

EXERCISE: Interpretation-of-Significance Worksheet

Go back to your mental-intrusion diary and select an unwanted mental intrusion you identified with your distress. Write the intrusion in the space below:

Next, respond to these questions about the intrusion.

1. Do you associate a personal threat or a bad outcome with the intrusion? Describe the threat or negative consequence here:

2. Do you feel responsible for preventing this negative consequence? If so, explain how you are responsible:

3. Do you believe having the intrusive thought could have a negative effect on you or others? If so, explain how this would happen:

4. Does the intrusion seem more significant because it happens frequently and is distressing? Answer yes or no:

5. Is it important that you suppress, or not think about, the intrusive thought? If yes, explain what might happen if you lost control of the thought:

Your answers to these five questions explain why the intrusive thought has gained such personal significance. Given its importance, can you now understand why it grabs your attention when it pops into your mind? This interpretation of significance plays a key role in causing an escalation in your distressing thoughts and feelings. We all automatically pay more attention and respond more vigorously to thoughts, images, memories, or other ideas that we consider important in our lives.