

Thought Adjustment Cues Worksheet

Cognitive restructuring is a strategy used by many individuals to take away the power of negative thoughts and feelings brought on by pre-performance anxiety. Cognitive restructuring asks athletes to reflect in order to recognize, challenge, and replace negative thought patterns with more positive thoughts and perceptions of anxiety (Rowland et al., 2021; Patel et al., 2010; Hanton et al., 2008). Negative thoughts often lead to negative feelings and negative self-perceptions, which can result in increased anxiety and poor performance (Rowland et al., 2021; Hill et al., 2010). Keep in mind that this strategy, while effective when implemented correctly, can take some time to master. You must be willing to try this strategy, otherwise, they may find it frustrating due to the lack of immediate results.

Learning to recognize the thoughts that fly through your head is a skill - one that takes time, practice, and trial and error. It can be challenging at first to recognize negative thoughts, as they can be brief; occurring very quickly before a game, practice, or task. To help recognize these thoughts, it's important to reflect on your experience within your athletic environment and determine exactly what triggers your negative thoughts. What kick-starts your anxiety and self-doubt? Is it the announcement that your race is about to start? The kick-off whistle? The pre-game pep talk? Skating to centre ice for a penalty shot? Anything can be a trigger for negative thoughts, but learning to recognize the triggers that bring up these feelings allows you to adjust your thoughts and focus on your performance. Once you identify the triggers for your negative thoughts, you can use them as cues to adjust your thoughts before they get gloomy.

For example, a rugby player recognizes that they begin to get anxious when setting the ball on the tee before they kick. By reflecting on this, they may decide that the tee will act as a cue to think positive thoughts – this will help to prevent the negative thoughts from taking over and impacting their performance. Follow the prompts on the infographic below to reflect on what your triggers might be and to work through developing a cue for more positive thoughts:

THOUGHT ADJUSTMENT CUES

WHEN DO YOU GET ANXIOUS?	WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE TRIGGERS FOR YOUR NEGATIVE THOUGHTS?	WHAT CAN YOU USE AS A CUE FOR POSITIVE THOUGHTS?
1 <i>Before my race</i>	→ <i>When they announce my heat</i>	→ <i>The announcement</i>
2 <i>Before my penalty shot</i>	→ <i>When the ref sets up the puck</i>	→ <i>When the ref leaves the puck</i>
3	→	→
4	→	→
5	→	→

WHAT POSITIVE THOUGHTS CAN YOU HAVE ONCE YOU SEE/HEAR YOUR CUE?

- 1 *"I have trained hard for this race and I know I am ready to compete"*
- 2 *"We practice penalty shots at the end of every practice. I know what move to make and I'm gonna score"*
- 3
- 4
- 5