

Guide

Challenging Questions Worksheet

Below is a list of questions to be used in helping you challenge your maladaptive or problematic beliefs. Not all questions will be appropriate for the belief you choose to challenge. Answer as many questions as you can for the belief you have chosen to challenge below.

Belief: **Put a stuck point here. You can use your stuck point log sheet to find one.**
NOT a feeling or behavior, NOT too vague, Use "If/then" statements if possible

1. What is the evidence for and against this idea?
Evidence is comprised of facts that will hold up in court. We are not challenging that the event happened. We are looking for evidence that supports AND does NOT support your stuck point above.

FOR: Do NOT use another stuck point! Make sure you are identifying facts.

AGAINST: Only need ONE exception to make the belief NOT a fact. A fact is 100% and absolute. If you can identify one exception to your stuck point, then it is not a fact, and therefore, would not hold up in court.

2. Is your belief a habit or based on facts?
Have you been telling yourself this belief for so long that it FEELS like a fact? It's like "advertising:" after a while you start to believe it. Is this belief something that you have been in the habit of telling yourself for a long time?
3. Are your interpretations of the situation too far removed from reality to be accurate?
Is it possible that your stuck point is unrealistic or not completely accurate or completely true? Does your belief reflect the all facts of the situation?
4. Are you thinking in all-or-none terms?
Does your stuck point reflect black and white categories? Are things all good or all bad? Are you missing the gray area in between? Example: If your performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself as a failure.
5. Are you using words or phrases that are extreme or exaggerated (i.e., always, forever, never, need, should, must, can't, and every time)?
This can be hidden. Example: "Men can't be trusted" is actually "All men can't be trusted."
6. Are you taking the situation out of context and only focusing on one aspect of the event?

This is about using one aspect from the event and holding it responsible for the event happening. Then, you use this one aspect to create your stuck point. Example: "If I had been stronger, then this wouldn't have happened." Now think about drawing a pie chart and showing one small slice of that pie as that one aspect that you are focusing on. You are probably assigning 100% of the "blame" or "cause" on this "slice" and discounting all the remaining factors (other slices) in the rest of the pie. Other slices might include that you were out-numbered or he had a weapon or you were taken by surprise or there were no other options at the time, etc. Why are these other factors/slices not considered here as contributory? Are you discounting them and only focusing on the one factor/slice?

7. Is the source of information reliable?

Think about the time period when the event happened. Who were you at the time (a scared 20-year-old in combat or a child victimized by an adult, etc.)? Your stuck point may be based on a thought that you developed when you were scared or very young. You have retained that stuck point all these years based on how you were at the time. Or think about the enemy/perpetrator: are these people reliable or to be trusted to make judgments about the event (or you) given that they were trying to harm you? Your stuck point might be a statement told to you by the perpetrator. Is a perpetrator to be trusted (reliable) to make this statement? Would we expect that a perpetrator is truthful?

8. Are you confusing a low probability with a high probability?

This question is best for a stuck point that is focused on the present or the future. It asks you "what is the likelihood or percentage/chance that the stuck point will happen again?" An example of a present or future-oriented stuck point would be "If I trust others, then I'll get hurt." It may actually be a low probability, but you are living your life as if it is a certainty. Yes, it COULD happen, but are you living as if it WILL happen? Of course, in a dangerous environment, you may have to consider everything as high probability because the consequences (death or injury) are great. But are you taking into consideration that you don't need to hold this same degree of probability in ALL environments? In other words, are you applying the stuck point as if it has a high probability (a certainty) of happening again in ALL situations now? For example, think about driving. We all know that many die every year in car accidents, yet we still drive. We do this because although we are aware that we could die in a car accident, we don't live as if it will happen.

9. Are your judgments based on feelings rather than facts?

This is the idea that if you FEEL something is true, then it must be. For example, think about hypervigilance, because you FEEL uncomfortable or under threat in a crowd, you assume (or develop the belief) that it is dangerous. This becomes "I don't like crowds" which translates into the stuck point, "I am never safe in a crowd," or "If I am in a crowd, then I will be harmed." Another example is that if you FEEL guilty, then you assume that you must be at fault.

10. Are you focused on irrelevant factors?

This question is about pinpointing cause or blame on something that had nothing to do with the event happening. For example, "I wore a red dress, therefore I was assaulted." This is different from question #6 because it is about something that was irrelevant whereas in #6 the factor may have had some contribution but is not wholly to blame.