

## Assumptions and Core Beliefs: 3 Levels of a belief

Automatic Thoughts



Assumptions



Core Beliefs

- **Automatic thoughts** are the verbal messages that we tell ourselves.
- **Assumptions** are less obvious, but involve “if....then....” sentences or “should” statements. “If I don’t do things perfectly, then I’m inadequate.” “If my boss asks me to revise a report, it means that it was lousy.”
- At the same time that new assumptions are identified and strengthened, unhelpful old assumptions and beliefs can be weakened.
- **Core beliefs** are usually absolutes about ourselves, others, or the world. These beliefs are based upon our life experiences and upbringing and have a powerful influence on how we think, behave, and feel. They can shift gradually but become more stable and stronger over time.
- **Core beliefs** help us to make sense of our world by organizing experiences into familiar patterns.
- **Assumptions and core beliefs** are the roots of our automatic thoughts
- **Core beliefs** can be identified by looking for themes in your thought records (homework from last time). You can also use the downward arrow technique.

Automatic Thoughts



Assumptions



Core Beliefs

“My boss doesn’t think my report is good enough.”

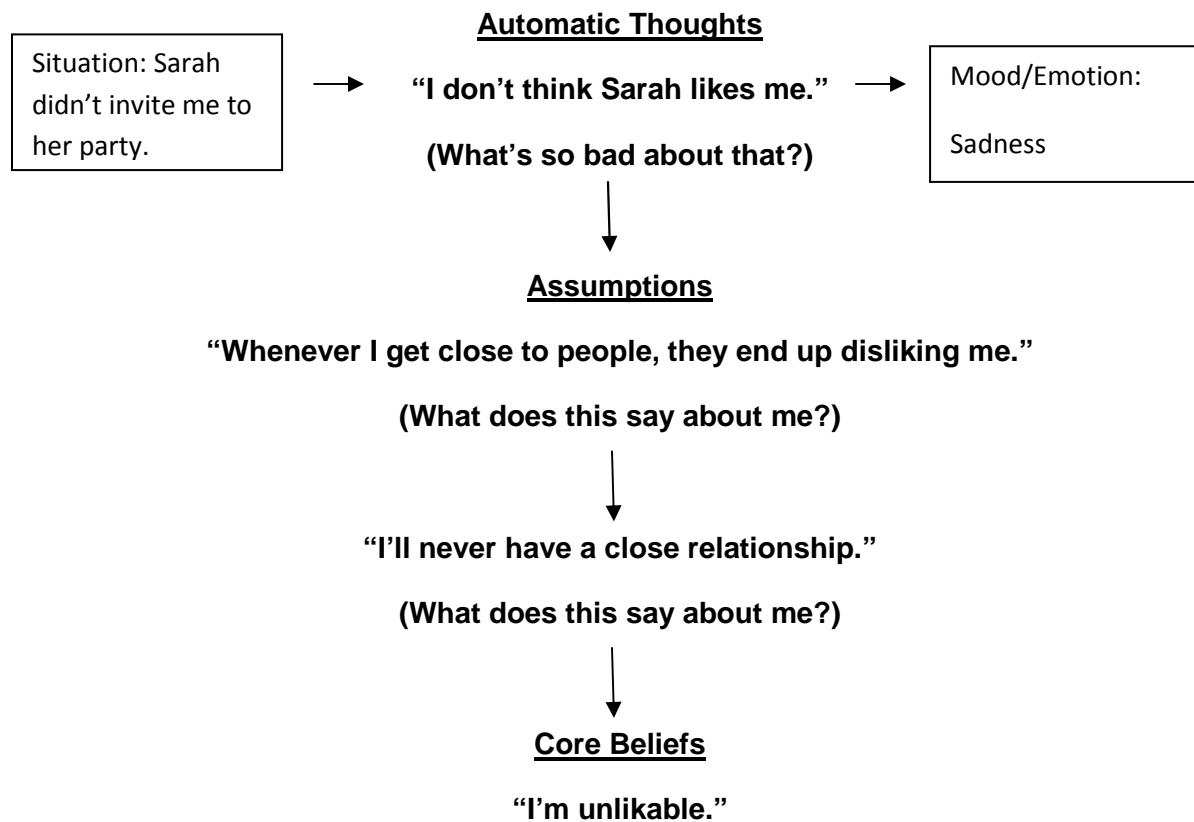


“If my boss asks me to revise reports, it means I’m not good at my job.”



“I’m incompetent.”

## Downward Arrow Technique



## The Downward Arrow Technique: Identifying Core Beliefs

**Situation:** Sarah didn't invite me to her party

**Automatic Thoughts:**

I don't think Sarah likes me

(What's so bad about that?)



**Assumptions:**

Whenever I get close to people, they end up disliking me

(What does this say about me?)



I'll never have a close relationship



(What does this say about me/the world/others?)



**Core Beliefs:**



I'm unlikable

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**Situation:** My boss asked me to revise the report that I submitted to him.

**Automatic Thoughts:**

My report was lousy

(What's so bad about that?)



**Assumptions:**

My boss doesn't think I do good work

(What does this say about me?)



I'm not good at my job



(What does this say about me/the world/others?)



**Core Beliefs:**



I'm incompetent

## The Downward Arrow Technique: Identifying Core Beliefs

Situation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Automatic Thoughts:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(What's so bad about that?)



**Assumptions:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(What does this say about me?)



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



(What does this say about me/the world/others?)



**Core Beliefs:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Negative Thinking

What do you say to yourself when you overeat or skip an exercise session? How about when you step on the scale and have not lost any weight, despite working hard to make healthy changes?



What we say to ourselves can make the difference between giving up and spiraling in a negative direction, and picking ourselves up and continuing on a positive path.

## **What would you say to a friend in the following situation?**

Your friend calls you after she overate at the buffet. She has decided that she might as well skip her exercise class as well, since she feels so stuffed and like a failure. This friend has been working really hard to lose weight by watching her portion sizes and exercising regularly. She now feels like giving up entirely.

What would you say to yourself in that same situation?

Positive and Negative Spirals: What happens after you “beat yourself up” over your behaviors or an event?

Is there another way to look at the situation?

What are the implications of changing your interpretations?

Start listening to your internal monologue. What are you saying to yourself? Is your self-talk supportive, kind, and nonjudgmental or critical and judgmental, and negative?



## Homework

## Tracking

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food & activity records online (myfitnesspal)   | <input type="checkbox"/> Meditation practice _____ days this week            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food, activity & mood journal (paper)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Journal 3 pages _____ mornings this week            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Specific food or eating behavior goal:<br>_____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Specific action related to support system:<br>_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Specific activity /fun goal:<br>_____           | <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxation practice _____ days this week            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____   | <input type="checkbox"/> _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____   | <input type="checkbox"/> _____   |

## Notes