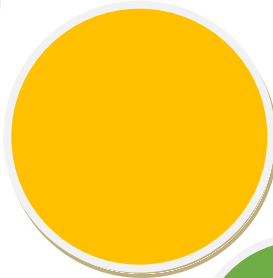
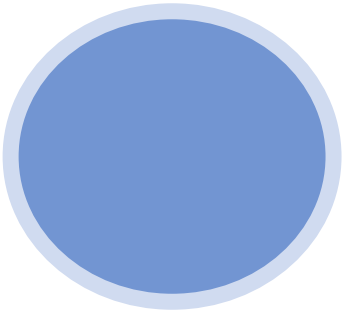
If you have any ideas of how to reconnect with others, please fill in the circles below. If you're not sure where to start, don't worry, we'll work on this together at the next group session.



If someone  
smiles at  
you, smile  
back



Find out  
about a new  
local group



Call/text  
an old  
friend

