

## Session 3: Controlling thoughts about using speed

### THERAPIST SUMMARY SHEET

- Aims**
- Introduction to the concept that thoughts influence behaviour.
  - Develop a plan of achievement and pleasurable tasks to carry out through the week.
  - Continue to cut down/maintain abstinence.

#### Materials needed for Session 3

- Photocopy of the “Self-monitoring record” (this now replaces the urge diary from Sessions 1 and 2).
- Photocopy of the “Activities list”.
- Photocopy of “The activity record”.
- Photocopy of “Seemingly irrelevant decisions” sheet.
- Blank pieces of paper and a pen.

#### Key elements of Session 3 *(may be photocopied for quick reference).*

##### PHASE 1: Session introduction

- review week
- review homework tasks
- set agenda

##### PHASE 2: Link between thoughts and behaviour

Use the following strategies:

- explain rationale for this exercise
- demonstrate on paper the link between thoughts, feelings and behaviours (using Ellis’s ABC model)
- complete exercise: demonstrating link between thoughts and behaviour

##### PHASE 3: Triggers

Use the following strategies:

- discuss challenges to unhelpful thinking patterns
- complete exercise: monitoring thoughts about triggers (self-monitoring record)

##### PHASE 4: Seemingly irrelevant decisions

Use the following strategies:

- discuss rationale behind seemingly irrelevant decisions
- complete exercise: review last relapse for seemingly irrelevant decisions
- give seemingly irrelevant decisions sheet to client to take away

##### PHASE 5: Pleasant event and activity scheduling

Use the following strategies:

- discuss rationale behind activity scheduling
- complete exercise: identifying pleasant activities and achievement activities
- complete exercise: the activity record

##### PHASE 6: Homework

- Set homework, including:
  - complete self-monitoring record
  - practise identifying seemingly irrelevant decisions as they occur
  - implement activity record
  - continue cutting down

## DETAILED INTERVENTION

### PHASE 1: Session introduction

#### **Review of the week, homework exercise and set agenda**

Start with an informal discussion about general activities, and also determine whether there are any important issues that have arisen, any questions so far.

Review the homework activity with the client, and discuss the triggers for using the client has identified throughout the week. If the client has not completed the homework task, ask them to do so now with your assistance.

Review the client's speed use pattern for the week. Did the client meet the planned goals for tapering?

Review their urge diary. Address any important aspects.

Review their cravings plan and discuss aspects of their management plan that were helpful and unhelpful.

Reinforce positive changes and address minor problems. Set the agenda for the session by explaining to the client the issues that will be covered.

### PHASE 2: The link between thoughts and behaviours<sup>9</sup>

#### **Rationale for the exercise**

Explain to your client that it was important to gather information about the situations in which they are more likely to use speed because it helps to establish what kinds of things are triggering or maintaining their use. The next step is to develop other ways to deal with these 'high-risk' situations without resorting to using speed.

Use the following rationale with your client:

*“All people who are trying to reduce their speed use will have thoughts about using, and will increasingly experience urges to seek it out. These thoughts and feelings are quite common, and in themselves do not create problems. Rather, it is important to focus on how you deal with, and respond to, these thoughts and feelings.”*

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<sup>9</sup> Exercises in Phases 2 and 3 are based on Jarvis, Tebbutt & Mattick, 1995

**Link between thoughts, feelings and behaviour**

Explain to your client the link between thoughts, feelings and behaviour using the cognitive model illustrated below (Ellis, 1975). This will enable your client to begin to see the links between their thoughts, feelings and subsequent behaviour (e.g. speed use).



Explain to your client that their thinking influences the way they feel and behave. Events/situations that occur in the outside world do not usually cause feelings or behaviour; rather it is an individual's interpretation (or thoughts) about those events that will directly lead to their feelings and subsequent actions. In some cases, the thoughts that they have about a particular situation can be quite unhelpful, and lead to them feeling the urge to use speed to help them cope.

Often, the unhelpful thoughts happen so quickly in response to trigger events that people do not even realise what is happening. That is why these thoughts are often referred to as 'automatic'. Usually, people suddenly realise that they are experiencing a craving/urge to use. These feelings are often a signal that they have slipped into automatic pilot and allowed a trigger situation to lead to an unhelpful thought about that situation, which has then resulted in a craving.

## Exercise 1: Demonstrating the link between thoughts and behaviour

- Take one of the situations from the homework task in which the client experienced strong urges/cravings to use speed or did use speed.
- Help the client to identify the A's, B's and C's surrounding that event/situation. Include any unhelpful self-talk/thoughts the client experienced, such as *"I can't cope without speed"*.
- Explain to the client that an important part in managing those situations that trigger cravings to use speed is to become aware of their unhelpful thinking patterns associated with these situations. The client can then better recognise the patterns associated with a relapse, and develop alternative thoughts or interpretations for those situations.
- Explain to your client that the thoughts that usually lead to cravings and urges to use characteristically fall into one of five *unhelpful patterns of thinking*:
  - 1. Black and white thinking:** this pattern of thinking is characterised by the interpretation that things are either all good or all bad – with nothing in between, no balance, no shades of grey. For example, because something has gone wrong once, black and white thinking dictates it will always go wrong. Does your client have strict rules about themselves and their lives? Are they rigid in their need to stick perfectly to their goals? If so, black and white thinking might be an unhelpful thought pattern that your client is using. Examples of black and white thinking include: *"If I fail partly, it is as bad as being a complete failure"*, or *"I never get what I want so it's foolish to want anything"*. In particular, *"even if I use once this week, I'm a failure, so why bother"* or *"I can't change, so it's pointless trying at all"*.
  - 2. Jumping to negative conclusions:** does your client automatically draw a negative conclusion about an issue more times than not? People who 'jump to negative conclusions' sometimes act like 'mind readers'. They think they can tell what another person is **really** thinking, often without checking it out or testing the conclusion. Other times, people who 'jump to negative conclusions' may engage in 'fortune telling'. They believe that things will turn out badly, and are certain that this will always be the case. For example, they might think: *"Things just won't work out the way I want them to"*, or *"I never get what I want so it's stupid to want anything"*, or *"There's no use in really trying to get something I want because I probably won't get it"*. In relation to their speed use, people with this pattern of thinking may believe *"I'll never be able to change my drug using, it'll never be any different"*.

## Exercise 1: Demonstrating the link between thoughts and behaviour (continued)

- 3. Catastrophising:** people with this pattern of unhelpful thinking tend to give too much meaning to situations. They convince themselves that if something goes wrong, the result will be totally unbearable and intolerable. For example, *“If I get a craving, it will be unbearable and I will be unable to resist it”*. If ‘catastrophisers’ have a disagreement with someone, they may think that *“the person hates me, doesn’t trust me, and things will never change”*. Or, *“if I don’t have a hit, I’ll never be able to cope with this.”*
  - 4. Personalising:** ‘personalisers’ will blame themselves for anything unpleasant that happens. They take a lot of responsibility for other people’s feelings and behaviour, and often confuse facts with feelings. For example, *“My brother has come home in a bad mood, it must be something that I have done”* or *“I feel stupid, so I am stupid”*. People with this pattern of thinking often put themselves down, and think too little of themselves, particularly in response to making a mistake. They may think things like *“I’m weak and stupid, there’s no way I’ll be able to resist my craving”*. In response to a slip, personalisers will often say to themselves: *“see, I knew I’d never be strong enough to resist, I’m such a terrible person.”*
  - 5. Shoulds/oughts:** people with this pattern of thinking use ‘should’, ‘ought’ and ‘must’ when they think about situations. This often results in feelings of guilt. Shoulds and oughts quite often set a person up to be disappointed, particularly if these thoughts are unreasonable. For example, *“I must not get angry”*, *“He should always be on time”*, and especially, *“I should be strong enough to never even experience a craving – I should just be able to stop.”* ‘Should’ statements can cause a person to experience anger and frustration when that person directs these statements at others.
- In helping your client to better cope in these craving situations, it is important for them to identify the unhelpful thought patterns they are likely to engage in, and then learn ways to deal with these thoughts directly, without using speed.
  - Help the client to identify from their urge diary, which unhelpful thinking patterns they are likely to use.

## PHASE 3: Triggers

### Challenges to unhelpful thinking patterns

The aim of the remaining session time is to help the client better manage those unhelpful patterns of thinking that are associated with their cravings/use of speed. You will then help the client to learn ways to challenge these unhelpful thoughts and replace them with more helpful ones. In this way the client will learn how to manage their thoughts about stressors and also cope with any cravings they might experience.

### Exercise 2: Recognising unhelpful patterns of thinking

- It is important for the client to challenge any unhelpful thinking patterns by asking themselves the following four questions (Jarvis, Tebbutt & Mattick, 1995):
  1. *“What is the evidence to support this thought? Is this 100% true?”*

It is common for people to mistake their feelings for evidence/fact, when in reality feelings are not facts. Often the evidence is contradictory to the client’s thought.
  2. *“What are the advantages/disadvantages of thinking in this way?”*

Unhelpful thoughts will have some advantages for the client, particularly when they help him/her avoid a difficult situation. In considering the disadvantages, such as anxiety or increase in speed use, it may be that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages and possibly pave the way for the person to develop new ways of thinking.
  3. *“Is there a thinking error?”*

Is the client able to identify whether they are falling into the habit of an unhelpful pattern of thinking described above? For example, are they personalising, catastrophising, jumping to negative conclusions, or using black/white thoughts or should/ought statements? If so, this is a sign that the client is putting himself or herself at risk of using speed.
  4. *“What alternative ways of thinking about the situation are there?”*

There will always be more than one way to interpret any trigger situation. Often these alternatives will be more helpful than the interpretations and consequences encouraged by unhelpful patterns of thinking. Brainstorm with the person some alternative ways of thinking/reacting to the stressful/trigger situations.
- Practise these steps with the client using the trigger situations listed on their urge diary from last week.

### Exercise 3: Monitoring thoughts about triggers

- Photocopy the self-monitoring record on the next page and give it to the client.
- Ask the client to take home the self-monitoring sheet and fill it in over the week. Explain how to use the sheet, e.g. *“over the next week, every time you have a craving to use speed, say to yourself STOP, SLOW DOWN, and then fill in the sheet. Make sure you complete all columns on the form, identify the unhelpful thinking pattern you are using in this situation, and ask yourself the four questions listed here on the sheet to challenge these thoughts.”*
- Ask the client to either do this for every craving they experience, or to complete the form at the end of each day, and bring it in next session.

### Self-monitoring record

Use this form to record any time this week when you experience a craving to use. Try to fill it in at least once a day to help you remember clearly what was happening.

Time and date	What was happening? <b>A</b>	What were you thinking? <b>B</b>	What were the consequences? (cravings?) <b>C</b>	What is the evidence to support your thoughts about this situation?	What are the positives and negatives of thinking in this way?	Are you falling into an unhelpful pattern of thinking? If so, what?	Is there another way of looking at this situation?

## PHASE 4: Seemingly irrelevant decisions<sup>10</sup>

### Rationale behind seemingly irrelevant decisions

Previous exercises have helped the client to identify situations in which they are most likely to use speed. Explain to the client that one useful way of avoiding these situations, and hence the trigger for a speed craving, is to become aware of the ‘seemingly irrelevant decisions’ they make that can lead to them being in a situation of high-risk for using. Present the following rationale for the client:

*“Many of our daily decisions and choices **on the surface** seem to have nothing to do with using speed. Although your decisions may not directly involve choosing whether or not to use, they may slowly move you closer to such behavioural/emotional states that are associated with using. It is often through seemingly irrelevant decisions that we gradually work our way closer to entering high-risk situations that may lead to using speed.*

*People often fall victim to their situations (e.g. “I always end up using at parties and can’t help it”). Although it is difficult to recognise choices made when in the middle of the decision-making process, each small decision you make over a period of time can gradually lead you closer to your predicament. The best way to combat this is to **think about each choice you make**, no matter how seemingly irrelevant it is to using speed, so you anticipate potential dangers ahead.*

***Choose the lowest-risk option** when faced with a decision, to avoid putting yourself in a risky situation. When you become aware of seemingly irrelevant decisions, you will be better able to avoid high-risk situations. It is easier to simply avoid the high-risk situation before you are actually in it.”*

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### Exercise 4: Seemingly irrelevant decisions

- Ask the client to think about their last relapse and to describe the situation/events that preceded the relapse.
- With the client, determine what seemingly irrelevant decisions led up to the relapse.
- Photocopy the reminder sheet on the next page and take the client through the steps. Then, give the sheet to the client to take away with them.

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<sup>10</sup> Exercises in Phase 4 are based on Monti, Abrams, Kadden & Cooney (1989)

### Exercise 4: Seemingly irrelevant decisions (continued)

When making any decision, whether large or small, do the following:

- Think about what different options you have.
- Think ahead to the possible results of each option. What are the positive or negative effects you can think of, and what is the risk of relapse?
- Select one of the options. Choose one that will give you the lowest chance of relapse. If you decide to choose a high-risk option, plan how to protect yourself while in the high-risk situation.

#### Practise Exercise

Think back to your last lapse to speed use and describe the situation/events that preceded the lapse.

What situations led up to the lapse? \_\_\_\_\_

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What decisions led up to the lapse? \_\_\_\_\_

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What stopped me from recognising these signs? \_\_\_\_\_

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**What would have been a more low-risk option?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Plan to manage high-risk situations:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## PHASE 5: Pleasant event and activity scheduling

### **Rationale behind activity scheduling**

For people trying to cut down or stop using speed, planning pleasant and/or meaningful activities into their day means they may be able to distract themselves from thinking about using. Often, when people have been using speed for longer periods of time, they focus all their energies on making sure they have access to speed, using it, or recovering from its effects. This is often to the detriment of other activities, which may help bring enjoyment or a sense of achievement to the person's life. Thus the idea of decreasing their speed use often means a decrease in enjoyment in the life of your client. But, by planning 'pleasurable' activities into the day, people will realise that they can enjoy themselves without using speed and also, by completing achievement activities, can gain a sense of control or mastery over important aspects of their life.

Explain these ideas to your client and discuss the importance of formally structuring and prioritising these pleasurable and achievement activities into their day.

It is important to acknowledge that it is impossible to plan every moment of every day in advance. Indeed there will be times when unpredictable things happen and the client will not be able to carry out the pleasurable and achievement activities set down for that day. Discuss this with the client, and explain that the activity record is not a rigid plan, and they should not feel guilty or bad if they cannot stick exactly to the plan.

In addition, they are able to substitute alternative activities into the record if something prevents them from doing what they planned. For example, on the day a client plans to go for a walk it may be raining. So, explain to the client that in these cases, they are free to substitute an alternative pleasurable activity into that timeslot. During the session, complete the activity record for the following day with the client's help.

### **Active scheduling of pleasurable and achievement activities**

#### **Exercise 5: Identifying pleasurable and achievement activities**

- Refer to the "Activities list" sheet on page 58.
- Ask the client to list activities they like and enjoy doing that do not involve using speed. For example, going for a walk, taking time for themselves, visiting friends, going to the beach, shopping, reading, having a cup of coffee etc. Make sure these activities are broken down into concrete components. For example, 'time to myself' needs to be broken down into the actual activities that constitute time to oneself. These could include listening to the radio, practising relaxation etc.
- List these activities in the "Pleasurable activities" column.
- Next, ask the client to list the things he/she needs to do. This could include attending intervention sessions, taking medication.

keeping appointments, therapy homework, looking after children, housework etc. It is important to list the components (smaller, discrete and concrete tasks). For example, break housework down into all the different activities that need to be done around the house (e.g. washing dishes etc). 'Looking after the children' should also be broken down into concrete tasks (e.g. bathing), and include doing fun things with them.

- List these tasks in the "Achievement activities" column.

## The activity record

### Exercise 6: The activity record

- Refer to the sheet titled "The activity record" on page 59.
- Using the list of pleasurable and achievement activities developed during the last exercise, complete with the client a schedule for the following day. Be sure to include both pleasurable and mastery activities for that day.
- In the "Evening" section of the record, schedule in time to complete the activity record for the following day, along with any other daily homework you have set for the client to complete over the following week. Mark these activities as "Achievement activities".
- Ask the client to sit down at the end of each day during the following week and complete the activity record for the next day. Whilst in the session, schedule in your next appointment with the client, and enter this into the activity record. If the client is aware of any appointments they must keep throughout the following week, add those to the activity record during the session.
- Make sure the client understands the importance of including a balance of both pleasurable and achievement activities into each day. For example, each achievement activity should be followed by a pleasurable activity to help enhance and maintain motivation.

## PHASE 6: Homework

1. Complete the self-monitoring record.
2. Become aware of the potential for seemingly irrelevant decisions that put the client at risk for using speed, and identify them when they do occur.
3. Complete the activity record and begin to use the activities list.
4. Maintain abstinence/reduced level of use of speed.



**The activity record**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
LUNCH							
Afternoon							
DINNER							
Evening							