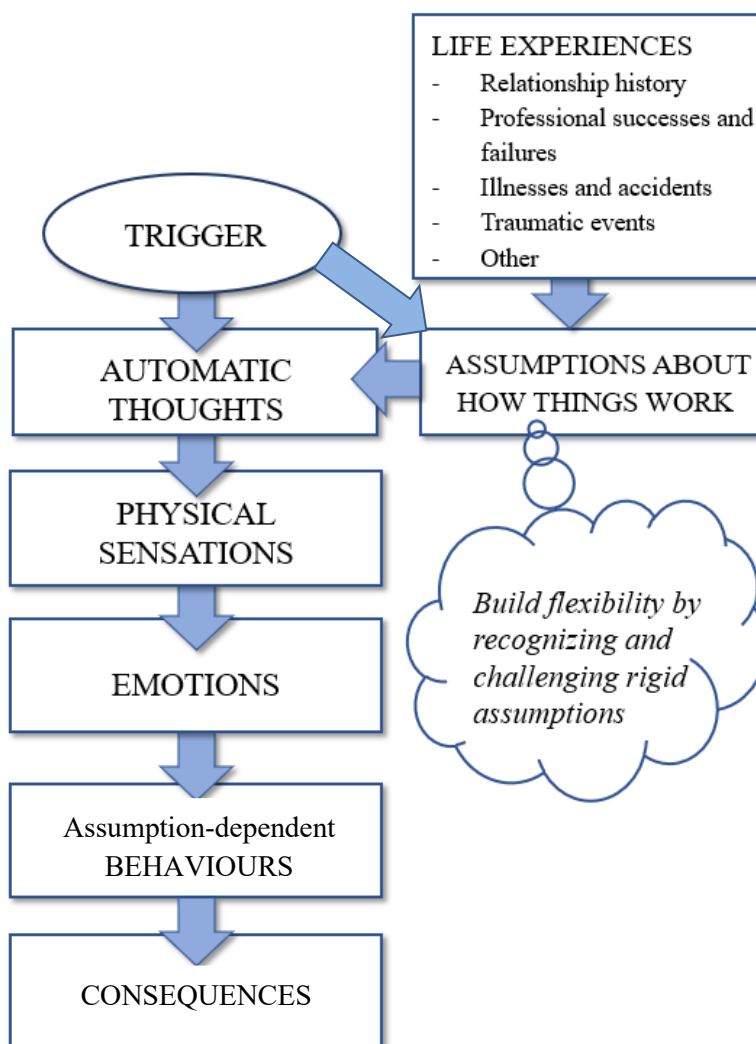




## OVERCOMING DEPRESSION – 6 PATTERNS AND ASSUMPTIONS – 1



So far we have worked on changing our behaviours to create slightly better outcomes for ourselves (meetings 2 and 3) and on ensuring that our thoughts match our reality as closely as possible (meetings 4 and 5).

Now, we are starting to look at “rules for living”-- assumptions about how things work together that are often so deeply embedded that we are not even fully aware of them.

When working on our automatic thoughts, we focus on **ACCURACY**. The main questions to ask ourselves were:

- a. Do my thoughts describe my reality in an accurate objective manner?
- b. Am I missing or ignoring significant pieces of information while exaggerating other aspects of my circumstances?
- c. What happens when I give into painful thoughts?

When working on our assumptions, we are going to look at their **USEFULNESS**. The main questions here are:

- a. Is following my rules/assumptions giving me what I want?
- b. If not, what is a better course of action?

Our hidden assumptions or protective rules represent our understanding of how things work and can be expressed in terms of “if...then” statements or “should” (e.g, “If I want people to like me, I have to always say yes”, “If I ask for help, people will think that I am weak and humiliate me”, “If want to avoid humiliation, then I should not speak up”, “I want to avoid blame, then I should not make any decisions that might affect other people”).

These assumptions developed as a result of our life experiences. A person who grew up in a loving household is much more likely to expect assistance whenever she feels sick whereas someone who was faced with abuse is likely to fear unjust criticism when feeling unwell even if he is in a supportive relationship. Such habits tend to become a hindrance when life circumstances that necessitated them are no longer relevant. It is a little bit like learning to drive in Canada and then adjusting to driving on the left in Australia – you might have some near misses until you adjust and it just feels strange until you get used to it. Our goal is to ensure that our rules are flexible and match situations at hand. To accomplish it, we need to build awareness of our “operational assumptions” and engage in a number of behavioural experiments that test different aspects of these assumptions.

One way to find hidden assumptions is to look at our actions under stress and ask ourselves what we hope to accomplish as a result of these actions. You might have already noticed some of these assumptions in our last meeting – a section of the worksheet asked you to have a look at consequences of your hot thoughts and costs of the actions that are solely rooted in your hot thoughts. (Remember, hot thought is the automatic thought that has the greatest negative emotional impact). We know we have acted based on our hidden assumptions whenever we have that annoying realization that we just have done something that we have promised ourselves never to do again (e.g., over-disclosed information due to fear of not being understood) or simply did not dare to do something that we have promised ourselves to tackle (e.g. did not dare to even initiate an important conversation due to a belief that it is useless).

Table 1 shows examples of hidden rules grouped by themes of achievement, acceptance and control. It includes examples of situations that are likely to mobilize the rule, rule-based behaviours and potential outcomes. You can think of these themes as key fears. Most of us will experience a great deal of apprehension at a prospect of rejection, failure, lack of safety and loss of control over what happens to us.

Key Fear	Example of a “rule”	Activating Situation	Rule-Governed Behaviour	Potential Outcomes
Rejection	“If you upset people, they will reject you.”	Colleague asks to leave the shift early while there is still work left to be done.	Agrees to stay longer to finish colleague’s job.	Resentment.
	“If someone dislikes you, there must be something wrong with you.”	Gets honked at when making a turn.	Promises self to be more attentive, worries about driving and becoming a nuisance on the road.	Might become highly uncertain about driving skills and apprehensive about driving through intersections.
	“I cannot be happy unless I am in a very special relationship.”	Sees a happy couple	Devotes all the attention to finding the right person and loses interest in other pursuits.	Becomes uncertain about who the “the right person is”. Develops unrealistic standards for romantic love. Gives up on other pleasure generating pursuits.
	“I need to look the right way and say the right thing as otherwise I will never fit in.”	Invitation to a social gathering.	Mentally compares himself to other guests and decides to not to attend.	Starts believing that he no longer fits in with his friends.

Key Fear	Rule	Activating Situation	Rule-Governed Behaviour	Potential Outcomes
Failure	“If I can’t do something perfectly, it’s not worth doing at all”.	Organizes home party.	Prepares multiple dishes, engages in excessive cleaning and redecorating of the home.	Everyone compliments the host so the next time the same amount of effort is spent.  One person comments on liking a dish that was not on the menu so next time the menu is even more extensive.
	“If it takes so much effort for me to do it, it means that I am stupid and shouldn’t have even tried”.	Hard time studying for the math exam.	Gives up studying.	Receives poor mark which might confirm that the math class should not have been taken at all.
Loss of Control	“Unless I keep a tight rein on my feelings at all times, I will be a complete emotional mess”.	Cries when reminded of recent loss.	Tries to stop thinking of distressing events and avoids all reminders. Criticises self for emotional expressions.	Becomes too afraid of potential losses and consequently avoids emotional connections with others.
	“I have to keep things organized and follow routines as otherwise everything will collapse and I won’t be able to cope”	Is offered free tickets to a concert.	Reviews schedule and rejects the offer to go.	Loses friendships Loses ability to engage in spontaneous activities.
	“Panic makes me lose control over everything”.	Small change in breathing	Monitors body changes Avoids all strenuous activity and triggers that might induce dreaded sensations.	Develops panic disorder Loses ability to tolerate stresses.
Loss of Safety	“If I am not fully prepared, something bad might happen”	Vacation	Reads everything available about the destination; insists on certainty of action.	Decides not to go and loses ability to explore the world for the sake of perceived safety.
	“If I speak out of turn, I will be punished or humiliated.”	Wants to offer a suggestion at a board meeting.	Spends the meeting waiting for invitation to speak and misses the opportunity to present his opinion.	Loses chances for promotion Becomes excessively shy and develops a belief that people competitive and uncaring in general.
	“Safety requires constant alertness”	Bedtime	Unable to relax enough to fall asleep.	Insomnia Tiredness causes poor concentration and the person becomes prone to mistakes and accidents.

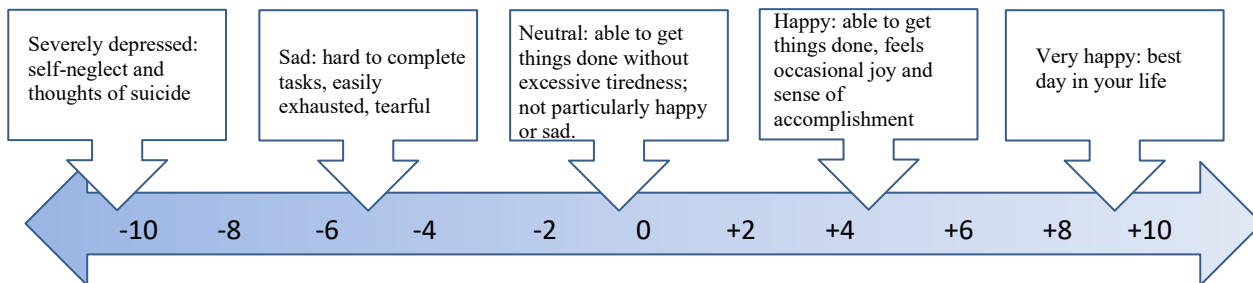
## CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS: FINDING AND ADJUSTING UNHELPFUL ASSUMPTIONS

<p><b>1:</b> Think of a situation that you dread, might have avoided or that stayed on your mind for a long time after it already happened. Describe it.</p>	
<p><b>2:</b> What were / are your key fears in this situation?</p>	
<p><b>3:</b> Complete following sentences:</p> <p>If I don't want _____, then I have to _____  <small>(dreaded outcome that you want to protect yourself from)</small> <small>(what you usually do in such circumstances)</small></p> <p>If I don't want _____, then I have to _____  <small>(dreaded outcome that you want to protect yourself from)</small> <small>(what you usually do in such circumstances)</small></p> <p>If I don't want _____, then I have to _____  <small>(dreaded outcome that you want to protect yourself from)</small> <small>(what you usually do in such circumstances)</small></p> <p>If I don't want _____, then I have to _____  <small>(dreaded outcome that you want to protect yourself from)</small> <small>(what you usually do in such circumstances)</small></p> <p>Circle the assumption that you tend to use quite a lot.</p>	
<p><b>4:</b> In which situations do you rely on this assumption?</p>	
<p><b>5:</b> What are the benefits of this assumption?</p>	<p><b>6:</b> What are the costs of this assumption?</p>
<p><b>7:</b> What life circumstances might have led to you to creating this assumption?</p>	<p><b>8:</b> What is different between now and when you had to use this rule/assumption to protect yourself?</p>
<p><b>9:</b> Write a more flexible version of your assumption that reflects your current life circumstances.</p>	
<p><b>10:</b> Select a situation in which you will start using a more flexible assumption. Describe this situation and what will you do differently.</p>	<p><b>11:</b> To be completed after you tried to act in accordance with a more flexible rule. Write down what happened when you did things differently.</p>

## CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS: FINDING AND ADJUSTING UNHELPFUL ASSUMPTIONS

<p><b>1:</b> Think of a situation that you dread, might have avoided or that stayed on your mind for a long time after it already happened. Describe it.</p>	
<p><b>2:</b> What were / are your key fears in this situation?</p>	
<p><b>3:</b> Complete following sentences:</p> <p>If I don't want _____, then I have to _____  <small>(dreaded outcome that you want to protect yourself from)</small> <small>(what you usually do in such circumstances)</small></p> <p>If I don't want _____, then I have to _____  <small>(dreaded outcome that you want to protect yourself from)</small> <small>(what you usually do in such circumstances)</small></p> <p>If I don't want _____, then I have to _____  <small>(dreaded outcome that you want to protect yourself from)</small> <small>(what you usually do in such circumstances)</small></p> <p>If I don't want _____, then I have to _____  <small>(dreaded outcome that you want to protect yourself from)</small> <small>(what you usually do in such circumstances)</small></p> <p>Circle the assumption that you tend to use quite a lot.</p>	
<p><b>4:</b> In which situations do you rely on this assumption?</p>	
<p><b>5:</b> What are the benefits of this assumption?</p>	<p><b>6:</b> What are the costs of this assumption?</p>
<p><b>7:</b> What life circumstances might have led to you to creating this assumption?</p>	<p><b>8:</b> What is different between now and when you had to use this rule/assumption to protect yourself?</p>
<p><b>9:</b> Write a more flexible version of your assumption that reflects your current life circumstances.</p>	
<p><b>10:</b> Select a situation in which you will start using a more flexible assumption. Describe this situation and what will you do differently.</p>	<p><b>11:</b> To be completed after you tried to act in accordance with a more flexible rule. Write down what happened when you did things differently.</p>

## KEEPING TRACK AND KEEPING HONEST



<b>DATE:</b>							
Rate your overall mood for the day using the scale above and mark it on the graph.	+10						
	+8						
	+6						
	+4						
	+2						
	0						
	-2						
	-4						
	-6						
	-8						
-10							
What challenges / stresses were you faced with today?							
Did you engage in any meaningful activity? If so, what was it?							
What skill have you practiced?	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in meaningful activity <input type="checkbox"/> Thought Record <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge Assumptions	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in meaningful activity <input type="checkbox"/> Thought Record <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge Assumptions	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in meaningful activity <input type="checkbox"/> Thought Record <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge Assumptions	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in meaningful activity <input type="checkbox"/> Thought Record <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge Assumptions	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in meaningful activity <input type="checkbox"/> Thought Record <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge Assumptions	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in meaningful activity <input type="checkbox"/> Thought Record <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge Assumptions	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in meaningful activity <input type="checkbox"/> Thought Record <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge Assumptions
What other things were you able to accomplish?							