

EXERCISE – Thought Bingo

It's often the case, in the process of thinking, that a thought occurs and we respond automatically. We may elaborate on the thought, and get drawn into it. We may push it away or attempt to distract ourselves with another thought. Let's take some time to practise slowing this process down and doing it less on autopilot. We'd like to introduce you to a game called

'Thought Bingo'. All you need is a pen, the worksheet below and a mind.

Sit back in a comfortable position in your chair, with your Bingo sheet and pen in front of you. We'd like you to bring to mind an action that involved doing something that matters to you. Something that's important, something that you know enriches your life, and that you're not doing at the moment. Something that has a sense of purpose. This doesn't need to be a huge thing, it could be small. It could be something like spending time with a loved one. It could be exercising or playing sport. It could involve connecting in some way with your community. But it has to be something that would be a step out of your comfort zone. Something where you feel a twinge of anxiety that tells you this action would be a challenge for you.

Take some time now to really *imagine* yourself engaging in this activity. Then, carefully start to watch your thoughts as they parade across your mind. Notice each one and register what kind of thought it is. When you see a judgement, circle 'judging' on your sheet. When you see a prediction, circle, 'predicting' on your sheet. Your job here is to simply **notice the process of thinking**. Keep going for approximately five minutes, or until you complete the line (at which point, you're free to leap up and shout 'Bingo!' as loudly as you possibly can).

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Judging	Evaluating	Criticising	Remembering	Predicting
Assessing	Describing	Deciding	Worrying	Planning
Reasoning	Explaining	Reflecting	Questioning	Arguing
Analysing	Problem-Solving	Noticing	Persuading	Comparing

What did you notice in doing this exercise? What did you notice about the quality of your mind as you took some time out to watch it? Did you notice thoughts that were 'positive' and supportive of your undertaking this activity? Were there thoughts that acted to hold you back, and that said you wouldn't be able to do it? Or you won't enjoy it or it would be a waste of time? And notice your response to these thoughts. How easy was it to just let these thoughts be there? Which were the ones that tugged at you, wanting you to 'play' with them? Did you feel a pull to resolve these thoughts? To change them or move them on? **We're not looking for particular answers here but we'd like to encourage you to be curious about your mind at work.**