We feel the way we think

The biggest mistake we make psychologically is that we believe events, people, circumstances MAKE us feel a certain way. Negative thinking, over thinking, intrusive thoughts or ruminating are becoming everyday terms and are incredibly common; they can be debilitating for some, leading to severe mental health conditions if left unchecked. Thoughts are not facts or premonitions; we don't have to act on them.

When we have a thought, we assign a meaning to it. We give the thought meaning. In other words, we jump to a conclusion. We then feel something based on that conclusion. It's the feeling that drives action; we act based on our emotional response.

You can live a very different life when you subscribe to the fact that you get to decide how you want to feel about events and experiences by addressing the initial thought.

We think, we feel, we act

Our thoughts can be grouped into 3 main categories, see the next page: Extreme thoughts tend to be when we take a simple event and produce a very harsh conclusion about ourselves or others.

We feel the way we think - based on the concept of "Thought Distortions" from the original developer of cognitive behavioural therapy, Aaron T Beck in the 1960s.

We feel the way we think

FARM STRONG Scotland

Extreme thinking

Catastrophising	Jumping to the worst possible outcome or conclusion. Taking one event and imagining all sorts of disasters from the one small event without perspective.
Black & white / all or nothing thinking	Thinking in extremes. You're trying to lose weight and end up having a cake, All or nothing thinking would make you decide that the whole thing is now totally pointless, you may as well eat the whole box now. You can both lose weight and have moments of temptations.
Overgeneralising	Drawing a complete conclusion from one or more events. For example; condemning yourself or someone else on the strength of one mistake or using words like "always" or "never".

Massive Conclusions

Fortune-telling	Predicting the future, how events will play out. We tend to predict what we fear the most.
Mind-reading	Predicting what someone else is thinking, often what we fear about the relationship.
Low frustration tolerance	Assuming that when something is difficult it's intolerable, magnifying the discomfort or difficulty purely through thinking it.

Negative Loading

Labelling and demanding language	Judging and subsequently rating things that are too complex for one label. Using language such as "must" and "should." When we make demands of ourselves, we leave no room for alternatives and then feel bad about outcomes.
Personalising	Interpreting events as being related to you personally and overlooking other factors. e.g "They're deliberatelyignoring me in this meeting" may be "They haven't got to me yet, I'm annoyed I might not get to have my say"
Mental filtering & disqualifying the positive	Processing information and keeping only that which fits with a negative belief or transforming information into negative from positive.

We feel the way we think

FARM STRONG Scotland

Use the space below to write down some of the unhelpful thoughts that come to mind.

We feel the way we think

The good news is that when we start to recognise the unhelpful thoughts, we can employ various tactics to settle those thoughts and change them to more useful ones.

For extreme thoughts, practice reminding yourself of other perspectives; be realistic and consider how you might be more flexible in your thinking.

Try to find replacement words if you hear "I always" or "I never,"
For example: "I can be late often" rather than "I'm always late."

When we draw massive conclusions, it tends to be because of fear. We predict what we fear the most whether that's someone else thoughts or our own circumstances. Consider what situations you fear or how you might filter information about relationships differently. Consider how to describe experiences in a different way, one that is less magnified.

The negative loading speaks for itself and requires us to examine our language, replacing it with less "load".

For example: change "I must go to the gym tonight; I'm such a failure." to "It would be nice to get to the gym tonight; I deserve the break and need some exercise."

Use the space on the next page to write down some alternative thinking to the unhelpful thoughts you have realised.

We feel the way we think

FARM STRONG Scotland