# Reframing Negative Judgements

**Mindfulness**
Intervention
n/a
Client
No

*A judgement is like a pair of glasses or a filter. We see the world through the glasses of our judgement. It is a kind of a filter through which we see the world and ourselves. A judgement stems from our beliefs: "Uneducated people are stupid", "I'm never lucky" "A man is not supposed to cry" or norms: "One should celebrates Christmas with family and friends". By labelling something "good" or "bad", you reduce it just to that: "good" or "bad", although there is nothing only good or bad. Judgements can strongly affect how we feel. For instance, when we experience sadness and judge this as "bad" , this will affect the thoughts that come with it. We are rather inclined to end up in a negative spiral of thoughts ("I should not feel like this; I don't want this"), and the chance of feeling negative emotions increases.*

## Goal

This practice can help your client to become aware of the impact of thoughts and judgements on emotions. Thoughts have the power to shape how we feel, both positively and negatively. By becoming aware of their impact on our emotions, we can learn to disrupt a negative cycle or initiate a positive spiral of thinking and feeling.

## Advice

Instruct your client not to judge him/herself if he/she notices a negative judgement ("There I go again, I'm full of judgements, and this should not be.") because then the judgement will return through the backdoor. Instruct your client to note this judgement and then take a step back, for instance by turning attention to the breath. It is no problem that judging occurs - it is an automatic process.

Having a trigger can help remind clients to do this awareness exercise. The trigger could be a word, gesture, a physical reminder (e.g. a picture, bracelet) etc.

## Suggested Readings

Segal, Z.V., Williams, J.M.G., & Teasdale, J.D. (2002). *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression*. New York: Guilford Press.

# Tool Description

**Instructions**

Ask your client to notice this week as many negative judgements about other people, groups, self, situations, etc. as possible. Instruct your client to describe the judgement, the situation that caused the judgement and the emotions or feelings that followed from the judgement. In addition, ask your client to reframe the initial judgement in a way that is less negative or less dichotomous (black and white). If your client finds it difficult to reframe the judgement, it is also possible to ask your client to list only the description of the situations and his/her judgements. During a session, it is possible to do the reframing together. It can also be valuable to discuss the effect of the initial judgement and the reframed judgement in terms of emotions and feelings. In this way, your client can notice that many emotions are caused by negative judgements, rather than the facts of the situation itself.

| Description of situation | My initial judgement | My emotion/feeling | A less negative (more objective) description |
|---|---|---|---|
| A friend kept me waiting for 15 minutes | He does not care about me | angry, disappointed | I was there, but he was late |
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