

Negative Reaction Activity (Example)

Preparation for process:

Before beginning the process, it is important to understand the context for a specific moment where you had a negative internal reaction. Be clear that it is not an event with a series of many moments (e.g., a relationship breakup, the death of a love one, or broadly a social event), but rather, a specific moment where you notice an internal reaction to something you either saw, heard, smelled, tasted, or touched. What was the exact moment?

Moment: Hearing my friend (Susan) say to me “You don’t care about me. I wish you were a better friend.”

Describe the larger context. What was happening? What was in your environment? Where you sitting or standing?

Larger context: We were both sitting together on a long chair facing each other as part of a 30-minute conversation, and I was mostly talking in our conversation. We were sitting outside in a sunny location.

Also, without going into the process yet, notice what were some of your thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, and behaviors that you had as part of your negative reaction.

Thoughts: “I have messed up”, “I am a bad friend”

Emotions: sadness, frustration, shame

Bodily sensations: tight in chest, shaky hands, increased heart rate

Behaviors: avoiding eye contact, walking away, inattentiveness

Note, see page 4 for this example as a diagram, demonstrating the relationship between our thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations and behaviors.

Process

Before beginning, close your eyes either fully or partially. Breathe in and out slowly for a few times, and reexperience the exact moment when you had the negative reaction. Now breathe into your feelings in reaction to this moment, and write down whatever thoughts come up...

*Note, this is a short illustrative example, and writing out your thoughts as a stream of consciousness will often include many more statements than this. Be honest with yourself! Don’t edit or filter your thoughts, but write whatever comes up. This is **not** a thinking exercise. It is an experiential exercise. If you notice yourself moving into your logical/analytical mind (e.g., analysis, interpretation, or contemplation), go back to your feelings, and back into the moment of your negative reaction. For example, signs that you are not fully connected to your feelings are using tentative words such as “maybe”, “might”, “a bit”, or “possibly” (automatic thoughts are more absolute, and rigid), or using abstract or intellectual words such as “imagination” “moral”, “forgiveness”, or “optimism” (automatic thoughts are more concrete, and less intellectual). The more you can fully reexperience the moment of your reaction, the easier it is to connect with your feelings in the moment. The feelings will lead to your automatic thoughts that are deeply ingrained. This is a challenging exercise, and takes practice. It is*

normal to find it difficult to connect with your feelings in this way, or to want to stay in your logical/analytical mind. Do the best you can and remember that each time you practice it gets easier.

Step 1:

Stream of consciousness

I have to listen to Susan.
 I should try harder.
 I am a bad friend.
 I will never have strong friendships.
 All my friends leave me.
 I am an awful person.
 I don't care about other people.
 I should have known better.
 I have to listen to all my friends.
 It is impossible to be a good friend to others.
 The world is too hard to live in.
 I will end up alone.

Step 2:

What is True, False, or Don't Know about each statement

T = True, F = False, DK = Don't Know

Please note that our mind likes to make generalizations and snap judgements. Be careful with any demands that you have on yourself (e.g., "I have to" "I should", "I need to" or "I must") as they imply you have no choice when you do have some choices. Also, check for any judgements you are making about yourself (e.g., "I am a stupid person") as these are the lies/beliefs we tell ourselves that don't reflect who God has made us to be and who we are in Christ, and are therefore, false.

<u>Statements</u>	<u>T, F or DK</u>	<u>What is actually true?</u>
I have to listen to Susan.	F	I can choose whether I listen to someone.
I should try harder.	F	I will put in the effort that I put in.
I am a bad friend.	F	I am a friend who puts in effort, and cares.
I will never have strong friendships.	F	I have some strong friendships.
All my friends leave me.	F	I have some strong friendships.
I am an awful person.	F	I am a compassionate, and caring person.
I don't care about other people.	F	I am a compassionate, and caring person.
I should have known better.	F	I only know what I know.
I have to listen to all my friends.	F	I can choose whether I listen to someone.

It is impossible to be a good friend to others.	F	I have a number of strong friendships in my life.
The world is too hard to live in.	F	I am capable of living in the world.
I will end up alone.	F	There are times when I feel alone, and other times when I do not.

Step 3:

What is true about your thoughts/feelings, what actually happened, and about yourself?

These can include truths about what actually happened, what is true about yourself, the world, or the future, and also if you now have any action steps about what you now choose to do.

Susan had a reaction during our conversation.

I had the feelings of sadness, frustration, and shame.

I do care about my friends, and make an effort to maintain my friendships.

I am a caring and compassionate person.

I will notice when I am not attentive to my friends.

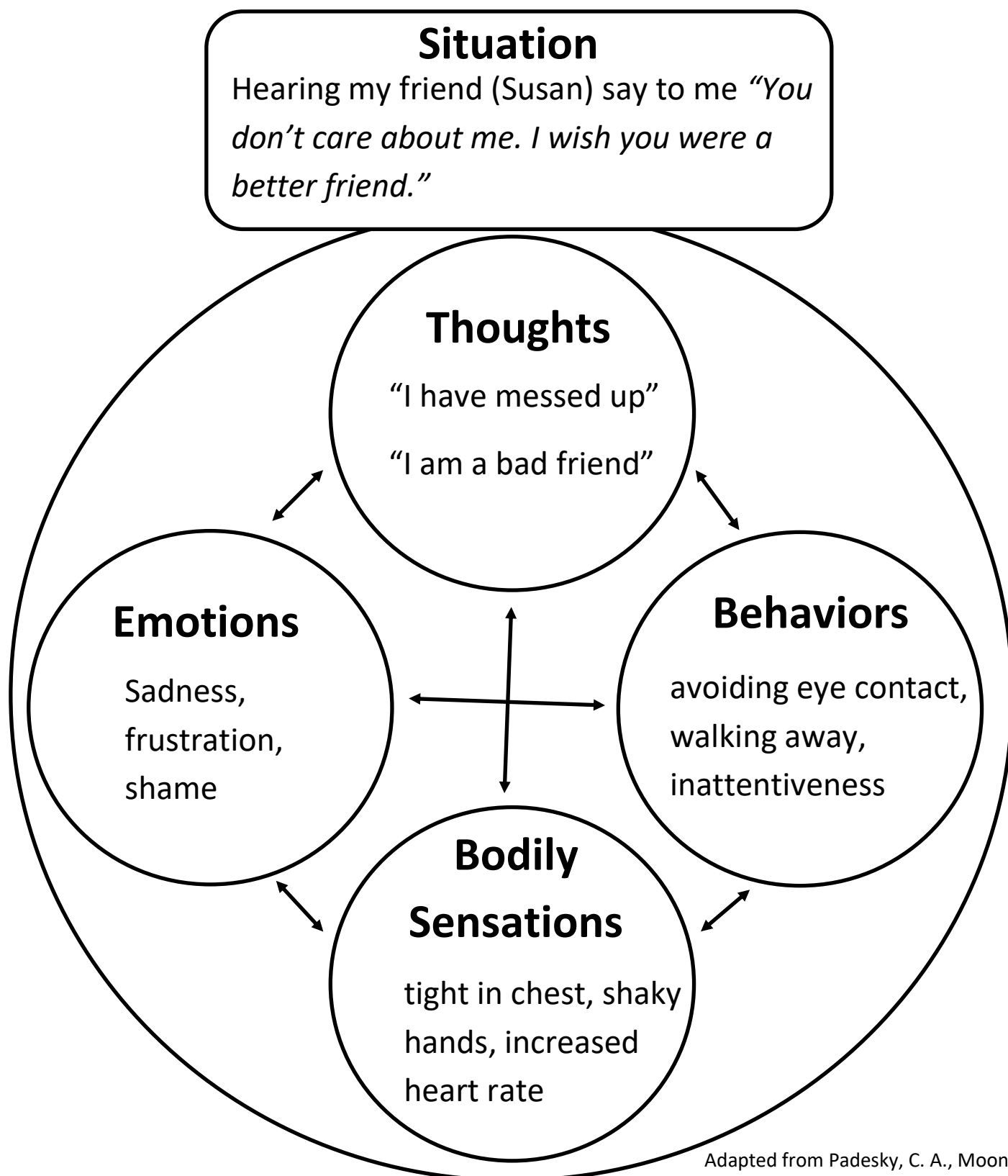
I will practice listening first to my friends, and not just sharing about me.

I will check in with my friends if I am not clear about their reactions.

I will be attentive to my friend's needs, AND kind and compassionate towards myself.

HOW WE REACT TO SITUATIONS

Cross Sectional Formulation (Example)



Adapted from Padesky, C. A., Mooney, K. A. (1990). Presenting the cognitive model to clients. *International Cognitive Therapy Newsletter*, 6, 13-14.