

# Concussion - Pathway to Recovery Program

## Session 5 - Patient guide

### Automatic thoughts, start attention therapies

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#### Session goal

- Understanding of the connection between the concussion and cognitive issues
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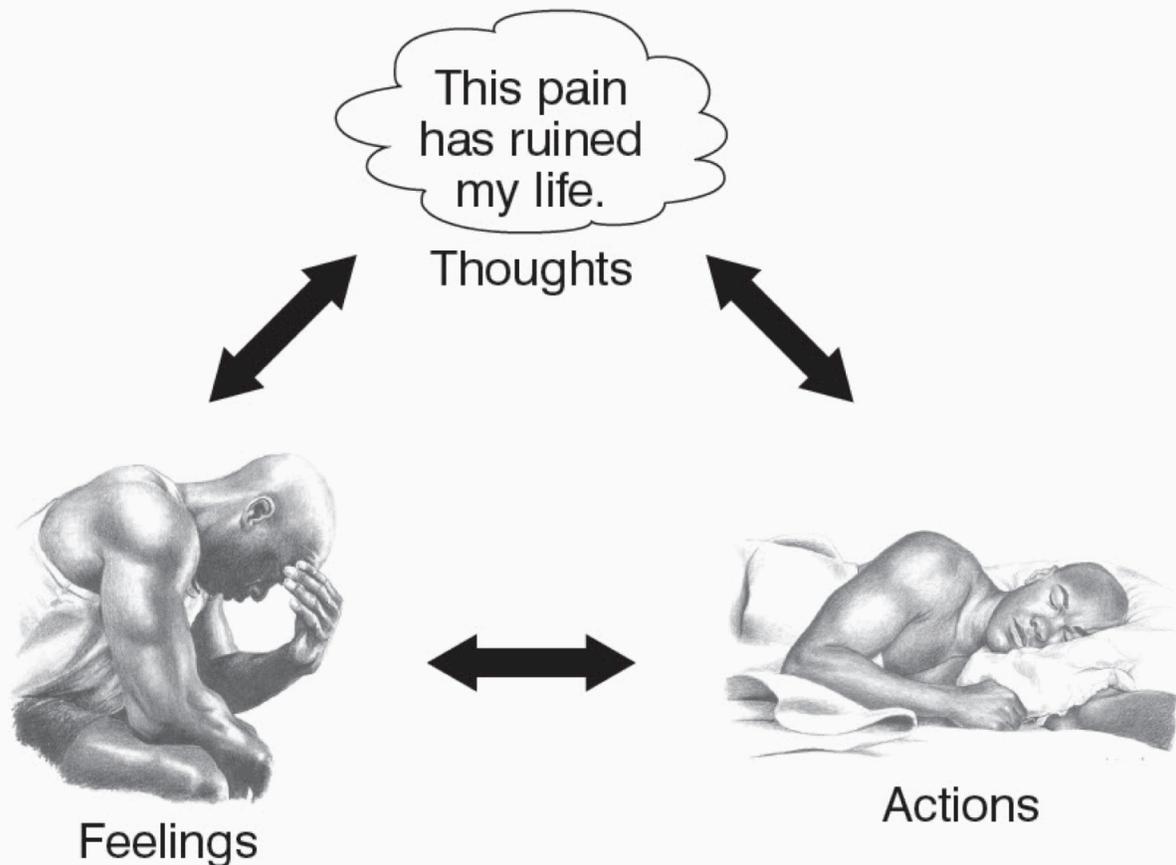
#### What are automatic thoughts?

- This important CBT principle looks at the close link between the content of our thoughts and how we feel, namely:
    1. What we think influences our emotions and our coping behavior
    2. We can develop the skill of noticing and identifying automatic thoughts and images. This gives us more control over how our thoughts affect our mood and actions.
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#### Introduce the “Think → Feel → Act” model

- In this CBT concussion treatment program, we put a lot of emphasis on the importance of your thoughts and judgments. In fact, people’s thoughts about pain and pain-related stressors make a huge difference in how well they will adjust to chronic painful conditions.
- In your handout, you see a man who is thinking, “This pain has ruined my life,” with an arrow toward emotions (in this case, depressed mood) and an arrow toward behavior (in this case, going to bed). Any guesses on how this man’s thought, “This pain has ruined my life,” is affecting his pain level?
- This drawing illustrates the **think** → **feel** → **act** model. The idea behind the **think** → **feel** → **act** model is simple but important: Our thoughts focus our attention on certain things, our thoughts influence our emotions, our thoughts influence our actions, and our thoughts influence our physical well-being, including pain. Our thoughts give rise to other thoughts, and those thoughts also have an impact on our emotions, behavior, and physical functioning. We’ve already discussed one category of thoughts: judgments about stressful

Illustration of the Think → Feel → Act Model



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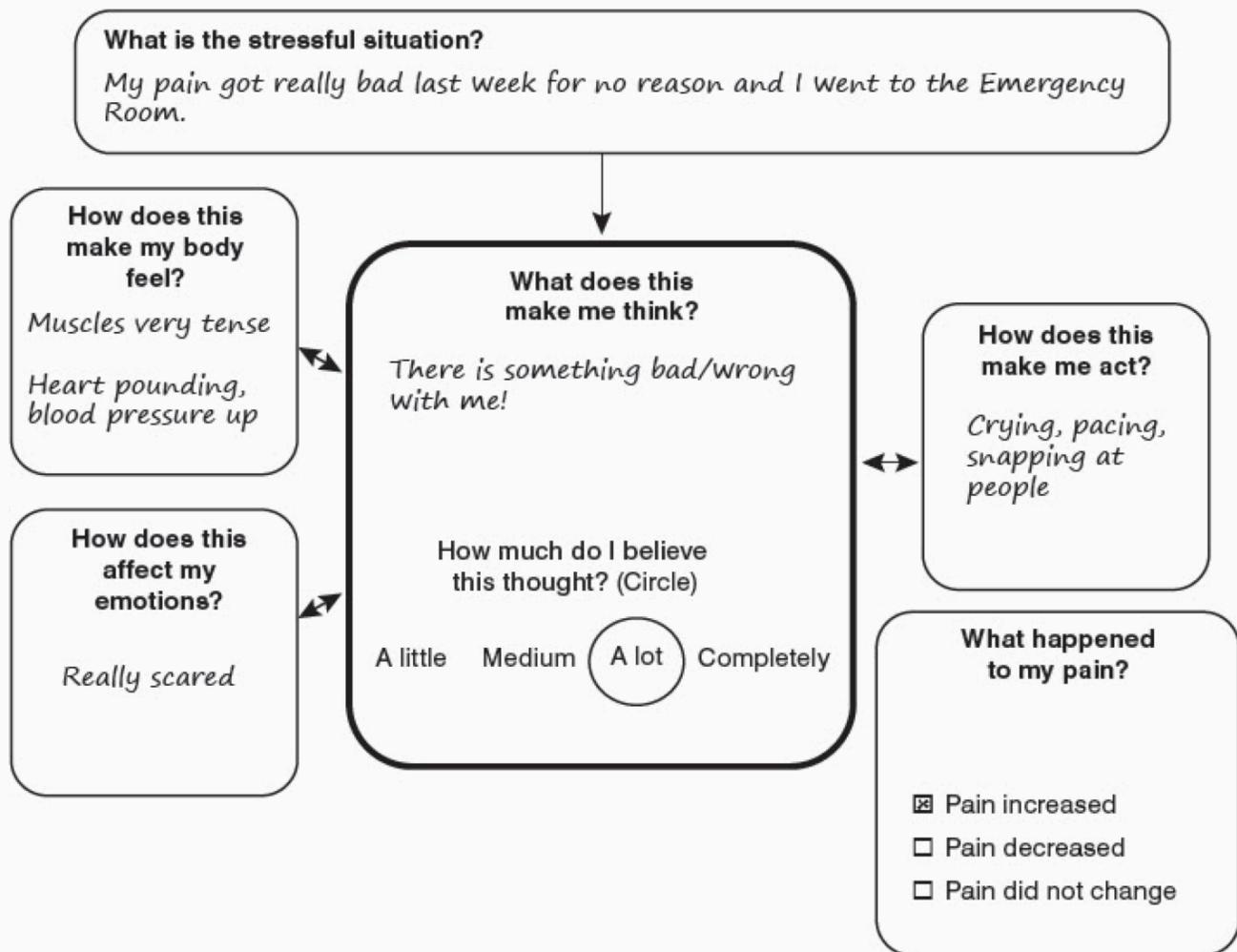
situations. For example, when we label a stressful situation as “threatening,” we are thinking “THREAT!” and our bodies go on high alert:

- We focus all of our attention on the situation; we feel uneasy, anxious, or scared; and we try to escape or avoid the situation if we can (or fight it if we can’t). There are other kinds of thoughts that are also very important to consider. Today we’ll learn about a category of thoughts called automatic thoughts.
- Automatic thoughts are like a steady stream of comments we are making in our heads. We are basically talking to ourselves constantly inside our head, and some of the commentary is not pretty!

- Automatic thoughts can also be pictures in our mind, rather than actual words. We are generally not even aware of these thoughts and images trickling by unless we pay specific attention to them, or unless a particular thought grabs us emotionally. If a thought catches our attention and hooks us, the trickling stream can become a rushing river of thoughts and feelings, and we can pretty quickly be swept downstream. Automatic thoughts, just like our judgments about a stressful situation, have a direct impact on our mood, our physical well-being, and our behavior.

CLIENT HANDOUT 3.7

Example: Noticing Our Thoughts Worksheet



\*Automatic thoughts often occur immediately before a shift in emotion (e.g., anxiety) or physical sensation (e.g., neck tension).

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## Cognitive therapies and attention

- Our frontal lobes are responsible for executive functions, including attention, information processing, and planning. Attention is necessary for all new learning and memory, and attention is frequently affected patients with traumatic brain injury.
- Patients with attention difficulties experienced impairment with performing work and school functions, reading, and carrying on conversations.
- The different types of attention include:
  - **Sustained attention.** This refers to inability to concentrate on a single task over a prolonged period of time.
  - **Selective attention** is necessary for filtering out background noise and distractions.
  - **Divided attention** is necessary for inability to maintain attention on 2 or more things at the same time.
- *See attached attention questionnaire*

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## Homework

- Noticing thoughts worksheet
- Continue breathing
- Continue progressive relaxation exercises
- Attention questionnaire