

# STEPS TO REDUCE UPSETTING OR DISTRESSING THOUGHTS (FORM 1)

## Step 1: Recognize/Defuse

- Pause and label the thought: 'I notice I'm having a thought that is upsetting or distressing that has entered into my awareness. It has caught my attention because of how it makes me feel.'
- Just notice how the thought makes you feel.
- Practice Mindfulness, which means paying attention to the here and now with kindness and curiosity. Move away from the troubling thought by focusing on the present. What can you see, hear, smell, and touch right now?
- This is a false alarm. It only feels dangerous.

## Step 2: Remind yourself: It's just a thought

- What have you learned? This is an ANT (Automatic Negative Thought).
- These thoughts are best left alone. Thoughts are just thoughts. No need to do anything.
- Reminding yourself helps you tell the difference between what you can and cannot control. Leaving these thoughts alone helps avoid getting entangled in them.
- Use your Wise Mind to remind yourself to sit this one out. Our Wise Mind refers to a balance between our reasonable and emotional halves. Our Wise Mind helps us to recognize and respect our feelings while responding to them in a rational manner. Our Wise Mind helps us to see the value of both reason and emotion and helps us find a balanced path.

## Step 3: Accept and Allow

- Do not try to push the thoughts away. Don't start exploring the ideas or content of your thoughts.
- Acceptance is an action. You are actively allowing the thoughts to be there because this attitude helps you to understand that some thoughts are unimportant. These thoughts do not require any attention or response.
- Accept the thought is an upsetting or distressing thought—no need to respond. Acceptance is action. The internal dialogue that follows the upsetting or distressing thought is the problem.

