Using Psychoeducation to Teach Youth at Risk the Benefits of Cognitive Restructuring and Self-Talk
Melissa Ross
Dedication
I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother. Without her unconditional love and support, none of this would have been possible.
Abstract

This research study evaluated the effectiveness of using psychoeducation to increase the knowledge and understanding of topics in youth at risk such as cognitive restructuring and self-talk. The four participants of the study were youth, ranging from 15-18 years of age. These participants were shown to frequently struggle with mental health, substance abuse, and interpersonal effectiveness. Two of the four participants completed the full research study. One participant dropped out after one week, and the other participant joined the study during week three. The psychoeducational workshops took place over six weeks and consisted of 45-minute weekly sessions. The workshop was provided to participants at the community agency which they were attendees of and was implemented by the student researcher. Each group workshop had an open format, where participants could join as feasible. The Cognitive Restructuring and Self-Talk Questionnaire was administered throughout the study, pre and post workshop across all 6 weeks. The questionnaire was comprised by the student researcher and included five Likert-scale rated questions which evaluated the effectiveness of workshop content and knowledge amongst participants. Results indicated that all of the participants acquired increased knowledge of important topics such as cognitive restructuring and self-talk and showed a positive progression in data. This study’s methodology, implications, multilevel challenges to the field of behavioural psychology, and future recommendations were discussed.
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Chapter I: Introduction

In 2011, it was estimated that 10-20% of children and adolescents around the world struggle with mental health problems (Healy, Kaiser, & Puffer, 2018). Child and adolescent deficits in mental health can be attributed to factors such as poverty, substance abuse, and delinquency (Healy et al., 2018). All three social and economic consequences which underwrite mental health challenges in youth today, have been directly observed by the student researcher with the youth currently attending her placement agency at Youth Diversion in the School and Non-Academic Program (SNAP). It can be seen that a reduced quality of mental health in children and youth can significantly affect their personal and academic lives negatively (Healy et al., 2018).

Regrettably, mental health concerns and related problems in children can go unnoticed and untreated (Fischer, Anthony, Lalich, & Blue, 2014). When young individuals experience emotional and behavioural disturbances, it can impede their development overtime (Fischer et al., 2014). When mental health issues go unnoticed, especially in adolescents, it can put them at serious risk for ongoing and prolonged concerns with their mental health, academic success, and social functioning (Fischer et al., 2014).

With the knowledge that mental health disturbances in children and youth often go unnoticed or are not treated promptly, it can be assumed that adding any education about mental health to a youth’s daily regime is a step in the right direction. Fristad, Gavazzi, Centolella, and Soldano (1996) stated that using psychoeducation to aid a young individual’s mental health in a positive direction can be invaluable. Moreover, psychoeducation has been seen to improve and reverse the negative effects of the way youth observe or individualize their mental health prognosis (Fristad et al., 1996).

According to Peris et al. (2015) learning psychoeducation in areas such as cognitive restructuring, can aid adolescents in identifying and correcting unhelpful and dysfunctional thought patterns. Aspects of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) such as psychoeducation, cognitive restructuring, and relaxation techniques are highly utilized when intervening with youth who have mental health diagnoses (Edmunds et al., 2017). However, aspects of CBT used with youth at risk, such as learning how to use positive self-talk have been less prominent and examined throughout the years (Edmunds et al., 2017). Therefore, the intent of the current research study is to determine if psychoeducational workshops with a focus in aspects of CBT such as cognitive restructuring and positive self-talk, will decrease at risk youth’s negative thought processes. It is expected that the use of the intervention methods will enable the participants to increase their learning on positive self-talk and cognitive restructuring techniques.

This research study took place at the Youth Diversion Program, in the School and Non-Academic Program (SNAP) classroom, located in Kingston, Ontario. The student researcher worked with four clients from the Youth Diversion Program who were identified as being at risk and frequently expressed maladaptive thinking patterns. Clients who were presumed at risk experienced a poor quality of mental health, engaged in substance abuse, had history of physical or verbal aggression, and seemed to have a reduced quality of life. These attributes were based on assessments executed by agency supervisors and observations made by the student researcher. It was brought to the student researcher’s attention that this clientele could benefit tremendously from psychoeducation focusing on aspects of cognitive restructuring and reformulating maladaptive thought patterns. Six different psychoeducational lessons were identified through research and by discussing the needs of the youth attending the SNAP program with the agency supervisors. Based on empirical research, the present study hypothesized that orchestrating psychoeducational workshops based on the basics of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and the benefits of restructuring automatic/maladaptive thoughts will improve the self-esteem and distorted cognitive thought processes of youth at risk. If the results of this research study indicate that psychoeducation does lead to the expansion of knowledge of topics discussed during the six
workshops on cognitive restructuring and positive self-talk, then this could assist in advocacy for
the need of more psychoeducational workshops within agencies where youth at risk are
supported.

Within the current research study, an in-depth review of the existing literature is
supplemented. The topics covered in this review include: empirical research that supports the
need for psychoeducation with youth at risk, a clear definition of youth at risk, psychoeducation,
cognitive restructuring, and positive self-talk, a review of empirically supported treatment such
as CBT for youth at risk, and a critical analysis of the current literature. Moreover, the method of
how psychoeducational workshops were provided in this study is described. The results of this
research study will be presented, followed by a discussion of the results, recommendations for
further research, and a conclusion.
Chapter II: Literature Review

The literature review provided below discusses how psychoeducation can be used as a beneficial tactic to improve a child’s automatic thinking and negative thought association. The literature review will first provide a definition of mental health concerns in youth, psychoeducation, and the effects of mental health concerns on academics and self-talk. The literature review will also cover an empirically supported therapeutic modality such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and the effectiveness of workshops which incorporate psychoeducation and review assumptive thinking styles that contribute to distress. In addition, this will review relevant research studies which support the use of psychoeducational workshops with at risk youth.

Mental Health Concerns among Youth

Kopetz et al., (2018) explain that youth and adolescents are more likely to engage in maladaptive and risky behaviours opposed to younger children and older adults due to their developmental stage. For example, lower impulse control and developing executive functioning abilities. Thus, making this age group more prone to substance experimentation/abuse, crime, measures of self-harming behaviours, poor academic achievement, and risky sexual behaviours (Kopetz et al., 2018). The participation in these maladaptive behaviours can be seen as triggers or causes for a lowered and decreasing quality of mental health in youth (Healy et al., 2018).

According to Sandler et al., (2018) the crucial stages of development for young children and adolescents, are especially sensitive when it comes to mental health concerns. During these important stages of development for youth, it can be seen that the onset of mental illness or prevalence of mental health concerns can be higher than for these other developmental stages (Sandler et al., 2018). This is why it is imperative for youth to be accustomed to stability across all domains during these vital years. Because mental health concerns regarding youth and adolescents can be seen as prevalent in today’s society, older adults have expressed bias towards this age groups and their reoccurring concerns (Jenkins, Bungay, Patterson, Saewyc, & Johnson, 2018).

Jenkins et al. (2018) state that 30% of youth in Canada have experienced mental health challenges in their lifetime. Furthermore, research has shown that 70% of ongoing mental health issues are seen to arise in adolescence and can prolong throughout one’s lifespan (Jenkins et al., 2018). The research also indicates that these mental health concerns and challenges adolescents face today can seriously impact their future development (Jenkins et al., 2018). Limitations in future development can include but are not limited to academic achievement, task completion, and impairment of daily functioning such as getting out of bed, cooking, and cleaning (Jenkins et al., 2018). Not only do mental health challenges in young individuals suppress functioning, it can also interfere with an individual’s ability to cope with emotional, psychological, or social facets (Jenkins et al., 2018). Therefore, it is evident that the beginning stages of a young person’s life are the most affected by mental health concerns and its preceding challenges. Which is why it is evident as pertinent to supply youth and adolescents at risk with intervention techniques to aid their mental health challenges.

Mental Health Concerns and its Contribution to Academic Disconnect

Students who experience mental health concerns can also experience a significant amount of emotional disturbances as well. Emotional disturbances which impact a student’s mental health can include but are not limited to sadness, hyperactivity, aggression, and withdrawal. This can add an extra barrier towards sustained attention, ability to concentrate, and overall academic success (Wagner & Newman, 2012). According to Wagner and Newman (2012), youth who attend special education programs (non-traditional high school), experiencing emotional disturbances and/or mental health concerns, are significantly at risk for negative life-long effects. Such as substance abuse, severe mental health diagnoses, and a lesser quality of life overall. This population of youth have demonstrated academic disconnect and poor social adjustment (Wagner
& Newman, 2012). Academic disconnect can be described as a student’s unwillingness to participate or engage in academic activities. The student does not find it important to participate in their academics due to an idea that they are not important or needed for success in life (Wagner & Newman, 2012). Consequently, in early to late adulthood these youth were more likely to be involved with the criminal justice system and unlikely to pursue post-secondary education due to early mental health concerns and academic disconnect (Wagner & Newman, 2012).

It has been stated that children from the ages of 12 to 17 are going through changes and challenges every day (Giota & Gustafsson, 2017). Changes and challenges such as developmental growth, puberty, and cognitive evolution. According to Giota and Gustafsson (2017) a majority of these changes and challenges in a young person’s life occur and pertain to academics. As an individual ages and matures, school demands increase in quantity and quality as well (Giota & Gustafsson, 2017). In turn, as academic demands increase, mental health challenges begin to escalate (Giota & Gustafsson, 2017). In a research study executed by Giota and Gustafsson (2017), it is hypothesized that mental health issues and related concerns in youth can be directly correlated to academic burnout and failure.

It is important for youth to be successful and feel accomplished while attending the gradual steps of achieving secondary education such as a high school diploma (Leonard & Gudiño, 2016). However, in the study conducted by Leonard and Gudiño (2016), the researchers noted that adolescents who experience deficits in their mental health also experience impaired functioning in their schooling. Leonard and Gudiño (2016) attribute lowered academic standards and poor academic functioning to a negative quality of at home life in youths. When young students have insufficient living environments paired with mental health challenges, it can be detrimental to their willingness to participate in academic achievement and success (Leonard & Gudiño, 2016). It was discovered that although a poor quality of mental health and an instable home environment can be related to low academic achievement, if a student is willing to engage in his/her academics fully, they can achieve stability and academic success (Leonard & Gudiño, 2016). Similarly, when a student is achieving success in their academics they are also creating a stable environment for themselves at school. By achieving academic success and obtaining stability through academics, a youth is at an increased position of discontinuing prolonged mental health challenges and concerns in the future (Leonard & Gudiño, 2016).

To summarize the topics discussed in the research studies above, it is imperative for children and adolescents to acknowledge their mental health challenges and try to address concerns in an effective manner, such as speaking with health care professionals and seeking intervention. Mental health concerns can directly reflect and transfer to a young individual’s academic achievement and success, which can cause long-term failure in life and related issues in the future.

**What is Psychoeducation?**

Psychoeducation is a process in therapy that involves teaching clients the basics, from start to finish, of the topic that is being covered (Luciano, Del Vecchio, Sampogna, De Rosa, & Fiorillo, 2015). The goal of psychoeducation is to inform and educate clients about the illness, topic, or challenge they are overcoming (Luciano et al., 2015). Psychoeducation seeks to improve a client’s long-term outcome by using techniques such as teaching, strategizing, and educating (Luciano et al., 2015). Although it has been hypothesized in past literature that self-psychoeducation is insufficient in the treatment and intervention of mental illnesses, in the study executed by Luciano et al., it is recognized that psychoeducation is more effective in a group setting; particularly with this population.

Schwalbe and Gearing (2012) state that using psychoeducation to diminish the adverse effects of mental health challenges in youth is a highly sought-after treatment. However, it can
be difficult for youth and adolescents to attend this type of therapy regularly which reduces the therapy’s success rates (Schwalbe & Gearing, 2012). The idea that adolescents have difficulties attending sessions is cause for concern for multiple reasons. This can be considered a limitation for the study and can create adverse effects if the participant is unable or unwilling to engage. Through research performed in Schwalbe and Gearing’s (2012) meta-analysis, it was learned that adherence to psychoeducation intervention relied on ongoing and effective communication after, and in-between sessions. Communication between the participant and the researcher demonstrates a healthy and meaningful relationship, which in turn will encourage participants to attend sessions. The student researcher is aware that she has contact with the youth who will participate in the current research study on a daily basis, before, after, and in-between psychoeducational workshops. This will aid the adherence to the workshops that the student researcher will be conducting. Therefore, this demonstrates the significance of the utilization of techniques such as psychoeducation to teach positive self-talk practices used with youth who are at-risk.

Similarly, Bachmann et al., (2018) conducted a study using psychoeducation and mindfulness as its main techniques during intervention. The study was conducted with individuals who were diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and appeared to have successes with both intervention tactics (Bachmann et al., 2018). While implementing psychoeducation, the focus was on offering clients insight into past struggles and challenges they had with their diagnosis and how to overcome them (Bachmann et al., 2018). The psychoeducation was also used to assist the clients in understanding and becoming aware of their diagnosis and its overarching themes (Bachmann et al., 2018). In both studies discussed above, using psychoeducation to teach clients about their diagnosis, challenge, or illness seem to have positive effects.

What is Self-Talk?

Self-talk can be described as a subjective form of internalized feelings that occur automatically in one’s head or out loud (Hardy, 2006). Often distress is influenced by one’s assumptive thinking patterns or self-criticism in this regard (either concisely or not). (Hardy, 2006) synthesizes and discusses in his study that the skill of recognizing and learning positive self-talk (e.g. self-affirmations, which promote positive mood) is commonly used in psychological treatments (such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy). Being able to implement positive self-talk opposed to negative self-talk in one’s daily regime, is critical to both cognitive processes and emotional processes of that individual (Hardy, 2006). Therefore, teaching youth at risk the basics of self-talk and how to form positive self-talk statements versus relying on negative self-talk statements, is essential to their growth and well-being in their coming young adult years.

If adolescents are emotionally disturbed to the point it is effecting the quality of their mental health and academic achievement, self-doubt and negative self-talk is surely a common and reoccurring theme in their psyche (Kendall Treadwell, 2007). In a research study executed by Kendall and Treadwell (2007), youth who are suffering from mental health related concerns, such as depression and anxiety, experience a significant amount of thought blocking and negative self-talk. It was observed in their study that cognitive behavioural techniques and increased learning on self-talk was beneficial in treating youth who express symptoms of anxiety and depression (Kendall & Treadwell, 2007).

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy is an empirically validated treatment modality (Levin, Haegar, An, Twohig, 2018). According to Levin, Haeger, An, and Twohig (2018), there are a wide range of treatment approaches and components involved with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). One of these approaches include cognitive restructuring. Cognitive restructuring techniques include changing or restructuring the content of negative or un-useful thoughts (Beck
& Haigh, 2014). The goal of teaching individuals the art of cognitive restructuring is to take the maladaptive thoughts and re-work them into something useful and/or positive (Beck & Haigh, 2014).

Cognitive behaviour therapy recognizes physiological features as a manifestation of anxiety within an individual. CBT is used as an efficient means to treat youth with anxiety disorders (Peris, Compton, Kendall, Birmaher, Sherrill, March, Piacentini, 2015). Cognitive restructuring is a technique used in CBT. In a research study conducted by Chrétien, Giroux, Goulet, Jacques, and Bouchard (2017), the intervention technique used to decrease addictive behaviours such as gambling, is cognitive restructuring. Peris et al. (2015) posit that cognitive restructuring in the form of changing self-talk and exposure tasks are imperative aspects of treatment and would be efficient means of reducing anxiety in participants. Exposure tasks were conducted with participants, they would be placed in emotionally provoking situations tailored to each participant. When the participants were placed in the anxiety provoking situations they were to demonstrate the skills they had learned to successfully and reduce their anxiety. In this study it was proven that teaching clients how to use cognitive restructuring would assist them in identifying and then correcting the thoughts that contributed to their gambling disorder (Chrétien, Giroux, Goulet, Jacques, & Bouchard, 2017). The study concluded that using an intervention technique such as cognitive restructuring against an addictive disorder was sufficient in treating the gambling problem (Chrétien et al., 2017).

Negative Thinking Styles

As it was hypothesized in the study done by Chrétien et al., (2017) negative thinking styles can contribute to addictive disorders such as gambling. Additionally, just as gambling is addictive, implementing negative thinking styles, especially as a child or adolescent, can hold addictive properties as well. According to Mills, Grant, Lechner, and Judah (2014) research covering negative thinking styles and their inner workings is becoming increasingly important. The author’s also discuss within this research study that negative thinking styles can play an important role in the development and maintenance of one’s symptoms/challenges of mental health concerns (Mills, Grant, Lechner, & Judah, 2014). Similarly, it is important to educate clients about their negative thinking styles and supply them with the tools to restructure them. Furthermore, Doménech-Betoret and Gómez-Artiga (2014) also agree that researching thinking styles and reworking negative thinking styles with clients is an important aspect during intervention to focus on.

A parallel concept to negative thinking styles are automatic thoughts. Automatic thoughts or thinking is the process in which ideas are outputted from one’s brain to the way they think or perceive ideas (Erogul, 2013). Automatic thoughts are naturally automatic, an individual is usually not skilled in control them. Like thinking styles, there can be positive automatic thoughts or negative automatic thoughts. According to Erogul (2013) negative automatic thoughts occur most often and can be associated with young children and adolescents who have mental health distresses. It is important to teach children who are at risk of mental health concerns how to reconstruct their negative automatic thoughts and focus on altering the way they process their brain’s automatic output. If children and youth who are at risk for mental illness and ultimately persistent challenges throughout the course of their lives are taught how to alter their automatic thoughts at a younger age, it can save them from concerns and negative trials in their adult lives.

Group Psychoeducational Workshops

In a study conducted by Horrell et al., (2014), it was researched that traditional one to one CBT sessions could be seen as unconventional. Clients who were diagnosed with mental illnesses such as depression and attended cognitive behavioural sessions alone, were shown to have less success and high dropout rates than those who participated in therapy within a group setting (Horrell et al., 2014). The authors of the study reflected that instead of one to one cognitive behavioural therapy, a large scaled group was more effective (Horrell et al., 2014).
During the completion of this research study, researchers examined the effects of providing quick, easy, and enjoyable group workshops surrounding psychoeducation and learning about one’s depressive symptoms (Horrell et al., 2014). Not only were the workshops effective in reducing depressive symptoms and teaching clients how to manage their symptoms effectively, the psychoeducation workshops were cost effective and easily accessible by the community. Although the workshops seemed to be effective in educating clients and providing them with therapeutic techniques, the literature lacks further evidence of group workshops across other settings and clients (Horrell et al., 2014).

Correspondingly to the study discussed above, Brown, Boardman, Elliott, Howay, and Morrison (2005) created their own research study to examine the effectiveness of large, community based, group psychoeducational workshops. The workshops discussed in this research study also focused on educating the participants and teaching them coping mechanisms to utilize in the future (Brown, Boardman, Elliott, Howay, & Morrison, 2005). The sample sizes of these workshops were 25 participants (Brown et al., 2005). Although that is a greater number of participants than the current thesis project, the workshops were comparable in mental health concerns, psychoeducation teaching, and implementation of coping mechanisms (Brown et al., 2005). In summary, the research piloted by Brown et al., was an effective and unique intervention strategy which was completed successful by the participants.

**Conclusion**

Empirically supported intervention for mental health concerns in youth have been identified in this literature review. Furthermore, the literature on psychoeducation with a focus on cognitive restructuring and positive self-talk for youth at risk is limited. The limited research available has shown that psychoeducation can be successful, group workshops can be effective, and youth who are at risk will benefit from these treatment pairings. Psychoeducation has been revealed to be flexible to diverse populations and unique challenges across the forefront of mental health related issues.
Chapter III: Methodology

Participants
Participants included in the research study entailed youth, from the ages of 12 to 17 years old, who participated in the agency’s programming on a daily basis. The research study was overseen by the student researcher’s placement supervisor, Davis Comfort, Behaviourist in the School and Non-Academic Program (SNAP). Youth who were participants of the program usually experienced hardships in their personal and academic lives. Participant’s family circumstances were usually complex and toxic, which could cause frequent and recurring emotions of sadness and self-doubt. In addition, the participants were at a reading and writing level of grade 6, and were willing to participate in the study. Reading and writing levels were assessed by the student researcher’s agency supervisor prior to the commencement of the workshops. Educational levels were assessed by direct observation, the youth’s current grade, and grading of school work. Exclusion criteria consisted of any youth who did not attend the agency’s program directly and was not willing to participate in the research study.

Selection procedures. The selection and recruitment of the participants were from the existing clientele at the Youth Diversion Program, who the supervisor and student researcher of the program had recommended to participate in the study.

Informed Consent Procedures
Every eligible participant had the study explained to them, orally, in a way that matches their intellectual level (verbal assent was garnered). When a participant was willing to partake in the study, there was an agreement form they and their guardian signed and provided written consent as well. The participant and their guardian were given an informed consent document and had time to read it over and ask any questions. The consent form outlined the expectations, intervention procedures, as well as the right to withdraw from the research study. Oral assent (Appendix B) was administered and obtained prior to the start of each workshop. Verbal assent will be provided to new participants, before the beginning of each workshop. Topics of discussion outlined in the verbal assent script will be that the participants (a) read and agreed to the terms and participation in the workshop/questionnaire, (b) gives their consent to data collection, and (c) that the user understands they may withdraw from the upcoming workshop at any time.

Design
The research design that was used in this study was a repeated measures design. This format was chosen to test the significance and validity of the information being provided to the youth during each workshop they attended. This was conducted by administering a questionnaire before a workshop began and then re-administering the same questionnaire after the workshop commenced. The dependent variable in this case was the Psychoeducational workshops in the way that they focus on teaching cognitive restructuring and positive self-talk to the participants. Moreover, the independent variable is the participant’s negative thinking and lack of education towards cognitive restructuring.

Setting and Materials
The research study and psychoeducational workshops took place at the Youth Diversion Program, in the regular classroom which the participants attended every day. The materials that were used in this research study, that are not limited to, a SMARTBoard, writing utensils, the student researcher’s laptop, copies of the workshop for each participant, a whiteboard, and any other tools involved in the sessions activity.

Measures
Cognitive Restructuring and Self-Talk Questionnaire. The Cognitive Restructuring and Self-Talk Questionnaire (Appendix C) is a 5 question survey which uses a 3-point Likert scale (1 = ‘Disagree’, 2 = ‘Unsure’, and 3 = ‘Agree’). The questionnaire aims to measure the
youth’s education on cognitive restructuring, negative self-talk, and positive self-talk before a workshop begins. Upon completion of the workshop, the questionnaire was re-administered to the youth to determine the significance of the workshop’s information and if any new learning/insights were obtained.

**Procedures**

Each Tuesday, every week, for 6 weeks, the participants would voluntarily join and participate in that day’s psychoeducational workshop (Appendix D). Every workshop was facilitated in the classroom which the youth participate in academics and receive support regularly. The participants began each workshop by completing the questionnaire, working through the psychoeducation, participating in an enjoyable activity such as ‘fast thinking’ or ‘the name game’, and then finishing with the questionnaire to assess their acquired learning. The student researcher guided the participants through each sessions learning, activities, and expectations. Reinforcement for the participants included, but was not limited to self-growth, rapport, and therapeutic gain. Recordings of possible participant reinforcement was not taken, only observed by the student researcher and agency supervisor. Different topics were chosen as psychoeducational targets for each of the six workshops. These psychoeducational topics were: thinking about your thinking, unhelpful thinking styles, cognitive restructuring, automatic thinking, self-talk, and a review. The content of these workshops were taken from academic journals, psychology textbooks, and various online sources. As shown in Appendix D, participants were provided with a copy of the lesson at the beginning of each workshop. The method of delivery for the six sessions is described below.

**Workshop 1 – Thinking about Your Thinking.** Before the first workshop occurred, participants were given a copy of the workshop and a questionnaire by the student researcher. The participants then filled out the questionnaires and handed them back to the student researcher. The participants were introduced to the psychoeducational topic of the week: thinking about your thinking, and the workshop began. The student researcher discussed the agenda for this week’s workshop and provided the participants with an overview of the workshop’s structure. The student researcher explained what the definition of thinking and asked participants what their definition of thinking was. Discussion was encouraged throughout the duration of the workshop. Reasons as to what thinking is used for was discussed with the participants in depth, including the benefits of thinking about your thinking. The student researcher then presented a strategy that participants can put in place to access the benefits of thinking about your thinking and how this can work out. The strategy included techniques such as slow down, plan your thinking, and focus. The participants and student researcher debated examples of where they can use this strategy to help them think about their thinking. At the end of the workshop, the student researcher assigned homework to the participants to further their thinking and bridge sessions. The homework assigned during the first workshop was a learning log reflection. The participants were asked to pick two reflection prompts which were provided and reflect on these ideas. Reflection prompts had the students think about their thinking with topics such as this week’s successes, this week’s challenges, new learnings, and goal setting. The student researcher hoped that assigning the reflection log for homework would enable participants to think about their thinking post workshop. At the end of the first workshop, discussion and feedback was conversed with the participants. Participants were encouraged to discuss their thoughts and feelings in regards to the workshop. Post workshop, participants filled out the same questionnaire as they did in the beginning and handed it back to the student researcher.

**Workshop 2 – Unhelpful Thinking Styles.** Before the second workshop occurred, participants were given a copy of the workshop and a questionnaire by the student researcher. The participants then filled out the questionnaire and handed them back to the student researcher. The participants were introduced to the psychoeducational topic of the week: unhelpful thinking...
styles, and the workshop began. The student researcher discussed the agenda for this week’s workshop and provided the participants with an overview of the workshop’s structure. The student researcher first inquired to the participants what they thought unhelpful thinking styles were. Discussion was stimulated throughout the entirety of the workshop. The student researcher proposed the definition of unhelpful thinking styles and asked the participants to discuss what they thought were their unhelpful thinking styles. The following portion of the workshop was dedicated to teaching the participants all ten of the designated unhelpful thinking styles (mental filter, jumping to conclusions, personalization, catastrophizing etc.) with provided examples of each. The participants and student researcher then discussed what unhelpful thinking styles they thought reflected most in their daily lives. The thought provoking activity of the workshop focused on situations where the participants used unhelpful thinking styles and the following consequences. There was no homework for this workshop. At the end of the second workshop, discussion and feedback was conversed with the participants. Participants were encouraged to discuss their thoughts and feelings in regards to the workshop. Post workshop, participants filled out the same questionnaire as they did in the beginning and handed it back to the student researcher.

**Workshop 3 – Cognitive Restructuring.** Prior to the beginning of the third workshop, participants were given a copy of the workshop and a questionnaire by the student researcher. The participants then filled out the questionnaire and handed them back to the student researcher. The participants were introduced to the psychoeducational topic of the week: cognitive restructuring, and the workshop began. The student researcher discussed the agenda for this week’s workshop and provided the participants with an overview of the workshop’s structure. The definition of cognitive restructuring was provided to the participants. The participants were asked if they often felt like they were subject to negative and inaccurate thinking. A discussion around these topics was held. Subsequently, the participants were taught by the student researcher the four steps of cognitive restructuring. The student researcher guided the participants through these steps and thought provoking examples were examined. Homework was assigned to participants that asked them to go through the four cognitive restructuring steps on their own. The student researcher clarified the homework and explained to the participants that the homework will be taken up at the beginning of next week’s workshop. At the end of the third workshop, discussion and feedback was communicated with the participants. Participants were encouraged to discuss their thoughts and feelings in regards to the workshop. Post workshop, participants filled out the same questionnaire as they did in the beginning and handed it back to the student researcher.

**Workshop 4 – Automatic Thinking.** Prior to the beginning of the fourth workshop, participants were given a copy of the workshop and a questionnaire by the student researcher. The participants then filled out the questionnaire and handed them back to the student researcher. The participants were introduced to the psychoeducational topic of the week: automatic thinking, and the workshop began. The student researcher discussed the agenda for this week’s workshop and provided the participants with an overview of the workshop’s structure. First, the student researcher and participants went over the homework from the previous workshop. Questions which the student researcher asked about the previous homework included what they thought about the homework and if it was beneficial. The participants of the research study then discussed examples they had wrote in their homework assignment. The participants were prompted to discuss what they thought automatic thinking went, considering the last few workshops discussed similar topics. The student researcher provided the definition as to what automatic thinking is and asked participants if they had any reoccurring, automatic thoughts. A short YouTube video was played for participants in order for them to acquire a better understanding of the concept being discussed in that week’s workshop. Thereafter, the thought provoking activity was introduced to participants. The student researcher explained to the
participants that the activity was called Fast Thinking. The objective of this activity was for participants to say aloud the first thought they had when they saw a specific word appear on the screen. The specific words included in this activity were school, parents, relationships, and self. The activity was intended to formulate and observe what automatic thoughts the participants had about the common nouns they were seeing on the screen. The participants were then introduced to a thought record sheet where they could practice refuting some of their automatic thoughts through a process and on paper. Subsequently, the student researcher guided the participants through two examples of how to fill out the thought record sheet. The thought record sheet was assigned for homework so participants could practice this skill on their own. At the end of the fourth workshop, discussion and feedback was communicated with the participants. Participants were encouraged to discuss their thoughts and feelings in regards to the workshop. Post workshop, participants filled out the same questionnaire as they did in the beginning and handed it back to the student researcher.

**Workshop 5 – Self-Talk.** Before the beginning of the fifth workshop, participants were given a copy of the workshop and a questionnaire by the student researcher. The participants then filled out the questionnaire and handed them back to the student researcher. The participants were introduced to the psychoeducational topic of the week: self-talk, and the workshop began. The student researcher and participants discussed the definition of self-talk, negative self-talk, and positive self-talk. Participants then deliberated why it is beneficial to practice positive self-talk more often than negative self-talk and how this could be life changing. Subsequently, the student researcher provided the participants with positive self-talk affirmations and everyone debated whether or not these could be useful in everyday life. The thought provoking activity included in this workshop was called the ‘Name Game’. Participants were asked to write their names on a piece of paper, vertically. Using the letters of their name, participants were to come up with positive traits, positive aspects of their lives, or things that they excel in. Some of the participants struggled with this activity. However, the student researcher and other participants came together and helped each person out. Together, the discussion of the workshop was enjoyable, positive, and constructive. Homework titled ‘Self Statements’ was assigned and explained to the participants. Self-Statements focused on allowing the participants to reflect on the positive aspects of different categories in their lives. Categories chosen were accomplishments, talents, satisfactions, physical attributes, mental attributes, likes, and what others tell you. At the end of the fifth workshop, discussion and feedback was talked about with the participants. Participants were encouraged to discuss their thoughts and feelings in regards to the workshop. Post workshop, participants filled out the same questionnaire as they did in the beginning and handed it back to the student researcher.

**Workshop 6 – A Review.** Preceding the beginning of the sixth workshop, participants were given a copy of the workshop and a questionnaire by the student researcher. The participants then filled out the questionnaire and handed them back to the student researcher. The participants were introduced to the topic of the week: review, and the workshop commenced. The student researcher provided the participants with a complete overview of every workshop that had been completed over the last five weeks. Each workshop was briefly reviewed and looked over, reminding the participants what had took place and if they had any outstanding questions. A short discussion was held after every workshop was reviewed and the student researcher thanked the participants for volunteering their time and committing to her thesis project. At the end of the sixth workshop, discussion and feedback was discussed with the participants. Participants were encouraged to discuss their thoughts and feelings in regards to the entirety of the workshops and how they have effected them (negatively or positively). Post workshop, participants filled out the same questionnaire as they did in the beginning and handed it back to the student researcher.
Chapter IV: Results

The main hypothesis of this research study was that through participating in weekly psychoeducational workshops which taught concepts such as cognitive restructuring and self-talk, youth at risk would gain a more sufficient understanding in these topics. The effectiveness of these workshops were measured by a questionnaire which asked participant’s questions to access their acquired knowledge of the overarching themes of the workshops. Themes of the group workshops included thinking about your thinking, unhelpful thinking styles, cognitive restructuring, automatic thinking, and self-talk. The Cognitive Restructuring and Self-Talk Questionnaire was provided to participants before workshops began and after workshops commenced to assess for any differences in thinking.

Descriptive Statistics

Participant 1. As shown in Table 1, participant 1 received an average pre-score on the Cognitive Restructuring and Self-Talk Questionnaire of 13.6. This participant’s average post-score on the Cognitive Restructuring and Self-Talk Questionnaire was 14. Giving a difference score of 0.4.

Participant 2. As represented in Table 1, participant 2 only attended week 1, therefore only completed one workshop in total, concluding with no average score.

Participant 3. As represented in Table 1, participant 3 received an average pre-score on the Cognitive Restructuring and Self-Talk Questionnaire of 11. This participant’s average post-score on the same questionnaire was 12.1. The difference score for this participant was 1.1. The difference score for participant 3 represents a noticeable change in knowledge of topics such as cognitive restructuring and self-talk.

Participant 4. As shown in Table 1, participant 4 received an average pre-score on the Cognitive Restructuring and Self-Talk Questionnaire of 14. This participant’s average post-score on the same questionnaire was 14.3. The difference score which participant 4 obtained is .3. Although a difference score of .3 could not be looked at as significant, participant 4 only participated in the study for the last 3 weeks that the workshops ran.

Table 1
Average Pre and Post Test Scores of the Cognitive Restructuring and Self-Talk Questionnaire across Six Weeks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Pre-Score</th>
<th>Post-Score</th>
<th>Difference Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Participant 2 only attended week 1’s workshop therefore did not have an average score

Graphing Analysis by Participant

Participant 1. As represented in Appendix E, participant 1’s total pre-score from week 1 was 13. Comparatively, at the end of week 6, participant 1 had a total post-test score of 15. Also shown in Appendix E and represented in the graph below, participant 1 had a positive progression of total scores. In weeks 3, 4, and 5, it can be seen that participant 1’s total post-test scores increased by one point each week. There was no data for participant 1 during week 2 because they did not attend the workshop for that week.
Figure 1. Participant 1’s total pre and post cognitive restructuring and self-talk questionnaire scores across 6 weeks.

**Participant 2.** As shown in figure 2 below, participant 2 only attended the first workshop in week 1. However, the data represented in Appendix E and the graph below show’s a positive progression of total scores between participant 2’s pre and post scores for week 1. Participant 2’s total pre-test score was 12 and their total post-test score was 14.

![Figure 2](image2.png)

Figure 2. Participant 2’s total pre and post cognitive restructuring and self-talk questionnaire scores across 1 week.

**Participant 3.** As shown in Appendix E, participant 3 had a fairly low pre-test score for week 1’s workshop of 5. Similarly, participant 3 also scored 5 on the post-test for week 1’s workshop. Represented in figure 3 below, it can be seen the participant 3 showed a positive progression of total scores on all pre-test and post-test questionnaires. Participant 3 finished the workshops with a total post-test score of 15.

![Figure 3](image3.png)
Participant 3’s total pre and post cognitive restructuring and self-talk questionnaire scores across 6 weeks.

Participant 4. As represented in figure 4 below, participant 4 does not have data for weeks 1-3 because they were not enrolled in the Youth Diversion program until week 4 of the workshops. In Appendix E and in figure 4, the participant’s data is represented in a positive progression of total scores. In week 4, participant 4 had a total pre-test score of 12. Comparatively, by week 6, the participant had a total post-test score of 15.

Figure 4. Participant 4’s total pre and post cognitive restructuring and self-talk questionnaire scores across 3 weeks.

Summary

All four of the participant’s understanding of the topics taught in workshops about cognitive restructuring and positive self-talk were shown to increase based upon the change in their pre-test and post-test scores of the Cognitive Restructuring and Self-Talk Questionnaire. The four participant’s all showed positive progressions from the data and graph’s analyzed in the current research study. Participant 3 had the greatest increase in knowledge and understanding of the topics presented in group workshops, with a pre-test score of 5 during week 1 and a post-test total score of 15 by week 6. The results of this study will be further discussed in detail in the following section.
Chapter V – Discussion

Summary of Research

The current study’s main research hypothesis was that participating in six weeks of group workshops, partakers would have an increased understanding and awareness of topics such as cognitive restructuring and self-talk. This was the main hypothesis of the research study because the student researcher thought it would be beneficial for this population to have a basic understanding and background of these topics, given they are youth at risk. As identified in the results, the participants who completed the workshops gained increased knowledge of the topics that were covered. This was shown in the participants pre-post test scores from the Cognitive Restructuring and Self-Talk Questionnaire when it was noticeable that there was a positive progression across all participant results. Therefore, these findings supported the current research study’s hypothesis. A pre-and-post-test design was chosen to measure the participant’s knowledge and awareness of topics which were being covered in each 1 hour workshop, before and after each session over the course of 6 weeks. The results of the Cognitive Restructuring and Self-Talk Questionnaire demonstrate a clear relationship between discussing important topics with youth at risk and their increased knowledge and understanding.

Although not measured throughout the current study, psychoeducational workshops, supplemented to youth at risk in community programs, could greatly benefit their futures. Programs such as the one presented in the current study, could improve their overall mental health and well-being. The workshops taught and supplied participants with effective coping mechanisms and tools.

Strengths and Limitations

There were a few strengths which were identified by the student researcher in completion of this study. First, of the participants who attended the workshops on a weekly basis, they reported to the student researcher that the workshops were enjoyable. The participants expressed that they had seldom knowledge of the topics presented beforehand and they were pleased with the new skills they had acquired through participating in the psychoeducational workshops. Each participant was provided with a copy of all six workshops so that they could reference any information, technique, or activity that may be useful to them again in the future. Copies of the six workshops in their entirety were also provided to the participants in order to help them generalize the learnings to different environments such as their home, and not just in the classroom. A master copy of all psychoeducational workshops (6), the activities, and homework which corresponded to each workshop was also given to the student researcher’s placement classroom for future reference.

Throughout the current research study, some limitations were identified. In terms of the sample size, it was small. It is unclear if different results would have been obtained if a larger sample size existed. Another limitation of the current research study is the attrition rate of participants. Participant 2 dropped out of the study because they stopped attending the student researcher’s placement agency. Participant 4 did not start attending the psychoeducational workshops until week 3 when they joined the student researcher’s placement agency. Furthermore, it was difficult for the student researcher to recruit students to participate in the current research study. At the beginning, many students attending the agency seemed eager to participate in the group workshops. However, some of these students moved on to different agencies or were uninterested in getting their parents to sign the informed consent document. The student researcher estimated 8 participants in total and only half of that number were able to get their informed consent documents signed. This could be due to the fact that these youth at risk did not have stable guardians or family environments.

Contribution to the Field of Behavioural Psychology

This study furthered research in the Behavioural Psychology field on topics such as cognitive restructuring, self-talk, and adding psychoeducational components to a school and non-
academic program. The study demonstrated a relationship between providing youth at risk techniques in restructuring maladaptive thoughts and implementing positive self-talk and their increased knowledge in these areas. Moreover, the six topics discussed over the period of six weeks could also be applied and generalized to different populations and in different settings. The student researcher concludes that the current research study was just a preliminary step in providing youth at risk unique supports to combat their poor quality of mental health.

**Multilevel Challenges to Treatment Implementation**

There are many challenges when working with youth at risk in a school and non-academic setting. When providing psychoeducational workshops to clients who experiencing mental health challenges and hazardous environments at home, it can be increasingly difficult. These challenges occur at a variety of various levels including client level, program level, organization level, and societal level.

**Client level.** For clients who attended school and non-academic programming on a daily basis, they were experiencing adverse environments outside of the classroom and a low quality of mental health. Because of these factors, attending program every day was difficult for most clients. It was important as the student researcher to make an effort to support the clients every day and make things enjoyable for them while they were attending program. If the clients were not satisfied with the support that they were given during the day, they would likely decrease their attendance.

**Program level.** When supporting clients in an environment where they still had to accomplish academic work, tension between clients could become high. Some clients found it difficult to focus on their academic work, especially when other clients were involved in distracting activities in the classroom. The student researcher found it difficult some weeks to conduct the workshops due to insufficient academic completion, distraction during program, and decreasing motivation. It was important to the student research to assist in client academic productivity before workshops began to supplement a harmonized program environment.

**Organizational level.** As an organization, many different resources were provided to clients to support them and to try and decrease their negative symptoms. This meant many different individuals hearing traumatic stories and hardships from clients frequently. The student researcher observed that topic of discussion amongst all professionals in the organization seldom included burnout and compassion fatigue. It is important that staff members communicate their concern and feelings to have success in the organization overall.

**Societal level.** Clients who attended programming on a daily basis were usually 14 to 18 years-old. In society, common thinking of youth at those ages included self-consciousness and judgement. The student researcher observed that some of the clients did not want to participate in the current research study due to perceived judgement from peers. Clients did not want to appear weak, self-conscious, or unsure to their fellow peers in this society.

**Future Directions**

It is highly suggested that more studies be conducted on the use of psychoeducational workshops with youth at risk. Furthermore, it is recommended that the use of psychoeducation is paired with therapeutic supports and treatment to combat high risk mental health challenges in youth attending school and non-academic programs. It would be beneficial for future studies to add self-confidence components to psychoeducational workshops and measure this as a specific trait in youth at risk. The student researcher proposes that more specific cognitive behaviour therapy approaches are incorporated and measured in future research.

As the current study involved quantitative variables, it would be beneficial for future studies to add qualitative variables to review the process and lived experiences of this population. In addition, replication of this study using a larger sample size may prove valuable. Due to the limitations of the programs sample sizes, this research was unable to provide inferential statistics to comment on the significant of whether increased psychoeducation on
these topics lent towards improved mental. If future studies wish to proceed with this researcher, it may be beneficial for researcher’s to test the effectiveness of psychoeducational instead of the amount of knowledge participants were gaining from them.

Implementing the above suggestions to future studies may identify significant benefits and gainful relationships in providing youth at risk weekly psychoeducational workshops in non-profit organizations.
COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING AND SELF-TALK

References


of Psychiatry, 204(3), 222–233. https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.112.121855


Appendix A

Using Psychoeducation to Teach Youth at Risk the Benefits of Cognitive Restructuring and Positive Self-Talk

Melissa Ross
Dr. Melissa Bolton
St. Lawrence College
Youth Diversion

Invitation

Your child is being invited to take part in a research study. I am a student in my 4th year of the Honours Bachelor of Behavioural Psychology at St. Lawrence College. I am currently on placement at Youth Diversion. As a part of my undergraduate thesis, I am completing a research project (called an applied thesis). I would like to ask your child for help to complete this project. The information in this form will help you understand my project. Please read the information carefully.

Why is this study being done?

My project is on ‘Using Psychoeducation to Teach at Risk Youth the Benefits of Cognitive Restructuring and Positive Self-Talk’—a program that is meant to help a youth decrease the persistence of negative thinking styles and increase the use of positive thinking styles and self-reflections. I have created a questionnaire to see if the program has been helpful to them. As I believe this program will be helpful to youth who are at risk, I also want to know which parts of the program were most helpful to your child. This will help me make sure this program is successful now and in the future.

What will you need to do if you take part?

If your child chooses to take part in the study, they will be asked to take part in 6 sessions of education and supportive activities. The sessions will be held on Tuesday afternoons at Youth Diversion, in the SNAP classroom, and last approximately 45 minutes. The sessions will be run by myself and Davis Comfort, the behaviourist in the classroom. Before and after every session, your child will be asked to fill out a questionnaire that will take approximately 3 minutes to complete.

What are the potential benefits of taking part?

The potential direct benefits of participating in this project may include learning more about one’s self. As well as decreasing negative perceptions, and increasing your child’s ability to see themselves in a more positive light. Information produced from this project may also be used to help improve the program for other young adults experiencing the same issues in the future.

What are the potential disadvantages or risks of taking part?

Risks from taking part in this research study are minimal, but may include emotional stress such as discussing slightly uncomfortable topics or uncovering things your child did not know about themselves. There also could be social risks involved with this research study. Youth attending the workshop could feel stigmatization from their peers who are not willing to attend the workshop and consider themselves less self-aware, competent, or weak.
Everybody is different and if they do have any strong emotional reactions to the program they may talk to me, Davis, Gill, Dr. Melissa Bolton, or any other staff involved at the Youth Diversion program.

**Will the information you collect from me in this project be kept private?**

I and my supervisor will make every attempt to keep any information that identifies your child strictly confidential, unless required by law. It is my legal responsibility to report any incident in which a child may be abused. Your child will be assigned a code number to enter on the questionnaires and their name, age, or gender will not be used. Informed Consent Forms will be stored securely for 10 years after your child’s 18th birthday and then they will be destroyed. The results from the research are part of my thesis and will be made available at the St. Lawrence College library. They may also be published in professional journals or presented at professional conferences. However, any such presentations will be of general findings and will never breach individual confidentiality.

**Do you have to take part?**

Taking part in this research is voluntary. It is up to you and your child to decide whether or not they want to take part in this project. If they do decide to take part and you agree, you will be asked to sign this consent form. If they do decide to take part, they are free to stop at any time, without giving reason, and without it negatively impacting their experience or the services they receive at the Youth Diversion Program. If they decide to stop, please speak to me or my supervisor. If they choose not to take part in this study, they can still continue to use the services at the Youth Diversion Program. If they choose to withdraw from the study, they can ask that their data not be used before the date of November 27th, 2018.

**Contact for further information**

This research project has received ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee for Behavioural Psychology (REC-P) under the authority of the St. Lawrence College Research Ethics Board (SLC-REB). The project was developed under the supervision of Melissa Bolton, my supervisor from St. Lawrence College. I appreciate your cooperation and if you have any additional questions, feel free to ask me, Melissa Ross at MRoss25@student.sl.on.ca. You can also contact my Agency Supervisor, Davis Comfort, at dcomfort@youthdiversion.org. If you have concerns about the way this research is being conducted or about your rights as a participant you may contact the SLC-REB Chair at reb@sl.on.ca.

If you and your child agree to take part in this research project, please complete the following form and return it to me as soon as possible. A copy of this signed document will be given to you for your own records. The original will be retained at the Youth Diversion Program.

By signing this form, I agree that:

- The study has been explained to me.
- All my questions were answered.
- Possible harm and discomforts and possible benefits (if any) of this study have been explained to me.
- I understand that my child has the right not to participate and the right to stop at any time.
- I am free now, and in the future, to ask any questions I have about the study.
- I have been told that my child’s personal information will be kept confidential.
- I understand that no information will be released or printed without asking me first.
- I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.
I understand that the data from this study will be presented at the St. Lawrence College Behavioural Psychology Poster Gala, and may be reported at other conferences or published in a scientific journal. No identifying information will be included in these reports.

I hereby consent for my child to take part.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent/Guardian Name</th>
<th>Signature of Parent/Guardian</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Printed Name</th>
<th>Signature of Student</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Child/Youth Assent Script

Hello! My name is Melissa and I am a student at St. Lawrence College. I am doing a research project for my studies at school and I would like your help. Research projects help us learn new things. First, we ask a question. Then we try to find the answer. If you take part in my research project, you will help me learn about the possible benefits of teaching you about the process of identifying and changing unhelpful thinking patterns.

You do not have to take part in this research project and no one will be upset with you if you decide you don’t want to take part in it. The choice is yours: you can say “yes” or you can say “no”, and you can change your mind at any time.

In this research project, we will learn about the basics of your thinking patterns and how to think positively more often. If you want to take part in my research project, then this is what I would like you to do: First, I will ask you to complete a very short questionnaire which will take only 3 minutes. I will ask you to complete this short questionnaire every session, before, and after. After that, we will meet once a week, every Tuesday, from 12p.m. to 1p.m. to learn the skills and participate in some activities. We will do this for 6 weeks.

I am grateful for your help with my research project. What you get out of this is that you might learn to see things more positively by using the steps we teach you during these workshops. Risks of participating in this research study may include discussing uncomfortable topics with your peers, or your peers viewing you as weak for contributing in personality building workshops.

I will not identify you or anything you tell me in my research project. However, I will only protect your confidentiality and privacy to the extent of the law. This means that if I see or discover that you have been harmed by an adult or if you plan to do yourself harm, I am required by law to report this. It will be everyone’s responsibility to keep their fellow group member’s shared information private. Topics discussed during workshops will not be discussed anywhere else. Your responsibility during this research study is to keep what your peers and other group members have to say, to yourself.

If you ever have any problems and need to talk about your emotions, you can talk to me, or the behaviourist in the room, Davis. You don’t have to take part in this research project if you don’t want to. Choosing to not take part in this research study will have no effect on your participation in the SNAP programming. If you agree to take part in it, you can change your mind at any time. If you would like to stop, just let I or Davis know.

Do you have any questions? Do you understand everything that I have just explained and what we will be doing together? Would you like to start? If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the following people by their email, listed below.

Contact Information:
Student Researcher’s Email: MRoss25@student.sl.on.ca
Davis’s Email: dcomfort@youthdiversion.org
My College Supervisor’s Email: Melissa.Bolton@theroyal.ca
Appendix C

Cognitive Restructuring and Self-Talk Questionnaire

**Instructions:** Answer the questions below using the 3-point rating scale. Circle only one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3 = Agree</th>
<th>2 = Unsure</th>
<th>1 = Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I know what Cognitive Restructuring means.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I know what negative self-talk is.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I know what positive self-talk is.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I use positive self-talk statements more than negative self-talk statements.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I know how to express positive self-talk statements.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Psychoeducational Workshops

Workshop 1: Thinking about Your Thinking

**THINKING ABOUT YOUR THINKING**

By: Melissa Ross
Honours Bachelor of Behavioural Psychology
Applied Thesis

**Agenda**

- Answer short questionnaire
- Review topics and information for today's workshop
- Participate in thought provoking activity
- Assign homework
- Discuss any interesting questions or feedback about today's workshop
- Fill out another brief questionnaire
What is thinking?

- The technical definition describes thinking as:

  → The process that underlies the mental manipulation of knowledge, images, and ideas. Often in an attempt to reach a goal, such as solving a problem.

Can you come up with a better definition of thinking? 🧠️💭
What do we use thinking for?

1. To solve problems
2. Reason and make decisions
3. Understand and communicate with others

Thinking About Your Thinking

- When you think about your thinking, you’re focusing on **WHAT YOU ARE DOING** and how you can do it better; rather than just doing it **WITHOUT THINKING**
- It helps to have a **STRATEGY** in mind so you can reach your **GOAL**
The Benefits of Thinking About Your Thinking

- If you are thinking about your thinking, **Solving Problems**, **Making Decisions**, and **Communicating with Others** becomes much easier.
Thinking About Your Thinking: Planning

- Slow down
- Plan your thinking/strategy
- And focus

This should put you right where you want to be!

Let’s think of examples together of where and also how you can initiate this sequence.

Homework: Learning Log Reflection

- Before next Tuesday, I would like you to fill out the sheet I am providing you with for homework.
- This will help you understand the process of ‘thinking about your thinking’ and it will also help you reflect on your thinking.
- The instructions are provided on the sheet.
- If you have any questions about the homework, do not hesitate to ask.

- Thanks! 😊
Discussion & Feedback

○ What did you think about this week’s workshop?
○ Was it helpful?
○ Did you learn something new?
○ Do you have any more thoughts about this topic or the process of ‘thinking about your thinking’?

References


UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

BY: MELISSA ROSS
HONOURS BACHELOR OF BEHAVIOURAL PSYCHOLOGY
APPLIED THESIS

AGENDA
✓ Answer short questionnaire
✓ Review topics and information for today’s workshop
✓ Participate in thought provoking activity
✓ Assign homework
✓ Discuss any interesting questions or feedback about today’s workshop
✓ Fill out another brief questionnaire
WHAT ARE UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES?

• When a person experiences negative emotions such as sadness or anger, it is usually followed by negative thinking styles, thought patterns, or self-statements.

• Because these negative thinking styles, thought patterns, or self-statements express themselves in a pattern, they are identified as unhelpful thinking styles.

• These thinking styles are unhelpful because they often focus on the negative or inaccurate part of reality.
CAN YOU DESCRIBE SOME OF YOUR OWN UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES?

THERE ARE 10 STYLES OF UNHELPFUL THINKING:

1. Mental Filter
2. Shoulding/Mustering
3. Jumping to Conclusions
4. Personalization
5. Catastrophizing
6. Overgeneralization
7. Labelling
8. Emotional Release
9. Magnification/Minimization
10. Black and White Thinking
1. MENTAL FILTER

2. SHOULDING/MUSTING

YOU MUST
3. JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

4. PERSONALIZATION
5. CATASTROPHIZING

6. OVERGENERALIZING
7. LABELING

8. EMOTIONAL RELEASE
9. Magnification and Minimization

10. Black and White Thinking
COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING AND SELF-TALK

• SOME OF THESE STYLES MIGHT SOUND SIMILAR TO ONE ANOTHER. THEY ARE NOT MEANT TO BE DISTINCT CATEGORIES, BUT TO HELP YOU SEE IF THERE IS A PATTERN TO YOUR THOUGHTS

• DO YOU HAVE A HABIT OF USING ANY OF THESE UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES?
• IF YOU SO, WHICH ONES?

ACTIVITY

• CAN YOU THINK OF A SITUATION WHERE YOU USED ONE OF THESE UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES THAT YOU MENTIONED BEFORE?
• WHAT WERE THE THOUGHTS THAT WENT THROUGH YOUR MIND?
• WHAT FEELINGS DID YOU EXPERIENCE CONSEQUENT TO YOUR THINKING?
DISCUSSION & FEEDBACK

• WHAT DID YOU THINK ABOUT THIS WEEK’S WORKSHOP?
• WAS IT HELPFUL?
• DID YOU LEARN SOMETHING NEW?
• DO YOU HAVE ANY MORE THOUGHTS ABOUT THIS TOPIC OR UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES?

REFERENCES

Cognitive Restructuring
Honours Bachelor of Behavioural Psychology
By: Melissa Ross
Applied Thesis

Agenda
- Answer short questionnaire
- Review topics and information for today’s workshop
- Participate in thought provoking activity
- Assign homework
- Discuss any interesting questions or feedback about today’s workshop
- Fill out another brief questionnaire
What is Cognitive Restructuring?

Cognitive Restructuring is a strategy used to recognize negative and inaccurate thoughts and replace them with alternative thoughts that are more realistic and helpful.
Do you think you often have negative and inaccurate thoughts?

Why is Cognitive Restructuring Beneficial?

- Cognitive Restructuring also helps promote optimal thinking during or after a stressful or overwhelming situation to reduce emotional distress
4 Steps to Cognitive Restructuring

1. Identify the negative thought
2. Identify the evidence to support the negative thought
3. Identify evidence to refute the negative thought
4. Come up with a reasonable conclusion/resolution

Can you think of or describe any situations where the skills of Cognitive Restructuring would come in handy?
Let’s try the steps together!

Homework

- Cognitive Restructuring 4 Step Worksheet
- During the next week, if a situation arises and you start having negative and inaccurate thoughts before/after, try and fill out the steps in the worksheet
- Next week, we will be discussing our worksheets and what we thought helped or what did not help
Discussion & Feedback

▶ What did you think about this week’s workshop?
▶ Was it helpful?
▶ Did you learn something new?
▶ Do you have any more thoughts about this topic or questions about cognitive restructuring?

References

Workshop 4: Automatic Thinking

AUTOMATIC THINKING

HONORS BACHELOR OF BEHAVIOURAL PSYCHOLOGY
BY: MELISSA ROSS
APPLIED THESIS

AGENDA

 европейрт Answer short questionnaire
 europ рt Review homework from last week
 europ рt Review topics and information for today’s workshop
 europ рt Participate in thought provoking activity
 europ рt Assign homework
 europ рt Discuss any interesting questions or feedback about today’s workshop
 europ рt Fill out another brief questionnaire
HOMEWORK REVIEW

• What did everyone think about last week's homework assignment?
• Was it beneficial?
• Do you have any examples you would like to share with the group?

AUTOMATIC THINKING

• If we look back to our last three workshops together, we have discussed basic topics about thinking, how we think, how we process thoughts, and how we are able to restructure our thinking.
• With that being said, does anyone have an idea about what ‘automatic thinking’ might be or what it might involve?
THE DEFINITION OF AUTOMATIC THINKING

- Automatic thoughts can be described as any negative, insistent, and involuntary thoughts which occur rapidly and repeatedly
- Automatic thoughts can change the way you are feeling, emotionally, without thinking logically

- Can you think of any automatic thoughts that you have had or have?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wd8dMU3mK_Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wd8dMU3mK_Q)
ACTIVITY: FAST THINKING

- Different things or situations will appear on the screen
- I want you to say the very first thought that comes to your mind when you see the word SCHOOL
PARENTS

RELATIONSHIPS
MYSELF

THOUGHT RECORD WORKSHEET

- Situation: What happened? The 5 W’s
- Emotions/Mood (0-100%): What emotion did you feel at that time? What else? How intense was it?
- Physical Sensations/Reactions: What did you notice in your body? What would other notice about you?
- Unhelpful Thoughts/Images: What went through your mind? What am I responding to? Do you think I’m being treated unfairly? Are you thinking that you won’t for it and you must do something about it?
- Alternative/Realistic Thought – More Balanced Perspective: Take a breath… Is this fact or opinion? What would someone else say about this situation? What’s the bigger picture? Is there another way of seeing it? What do you want out of this situation? What advice would I give someone else in this situation?
- What I did/What I could do (0-100%) – Diffusion Technique: What will the consequences of your actions be? Will you have any regrets later? What will be most helpful for you, for others, or the situation? What could I do differently? What would be more effective?
HOMEWORK

- Thought Record Sheet
- During the next week, when a situation arises or is occurring and you are having automatic thoughts, attempt to fill out the columns in the worksheet
- We will discuss next week how easy/difficult you found this task and reflect on its benefits/shortcomings

DISCUSSION & FEEDBACK

- What did you think about this week’s workshop?
- Was it helpful?
- Did you learn something new?
- Do you have any more thoughts about this topic or questions about automatic thinking?
REFERENCES


Workshop 5: Self-Talk

Self-Talk

BY: MELISSA ROSS
HONORS BACHELOR OF BEHAVIOURAL PSYCHOLOGY
APPLIED THESIS

Agenda

- Answer short questionnaire
- Review homework from last week
- Review topics and information for today’s workshop
- Participate in thought provoking activity
- Assign homework
- Discuss any interesting questions or feedback about today’s workshop
- Fill out another brief questionnaire
What do you think self-talk is?

Or what do you think self-talk means?

Self-Talk Defined

**Self talk** is the way you **talk** to yourself, or your inner voice. You might not be aware that you're doing it, but you almost certainly are.
Do you think there are different kinds of self-talk?

Negative Self-Talk

- Self-talk becomes negative when it is used to reinforce irrational or inaccurate thoughts about yourself.
- Negative self-talk can include thinking badly about yourself, putting yourself down, saying hurtful things towards yourself, or any other repetitive narrative you have about yourself inside of your mind.
The Negative Effects of Negative Self-Talk

- Throughout the years, these messages can play over and over in our minds, fueling our feelings of anger, fear, guilt, and hopelessness.
- If your self-talk is generally negative, you may be perceiving events if your life as more stressful than they need to be and creating unnecessary anxiety and stress for yourself.

Positive Self-Talk Defined

- Speaking confidently to one’s self or about one’s self
- Encouraging your own success, internally
- Successful people talk confidently to themselves, boosting their feelings of self-esteem, which encourages success.
Why do you think it’s beneficial to practice positive self-talk verses negative self-talk?

Examples of Positive Self-Talk Affirmations

- I ACCEPT AND APPRECIATE MYSELF EXACTLY AS I AM
- I ENJOY THE VARIETY OF LIFE
- I SEE AND VALUE MY UNIQUENESS
- I HAVE ALWAYS DONE MY BEST
- I KNOW I CAN ALWAYS UPGRADE

For more statements such as these visit http://www.russellsmall.com/positive-self-talk-affirmations
Activity: Name Game

- On the paper provided, vertically write your first and last name
- Using the letters of your name, create words that express your positive traits or positive aspects about yourself
- Let’s try it together!

Homework: Self Statements

- There are a few categories listed in the homework that I am providing you with today
- For each of these categories, I would like you to write down things that you like about yourself or that is satisfying to you
- Over the next week, I would like you to think about each positive thing you have written about yourself
- If you review the homework frequently over the next week, you are devoting time to the positive parts of yourself and reinforcing the expressions you’ve written down
Discussion and Feedback

- What did you think about this week's workshop?
- Was it helpful?
- Did you learn something new?
- Do you have any more thoughts about this topic or questions about positive/negative self-talk?

References

Week 1: Thinking about your thinking

- Learned the definition of thinking
- How we use thinking
- The definition of thinking about your thinking
- Why thinking about your thinking is beneficial
- Strategies to implement thinking about your thinking
- Learning Log Reflection
- Do you have any questions regarding workshop 1?
Week 2: Unhelpful Thinking Styles

- Learned the definition of unhelpful thinking styles
- Defined and provided examples for the 10 styles of unhelpful thinking
- Discussed the most used unhelpful thinking styles
- Conferred consequences to unhelpful thinking styles
- Do you have any questions regarding workshop 2?

Week 3: Cognitive Restructuring

- Learned the definition of cognitive restructuring
- Why is cognitive restructuring beneficial
- The 4 steps to cognitive restructuring
- Practiced the steps all together
- Do you have any questions regarding workshop 3?
Week 4: Automatic Thinking

- Learned the definition of automatic thinking
- Watched a thought provoking video about automatic thinking and thoughts
- Participated in an activity called Fast Thinking
- Introduced a thought record sheet
- Practiced filling the thought record sheet out with specific examples/situations
- Do you have any questions regarding workshop 4?

Week 5: Self-Talk

- Defined self-talk
- Learned the different types of self-talk (positive, negative, and neutral)
- Discussed the negative effects and consequences of negative self-talk
- Deliberated the benefits of practicing positive self-talk versus negative self-talk
- Discovered and acquired positive self-talk affirmations and how to use them more often
- Do you have any questions regarding workshop 5?
Thank you for allowing me to work with you. I hope my workshops have benefited you in a positive way. I wish you the very best in the rest of your journey!

- Melissa Ross
Appendix E

The Cognitive Restructuring and Self-Talk Questionnaire: Data Charts by Participant

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