

Using the Belief-O-Meter to See That Thoughts Are Not Facts

What to Know

If you have thoughts that are frightening and upsetting ("bad thoughts"), you are not alone. Everyone has scary or weird thoughts. Most people can shrug them off and move on, giving them little attention. It is when you give a lot of weight to your thoughts - and when you feel like your thoughts are the absolute truth - that you can become very upset by them. Sometimes your thoughts can even affect your body. Your stomach might sink or your heart races. When you're lost in a difficult or painful thought that's believable, it might seem like you're under threat in that very moment - based on what's going on in your head. It can feel awful.

One of the important thinking skills to manage your thoughts in helpful ways is learning to notice you're "having a thought," and checking them against your belief-o-meter. Learning to *look* at thoughts rather than *through* them is a game changer because you'll realize NOT all thoughts are facts. You don't have to believe everything you think. What a relief!

Just because you think a confusing or scary thought doesn't make it true. It doesn't mean you want it, believe it, or want to act on it. These thoughts aren't a reflection of you as a person.

Watch your thoughts come and go instead of treating them like facts. Ask yourself these questions.

1. Is it true? The answer might be "yes." This is your brain initially reacting on "autopilot."

2. Is it ABSOLUTELY true? Is your thought 100% accurate? Imagine you can see the thought in a different way.

3. How does this thought make me feel? Notice if you're making up stories, and name your feelings: hurt, sad, jealous, angry, and so on.

4. What would it be like if I didn't believe this thought was a fact? Imagine how you would feel if this thought *wasn't* accurate.

This worksheet will help you pay attention to the fact that you're having a thought - and that thought might not be a fact! The belief-o-meter helps you relate to your thoughts differently. You can begin to consider thoughts as "objects" which are not always accurate. Maybe a thought is an opinion or a worry. You'll soon find that some thoughts are more trustworthy than others.

What to Do

Just having a thought doesn't mean that it's true or that you must believe it. First, use the dial to rate how much you believe the thoughts in each bubble. Draw an arrow to the appropriate spot on the meter.

Unicorns are real.

The sun is hot.

Pizza is delicious.

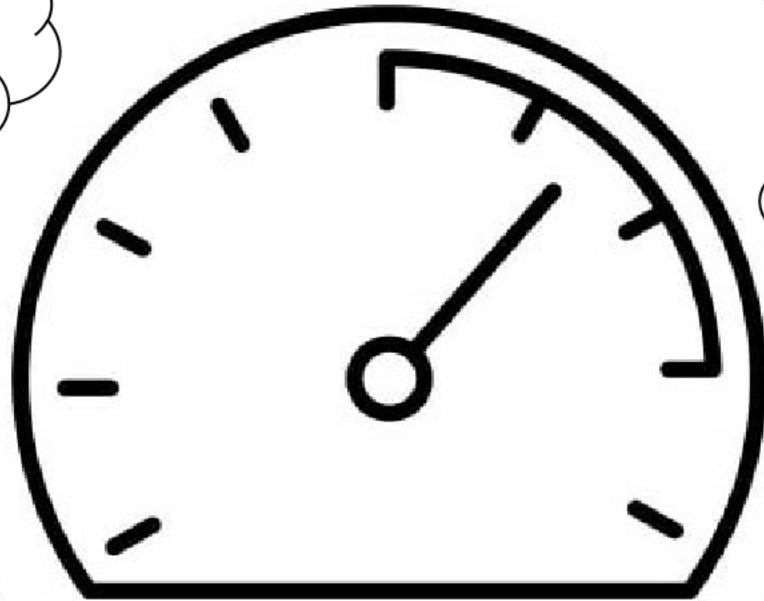
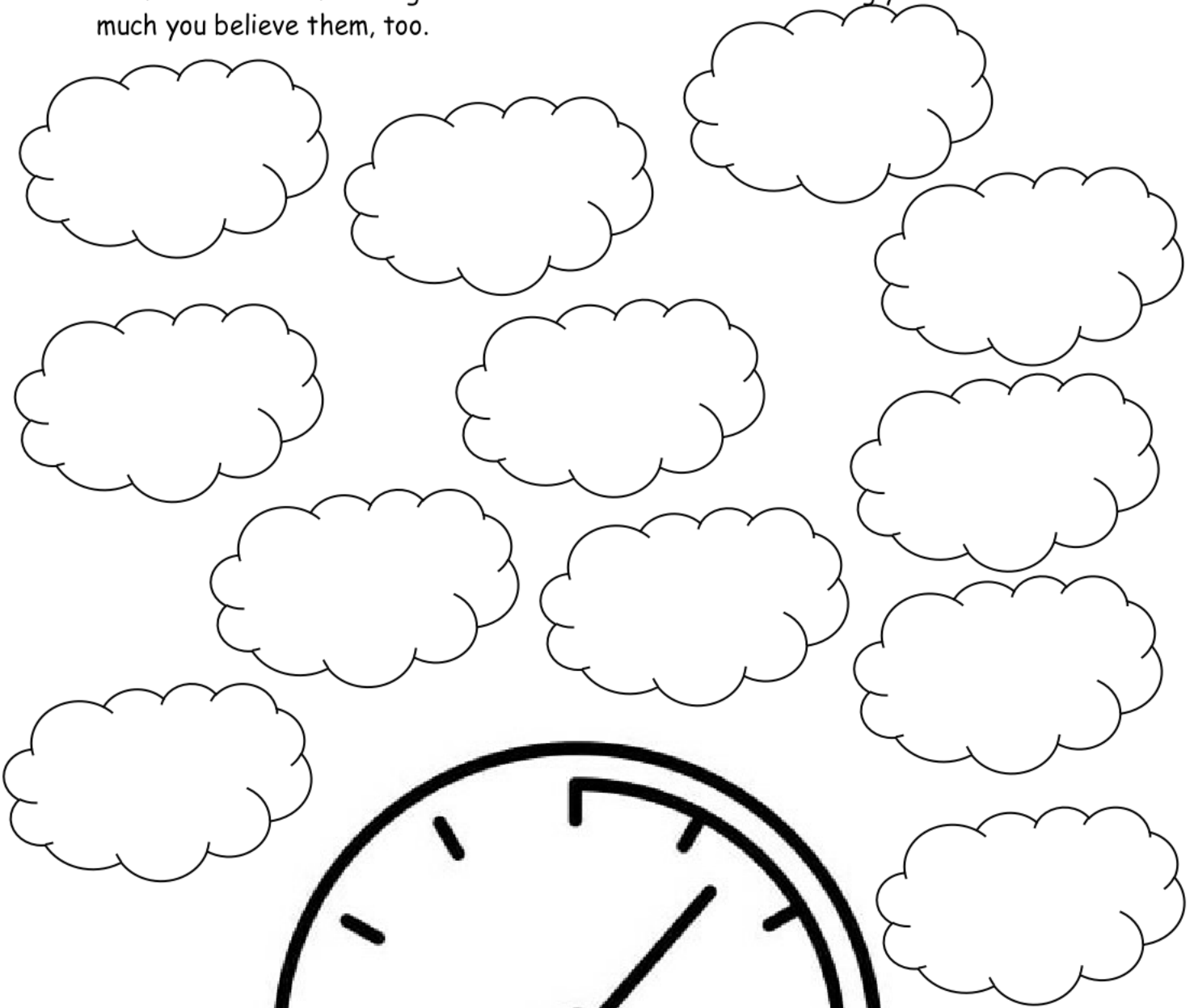
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I don't believe this thought at all.

I completely believe this thought.

Now write your own thoughts in the blank thought bubbles and draw arrows to rate them. Consider some thoughts or ideas that have been bothering you - rate how much you believe them, too.



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I don't believe this thought at all.

I completely believe this thought.

Sometimes it's interesting to see what other people believe about your thoughts. Ask a friend or family member to find out what they think. What does it mean if they think the same way? What does it mean if they think differently? Explain.

Write down some thoughts from this past week when you felt upset and write down other less-upsetting thoughts. How believable were these thoughts at the time? Explain.

Thought: _____

Believable? _____

Thought: _____

Believable? _____

Thought: _____

Believable? _____

Thought: _____

Believable? _____

Did this worksheet help you see that some of your thoughts are not facts? Why or why not?
