

Shifting Your Mind on Difficult Days | Coping During Hard Times

Hey everyone! In this video today I'm going to be giving some tips on how to shift your mind and cope in difficult times.

So, the first thing is challenging negative thoughts. Challenging negative thoughts is sort of like a therapy technique that some people use but it can really help you dismiss concerns and become more solution-focussed. So here is an example:

Challenging Negative Thoughts:

Thought / idea: I may be annoying to others.

Challenge it: I feel like I may be annoying to others because of my hyperactivity and eccentricity. The latter is something that is actually a beautiful aspect of my personality because it helps me be unique. The hyperactivity was part of my condition so isn't my fault and isn't something to be ashamed of.

If others find me annoying, then that is their own issue as I am just being me and doing the best I can. There was a situation in which I felt that I was annoying others but if they felt that way about me then that is their own issue, and we can work out ways to get through things together. We can find a way to communicate with each other in healthy ways and they can develop more tolerance. I can be more mindful of what I am doing but before, I know I was

trying my best so even though I made a mistake I learnt from it.

The person may not actually find me as annoying as I think they do as they said that they think I am awesome.

Here is the example on challenging negative thoughts. So, at the top we are going to put thought / idea. I say idea because sometimes thought can be taken too literally, like everything that goes through your mind, so idea is more of an ingrained perception. So here we go, you put that at the top and then you say "Challenge it". How do you challenge it? So, here we go, you can say why you feel that way, why you have that sort of worry or concern and then you can say why it may not actually be a bad thing. For example, here it says "The latter is something that's actually a beautiful aspect of your personality because it allows you to be unique," and then you could say why something isn't something you need to judge yourself for, so then it says the hyperactivity is part of a condition, and then it can help you really dissolve some shame. Then you can say that if others do perceive you a certain way (if you worry about that), then that's their own problem and not yours. It can help you have some sort of freedom and confidence. Then you may want to relate it to a situation; if you feel that way because of a certain situation or the thoughts / idea is from a situation then you can really say what you've learnt from that or why it made you feel that way. It can really help you understand yourself more. And it can also, when you say what you've learned from it, it can really help you be more

solution-focused and that's something that's really important to cultivate. There you go, there's the solution. Then you dissolve judgement again, have some self-compassion. Then you say why it may not actually be true again, it's showing here. The person may not actually think that. You can identify your thought-traps, really.

The next thing is to cope through humour. This can actually be really, really helpful because you know, if you don't laugh at yourself you'll cry, that is the saying, but I think that when you allow yourself to cope through humour, you see that nobody's perfect and that you can embrace your human-ness. As well as this, I know for me, apparently humour really helped me to cope with my OCD, it can serve as a distraction, or just allow you to make light of the situation - this is not the same as self-deprecating humour though because that can be very unhealthy. This is more just seeing the bright side of things, in a way.

[I remember when I had a mix of dissociation, brain fog, low mood, and strange thought patterns I was terrified as I did not know what was going on so I made up a funny name for this feeling and it reduced the fear and allowed me to cope with the feeling better so I felt lighter.]

As well as this, this sounds really strange I know but... memes. Memes can allow you to relate to others in a similar situation and distract yourself and just have a bit of a laugh. I know not everyone sees the point in memes but sometimes they can help, and this doesn't

sound like very professional advice or anything but sometimes it helps.

The next thing is look into online services and also apps. There are a ton of apps in the app store that can help with self-care and changing thought patterns, and there are CBT apps and stuff, and I found that really fascinating, so you can definitely look on there to see if there's anything that may help you change your thinking patterns or just feel better about yourself, that can be really good to look into. Also, local mental health organisations, I did not know until recently how many local organisations there are, so there's probably a lot more support than you think there is. So definitely look in your local area about services that are available, but also large, national organisations can sometimes have services that you can use as well so that can be really, really helpful. The next thing is look at supportive and empowering quotes online. This can be really, really good because it can help you feel very empowered, worthy, and confident. Looking at quotes... it depends what quotes you look at, but you can look at quotes that are more reminders, or quotes that give you motivation or things that feel like they give you strength to overcome things, it can be helpful in some circumstances; and also making a quote book, I've spoken about that before as well but that is something that helps me so a quote book can sometimes be helpful if you write some reminders or your favourite quotes in a little booklet, it can be good.

The next thing is, write about or just think about how you can grow from the struggle or what you have learnt already from it. This can make it feel like the struggle is more worthwhile and it can help you sort of see how you do actually evolve, these things can actually help you even though they can be very, very difficult.

What you gain from difficult experiences:

- Empathy
- Ideas on how to help others
- A shift in your life path that helps you do better than you could have done before
- Compassion
- A new perspective on things
- Seeing what you need to change in your life
- A deeper understanding of yourself
- The ability to cultivate creativity and start projects based on what you have learnt from your experiences
- The ability to share your story

The next thing is, remind yourself that the little things can have a huge impact. You may not always see this because we often think that it's only the big things that make a big difference but actually if you smile at someone when you're out that could mean the world to them, or if you share a post, that post could be what someone really needs to see in that situation, so it could really help them feel less alone, so that sort of thing, little things can make a big impact, and you've got to remind yourself of that - you are making a difference even if you don't feel like you are.

The next thing is, see things from other people's perspectives but don't let yourself be mistreated. So, what I am referring to with this is, if you have a miscommunication with a friend or some sort of misunderstanding or a little conflict then it can really help to be able to see their situation, you can write about how they may be feeling, why they may have a certain perspective that's different from yours, and it can really help with forgiveness as well, but of course this doesn't really apply to every situation because there are unfortunately some situations where people get mistreated and in that case it helps more to see that this is actually a really bad situation and empower yourself enough to get out of it, but in terms of a friendship conflict or something then seeing their perspective can really, really help.

Seeing others' perspectives

I got upset and angry at someone because they posted a comment disagreeing with what I said online and insulted me.

Their perspective: To them it probably does sound strange, we have different views because we have different life experiences. I cannot change their views and it isn't right of me to do so. It wasn't very nice that they insulted me but I know that they were just looking for a way to express their frustration. It was upsetting to me but it is okay, I can let it pass. It means more about them than it does about me. I guess it is understandable that my views can confuse certain people if they have been consuming different content and have a different perspective on things. What I am

saying probably doesn't make sense to them and that is okay as we are learning from each other. They are worthy of all the love in the world.

So, this is the example for seeing others' perspectives. At the top you can say what the situation is that happened where you maybe felt upset towards someone else and why, and then under that you can say why they may have a certain perspective and it can help you be more understanding and see from their perspective rather than just having your own view, because it can be really helpful to see things from other people's perspectives as that can also prevent you from getting into arguments. So, you can say that they have different life experience, you can't change their views, you can be understanding towards their own actions if you feel like they've done something inappropriate, and validate their feelings, and all of this just really helps you be understanding and more open-minded and can prevent conflict and can allow you to forgive others as well for certain things that are needed to be forgiven.

The next thing is boundaries! I talk about this a lot as well but boundaries are really important because although you may feel guilty for setting boundaries, you really need to. If you do feel guilty that's okay but don't let it control you because setting boundaries is actually really important because you do not have to do everything for everyone, you do not have to socialise all the time, you do not have to do stuff that you don't feel comfortable with.

[self-respect]

Your boundaries are really, really important and they are how you really care for yourself, so take time for yourself, tell people that you don't feel comfortable with something or that you'll do something at another time because that is really, really important - keep your boundaries, do not let yourself be used.

The next thing is, write a list of things that you judge or have judged yourself for and then challenge that, say why the judgement is unnecessary, untrue, and unhelpful - that can be really, really helpful.

The next thing is, ask for help when you need it. This is something that a lot of people say but it is important, because if you're someone who doesn't really like to talk to others about how you're feeling it can be really helpful to actually do that, but of course, ask first because if someone else is going through a difficult time and you vent then it can be quite difficult, but ask if someone is able to listen and if they are then talk about how you feel, but make it more of a casual thing, it would be great if we lived in a world where talking about this sort of thing was just normal rather than perceived as a big thing, which makes people afraid of it. Talk about how you feel. It takes a lot of courage to be vulnerable, as Brené Brown says, but definitely talk about how you feel. However, bear in mind that if you are an overly dependent person who always seeks others to help you feel better and validate your worth, sometimes that isn't always healthy, so if you are an overly dependent person (like myself), then I would say that try to self-soothe, try to do other things on here to help yourself feel better

and validate yourself, maybe do activities that show yourself that you care for yourself and try to prevent yourself from seeking validation from others and see if you can comfort yourself rather than always trying to get it from other people, but of course if it is something serious then definitely talk to someone about it.

The next thing is, take the pressure off of yourself when you're struggling. If you're holding yourself to really high standards or you have this mental idea that you have to do this specific thing when really there's nothing forcing you to do it, then take the pressure off of yourself because your well-being is more important. If something is stressing you too much and you can say no to it then say no. If something is upsetting you or making you dread it then put it to the side for a while and do something that gives you more feelings of joy, and also rest when you need to, that is really important.

The next thing may sound a bit cheesy I guess but compliment yourself in the mirror. This could be on your characteristics - maybe you're really kind and empathetic or maybe it's your physical appearance, you might say that you have really nice eyes or something. This can help you if you lack confidence, and over time it might help you feel a bit more confidence and raise your self-esteem a little bit.

The next thing is something that can sometimes help with worries and anxious thoughts. Sometimes when you're worrying or have anxious thoughts, if you try to resist and say "No, no, no, that won't happen," it

doesn't always help and although it's true that the majority of things you worry about don't happen, I think that sometimes your mind just won't leave you alone no matter how many times you say "That's ridiculous," because of the uncertainty. So, in that circumstance I would say that sometimes it helps to write about why it wouldn't actually be that bad if your worry or fear came true. Now, sometimes this can be really difficult because of course some worries and fears are quite strong, quite extreme. However, if it's something like you worry that someone will get ill you could write about how if they did they could recover and they could get the treatment they need. If you worry that something won't happen that you want to happen, that's a sort of sense of control that you feel that you need, that's normal, you don't need to judge yourself for that, but if you do have that and it's causing you a lot of distress because you feel you have to control something then I find that it can let things go if you write about why it wouldn't actually be that bad if it didn't happen. For example, you could write about how maybe there are other things to look forward to, that can be helpful sometimes.

The next thing is, go online and learn from other people's experiences, maybe read some blog posts, watch some YouTube videos (I mean you're watching a YouTube video now of course), those sorts of things - just learn from others because when you relate to others it can feel really good because you know you're not alone and you know that what you're experiencing isn't "weird", it's something that a lot of people go through, so that can be really helpful and you can also learn from others' experiences as well and do

things that help you by doing what they've done and stuff like that. Again, different things work for different people.

The next thing is to question whether you are projecting thoughts and feelings onto others. For example, if you are feeling quite hostile towards someone for no reason, then ask yourself are you actually feeling bad about yourself but you don't want to admit that, so you're putting it on someone else? Sometimes you are and then you can work on building your sense of self-worth and making yourself feel a bit better and being more understanding towards others as well, but sometimes as well you may project thoughts onto others by assuming that they're thinking something about you when they are not, because you might feel that someone's judging you, maybe you feel like someone's disappointed in you, but actually it may be that you're feeling that way about yourself, because when you feel that others are judging you, you are sometimes judging yourself so, just bear that in mind and then you can use the challenging thoughts technique to address that as well.

Treat yourself to something nice. There's this quote I saw, I think a lot of people have seen it, about how every day is a special occasion, and you know that's true because you're always worthy of nice things, so maybe eat your favourite food, have a drink you like, or maybe read your favourite book, or listen to music or something like that, because that can really help you feel a bit better and show that you know your

worth, you know you are worthy of nice things, that can be really good as well.

The next thing is journaling. Journaling can be very helpful; it can help you release your thoughts and learn more about yourself. There are different forms of journaling. The first one is with a prompt; you either finish the prompt or just write about a certain topic, but some people may feel that that is too constricting so in those situations it can be really helpful to do a stream-of-consciousness because a stream-of-consciousness doesn't need to make total sense, it doesn't need to be spelled right, it doesn't need a lot of effort put into it, you can just do it, just write whatever comes to your head and that can really serve as a release, it helps you vent really, so that can be really, really good. And it can be really about anything. Once you vent that on paper or on a laptop if you're typing then it can stop it going around in your mind. I find for me that typing it actually helps a lot more because, I mean writing probably makes stuff a lot worse because my writing is terrible and it's very uncomfortable to write with my hand, so typing can really work for some people who have difficulty with handwriting.

The next thing is, don't force yourself to do things, this kind of goes back on another point, but if you are holding yourself to a really high standard, you feel like you have to do something but you are avoiding the demand or you are dreading it to the point where it's impacting your wellbeing then definitely don't force yourself to do something, do something else until you feel that the demand has been lifted and then it might

be easier to do another thing. This applies more to people with autism and ADHD, I think.

The next thing is a self-compassion letter, I've spoken about this in other videos, I go on about it quite a bit, I love self-compassion, but this can really help you accept your human-ness, although I would say try not to write a self-compassionate letter when you are frustrated at yourself because that's probably not going to end well, but in a time when you're feeling quite nurturing maybe, or you don't feel angry or too much self-hatred, it can help because you kind of write to your mind or maybe pretend that the letter is addressed from a friend or a guardian angel, or a family member or something like that; and then write nice things to yourself. I will show an example in a moment but that can actually be really helpful to get that sort of outside perspective and change your thinking patterns as well, so I will show an example of that as well.

Compassionate letter

Dear _

It is understandable that you are struggling right now. You are going through a lot and have been very stressed. I know that you are trying your best and I want you to know that you can take time for yourself when you need it. You never needed to be working all the time.

You seem to be doubting your ability to do your assignments but remember all the other times you did things when you thought you couldn't. You have a lot

more in you than you thought. Remember that it is okay to ask for help. Take some time in nature if you need to do so. I love you and if anyone judges you it has nothing to do with you.

Here is the example of the compassionate letter to yourself. So of course, you address it to yourself and then you can say that it's understandable that you're struggling or something like that, because you want to validate how you feel first of all. Validation is really, really important. Make sure it's understanding and non-judgemental towards yourself. Help it make yourself feel good, because you're allowed to feel good about yourself, and then you can remind yourself to do things that allow you to feel a bit better, and remind yourself to take care of yourself. Add some little reminders as if it's coming from a wise part of yourself, because it is. Address worries through it, through a loving lens rather than a judgmental lens. Add some reminders. Just make it so that it completely validates you, it's truly loving; not frustrated, judgemental, not angry towards you, not critical; as if it's coming from a higher source, even though you are the higher source it's coming from.

The next thing, I'm just reminding you to accept how you feel, because if you resist the feeling you feel it ends up getting worse because if you have the mindset that I should be happy or I shouldn't be feeling how I'm feeling that makes it a lot worse, because it makes you feel bad about yourself. You don't need to judge yourself for how you are feeling, so you can just be there with the feeling, it's a sensation, it will pass and I think that it can be

difficult at times but there's really nothing wrong with feeling how you feel at all and the resistance can cause more struggles, so once you let yourself feel the way you feel it's okay, it gets a lot easier.

The next thing I wrote down is meditate. Now, a lot of people say meditation can really help with anxiety and if it helps you then that's great because it can kind of give you a break from your mind and make you feel calm, especially if you do deep breathing, it's almost as if it resets your nervous system. However, I understand that this does not work for everyone. For some people, the self-critical thoughts get louder if you try to meditate. For some people, the intrusive thoughts can make it difficult to meditate. For some people, hyperactivity can make it virtually impossible to meditate, so of course this isn't for everyone but for some people it can be really helpful. There are different forms of meditations, some people may find guided meditations more helpful because they allow you to be creative rather than just being in your mind. Some people may get frustrated that they can't stop their thoughts, although with meditation you're not supposed to stop your thoughts, you're just supposed to observe them, but still that can be really, really difficult to just observe them so I would say that guided meditations can be a better option for some people, and if you also find that difficult maybe due to mental OCD compulsions then try another method because this isn't for everyone, but for some people it can really help with anxiety and stuff.

The next thing is to remind yourself that fun is a really important aspect of life and that you are allowed to

have fun. Go and do a fun activity; run outside, go dance in the rain or something. Just do something fun because in society we feel like once you reach adulthood you have to be serious and productive, and work all the time, and that is incredibly dull and very boring if I'm being completely honest, so remind yourself that fun is an important part of life, but of course you want to work on stuff, you want to be serious when you have to, but you don't have to be like that all the time, so definitely remind yourself that we are allowed to play, we are allowed to have fun.

The next thing is to see how your imperfections can actually be a beautiful thing. This sounds very clichéd but it's true because what you perceive as your imperfections may actually be something that give you a lot of depth, a lot of rawness, it may help you be less judgemental to others, it may give you a lot of understanding, it may allow you to express yourself creatively, stuff like that, so what you deem as an imperfection may actually be a great asset, so definitely try to change your perspective on what you perceive as your imperfections, that can really help as well.

The next thing is to write a gratitude list. Now, this can be helpful to help you see positives in things in the sense that, even though things may be difficult for you, you still have things that are going well for you. Gratitude lists can be really helpful for this sort of thing, however, sometimes they can make people feel guilty for feeling sad, and that's never the intention, you do not need to feel guilty for feeling sad or for seeing that there are struggles you're facing. But a

gratitude list can help you see that it isn't all bad, even though sometimes your mind may trick you and make you feel that way, but a gratitude list can make you see that even little things can be something to be grateful for, so that can be really helpful, but remember that if it is something that's making you feel more guilty then you don't need to do this, but for some people it can be really good for having a more positive perspective. So, here is an example:

Gratitude List:

1. Cats
2. Nice food
3. Sunlight and nature
4. Good music
5. Nice people I have met
6. My class in school

So, in your gratitude list you can put lots of different things, no matter how big or small. It could be things like, you can listen to nice music, it could be your pets, it could be even things that happened in the past that you're grateful that they happened or maybe even things in the future that you are grateful for the opportunity to do. It could be things like sunlight and nature, it could be the people in your life, or opportunities that you have, or things that you've done, or things that you partake in like hobbies that you're grateful to be able to do. It could be your health, it could be that you are better than you used to be, it could be that you are not suffering with something that other people do.

The next thing is to go out in nature. Being in nature... I mean I sound like a hippy, but I go on about this a lot. It can be really, really calming and being near trees and greenery can just be really calming - it used to give relief from my intrusive thoughts. Being under the sun can be really relaxing and the brightness of the sun is just something that can bring you joy and it also allows you to get vitamin D which, vitamin D deficiency is associated with depression so I mean it can help in the long run as well, but even if you want to go out in the evening and gaze at the stars it can be really relaxing and give you some time away from the hustle and bustle of life really, so that can be really good for some people.

The next thing is, list your strengths or things that you're proud of. So, everybody has strengths. Maybe you are really resilient, maybe you are really good at overcoming things, maybe you are very good at adapting to things, maybe you are really good at reading, maybe you are really good at music, something like that. And list things that you are proud of that you've done, it doesn't have to be achievements because sometimes if you list too many achievements it just gives you an unhealthy ego boost but if you are proud of yourself for something then let yourself feel that for a bit because you are allowed to be proud of yourself as long as it doesn't turn you arrogant of course, but be proud of yourself, it's alright to be proud of what you've overcome. Be proud of what you've achieved that you once didn't think was possible.

Write a forgiveness letter to yourself. Now, this is very, very similar to the compassionate letter to yourself, but if there is something that you are dwelling on, maybe an old mistake you made or even a current one and you feel really bad for it sometimes our minds put it out of proportion; a small mistake can make us feel like it's a big one but actually, writing a forgiveness letter to yourself can again aid in self-compassion and allow you to let go of the blame that you may hold towards yourself and stop you from dwelling on those things.

The next thing is, have some reminders you can read out to yourself when things get particularly difficult; this can be in a quote book or it could be just on your phone like maybe a few pointers that you repeat to yourself to remind yourself that things do get better and it won't be like this forever.

The next thing is, acknowledge that you are still growing and there is no need to be perfect. You are still growing, we are always growing no matter how old you are, we are always evolving, we never needed to be perfect, we never needed to be the same as others, we never need to be on the same "level" as others that we may feel that they're on a different level (but we're actually all equal). You don't need to be a certain way, you don't need to know everything yet, you are still learning - you're human, you are in this realm (I like spiritual stuff) to learn things and it doesn't matter if you make mistakes and get stuff wrong, you are still learning all the time and you can be gentle with yourself in that sense.

Cuddle your pet if you have one. This can be really calming. I have seven cats, one of my cats is called Dolly, when I cuddle her she purrs and she's so cuddly, she likes to cuddle in and everything, I will insert a video shortly, but it's amazing because when she purrs and cuddles you it just feels very nice and that can really help if you're feeling down if you have a pet. Of course, not everyone has a pet but if you do then that can be a really good thing to do as well.

The next thing is, do something to make you feel comfortable, maybe get some blankets, wrap yourself up in it, like hug yourself maybe. Just do something that soothes you, it can be very soothing to get a blanket or maybe sit down and read a book, have dim lighting, like I have a Himalayan salt lamp, it's actually broken now because I tried to use it as a weight lift, but dim lighting... just create a soothing environment for yourself, maybe after a busy day because you need something to be able to calm you down and calm down your nervous system, that can really, really help as well, and help you feel calm and a lot less anxious, a lot less stressed, a lot less pressured.

The next thing is, if you're feeling really unmotivated or you're struggling to believe in yourself or you're stressing about time management, visualise yourself achieving your goals, it can really help you feel more motivated and optimistic if you visualise yourself achieving something, you visualise yourself getting something done, you see what the good outcome can be. That can just make you believe in yourself a bit more and really motivate yourself, so that may be an option for some people.

Let yourself cry. Some people have a lot of shame around crying but repressing it and holding it in only serves to make bigger problems, so it is actually a release and it can be calming, it can literally release your emotions and make you feel calmer and soothed so it is really important sometimes if you're feeling really stressed then maybe you actually just need to cry.

The next thing is, this is a difficult one but remind yourself that you can get out of a cycle. When you're in a cycle and you keep doing the same thing over and over again or making the same so-called mistake over and over again, you can feel like there's no way for you to get out of the cycle but remember that you've already overcome so much, and you've already evolved so much it may happen naturally. Sometimes you try to force yourself to get out of a cycle and it doesn't work but be patient with yourself. Getting out of a so-called negative cycle can take time. You have to have a lot of patience with yourself so just do the best you can and remind yourself that you will get out of this cycle at some point.

[Take things one step at a time. Focus on breaking the cycle one changed behaviour at a time rather than feeling like you need to change everything at once as that makes it seem like a daunting task. Congratulate yourself for each time you change one little thing and know that going backwards is just a blip and you can still go forwards again.]

Honour your solitude. If you've been socialising so much that it's leading to burnout - this is very common for autistic people, we have a low social battery, but if you've been socialising too much and you need some time for yourself and you're angry because you don't have enough time to do what you want to do and you need some time in solitude, embrace your solitude and say to people "I'm not meeting up right now, I am spending time for myself," because that is completely okay. Being an introvert is okay, it gives you time to research, gives you time to do stuff you're passionate about, it gives you time to create things, so that can be really helpful as well, but again this can go the other way.

[You may feel like you want to withdraw and hide away]

If you're someone who... you're feeling down and you feel really unmotivated to talk to people, I know it can feel better to stay away from people in that situation and it's okay sometimes but actually you can find that you feel a lot more joyous when you're actually with others and socialising, so even though it may feel like a huge effort and you don't want to (I know I do avoid social situations sometimes because of that sort of thing), but it can actually really help if you get yourself out there and say "Alright, just for today I'm going to see someone, even though I haven't really seen someone in ages." Sometimes it can actually help you feel more joyous and connected to others and sometimes that is what you need even though it's something that you feel is going to take more effort than usual or you're usually best in your own company. You can get yourself out of your comfort

zone a little bit if you're feeling down and realise that actually being with friends is more helpful than just sitting there being sad, really.

So yes, these are some tips on what to do on difficult days or when going through difficult times. Hopefully, this can help you shift your mindset but remember that shifting your mindset isn't because you're doing anything wrong, you're not doing anything wrong by having so-called negative thoughts, or feeling down or anything, you're not doing anything wrong, these things are to help you feel better because you are worthy of feeling better, not to say you're doing anything wrong because you're not, but you deserve to feel better you know!

[These tips may help you cope better]

And this can make your life easier for you, maybe some of these things, or maybe you have your own coping strategies. So, I really hope that this video has helped. I also hope you liked the little examples that I put in.

Thanks for watching, bye!