

## Toolkit 1 - Learning Unit 3

### Post-intervention

#### Activity 5

### Risk awareness and responsibility: Taking ownership of protective measures to address soft skills



Exercise

#### Counterfactual thinking

### 5. Do you transfer negative emotions from previous negative experiences to current situations?



YES

#### Activity 5

A. Read this brief introduction:

**Counterfactual thinking** is the cognitive process in which we imagine a different path than the one we have taken. This can be major or minor historical events in our lives. With counterfactual thinking, we question time and reality by reassessing what has happened and imagining what society or our lives would be like if things had gone in a different direction.

B. Read an example of what counterfactual thinking look like (e.g., Irrational Beliefs Scale; Kondáš & Kordáčová, 2000 is used):



The scale consists of the following 5 factors:

- 1. Powerlessness:** surrender to fate and external influences, inability to resist them, external attribution of thinking, passivity to resignation due to reduced confidence in one's own strength and abilities, possible pessimism, and low ego strength (10 items - example: "One must have luck on his side in order to have a fulfilling life.");
- 2. Idealization:** factor of emotional vulnerability, elimination of the negative with an unrealistic demand for the exclusive occurrence of the good, overexposed need for positive experience, low frustration tolerance, vulnerability to everything negative, need for positive emotions (8 items - example: "All bad things must be suppressed.");
- 3. Perfectionism:** perfectionistic demands on self and others, unrealistic desire for ubiquitous and inevitable perfection, expectation of desire fulfilment and eventual personal reward (8 items - example: "Everyone should do everything perfectly.");
- 4. External vulnerability:** increased tendency to be sensitive to one's own positive image in others and to gain their favor, increased controllability, sensitivity to external influences to which the person is subject to, underestimation of self-regulation (10 items - example: "I try to be liked by strangers.");
- 5. Negative expectations:** pessimism to catastrophizing, generalized expectation of the negative, negative cognitive attitudes, unfounded, irrational fears (7 items - example: "Even my best friend eventually disappoints and fails.").



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C. Go through the whole questionnaire by yourself:

You have various statements and claims in front of you. For each statement, rate how much you agree or disagree with it using the following scale:

**1 = I believe it is not true;**

**2 = I don't think it is true;**

**3 = I don't know if it is true or not;**

**4 = I think it is true;**

**5 = I believe it is true**

- \_\_\_ 1. Luck is fundamentally a matter of chance.
- \_\_\_ 2. Efforts at self-improvement are usually unsuccessful.
- \_\_\_ 3. Even one's best friend eventually disappoints and fails.
- \_\_\_ 4. Our conscience does not allow a person to forget wrongdoing even after years.
- \_\_\_ 5. There should be no misunderstandings between people at all.
- \_\_\_ 6. All bad must be suppressed.
- \_\_\_ 7. Other people's opinions greatly influence our actions.
- \_\_\_ 8. One strives to be liked by everyone.
- \_\_\_ 9. It is futile to defy fate and circumstances.
- \_\_\_ 10. I only feel confident if I can completely rely on someone.
- \_\_\_ 11. A person who does not pay proper attention to our problems is not worth much.
- \_\_\_ 12. What one desires is always glossier than what one has.
- \_\_\_ 13. In the future I will surely be affected by some dangerous diseases.
- \_\_\_ 14. One should be perfect in every situation.



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- \_\_\_ 15. There will only be good in the world when much in people's lives changes for the better.
- \_\_\_ 16. It is desirable that everyone appreciates all my good points.
- \_\_\_ 17. It is tragic if fate brings nothing but bad luck.
- \_\_\_ 18. In the face of adversity, man is utterly helpless.
- \_\_\_ 19. A strong emotional attachment to another person tends to be harmful.
- \_\_\_ 20. Our conscience is so sensitive that it makes us feel guilty at the very thought of something illicit or wrong.
- \_\_\_ 21. Most people - if they could - would want to completely remake themselves.
- \_\_\_ 22. For one's own satisfaction, one needs the feeling that what they have done could not have been done any better.
- \_\_\_ 23. Our life partner should fulfil all our wishes and desires.
- \_\_\_ 24. It is terrible if we are prevent from accomplishing what we set out to do.
- \_\_\_ 25. Every person should do everything perfectly.
- \_\_\_ 26. It's terribly annoying if people sense my weakness.
- \_\_\_ 27. The root of evil is usually external circumstances.
- \_\_\_ 28. Being responsible for all your serious decisions is beyond the power of an individual.
- \_\_\_ 29. A sensitive conscience will only complicate one's life unnecessarily.
- \_\_\_ 30. It is definitely necessary to find a way to avoid all dangers.
- \_\_\_ 31. There is no excuse for parents not to raise their children to be the most perfect people possible.
- \_\_\_ 32. Only those who believe only in themselves will avoid disappointment.
- \_\_\_ 33. Selfless people always pay for their nature in the end.
- \_\_\_ 34. My past certainly adversely affects my present life.
- \_\_\_ 35. Without the help of loved ones, one would be completely lost.
- \_\_\_ 36. I try to be liked by strangers.
- \_\_\_ 37. If someone points to our weakness in public, it's terribly embarrassing.
- \_\_\_ 38. One must have luck on his side in order to have a fulfilling life
- \_\_\_ 39. Whoever is overly concerned with possible dangers will eventually have something really bad happen to him.



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\_\_\_ 40. One should act in a way that is generally considered appropriate.

**D. ACTIVITY:**

Use counterfactual thinking in a positive way to try and understand where you have gone wrong or what you could do better in the future.



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