



The 12 NATs

Our Negative Automatic Thoughts usually fall into one of these 12 categories. Asking questions can help us to find more helpful ways of thinking.

Mental Filter

Our brain passes everything we experience through a filter and can shape how we're feeling based on how we think our day is going.
Snapping at a family member because we're struggling with rehabilitation on that day.

Ask: Am I only noticing the bad things? Are there positive things I've missed?

Predicting

We make assumptions on the current situation, based on what has happened before.
Worrying that we will be admitted to hospital when our breathing becomes irregular because this has happened in the past.

Ask: How likely is it that this might really happen?

Mind Reading

When our brain guesses what someone else is thinking.
Avoiding conversations around our health condition because we think people are judging us.

Ask: What's the evidence? How can I know what others are thinking?

Compare & Despair

We compare ourselves to others, but we often only see their best side.
Feeling bad about ourselves and avoiding seeing friends because we think they have a better lifestyle.

Ask: Am I seeing the full picture?

Self-Criticism

Blaming ourselves when something goes wrong, whether it's our fault or not, or picking flaws in ourselves.
Being critical of ourselves when we struggle to do something because of our long term health condition. Such as forgetting someone's name after a stroke.

Ask: What would I think of a friend who did the same thing?

Shoulds & Musts

Putting pressure on ourselves and setting expectations based on what we think should happen, rather than what's realistic for us.
Getting frustrated that you're not recovering fast enough from a stroke.

Ask: Am I putting too much pressure on myself?

Judgements & Labels

When we don't do as well as we wanted to, we can label ourselves as 'wrong' or 'bad'. This way of thinking can also lead us to judge others.

If we are having a bad day we might think we are a failure or that we should be managing our condition better.

Ask: How does this way of thinking help me? Is there another perspective?

Scale & Perspective

Sometimes our brains make things seem much bigger or smaller than they are. We may feel overwhelmed by something we normally find easy or brush off something that's important to us.

When being unable to do one thing because of our LTC makes us doubt our overall abilities.

Ask: How would someone else see this? Am I seeing the bigger picture?

Black & White

Our brains can filter things into extremes. Everything is either one thing or another, and we don't see anything in between.

When we make a small mistake, and feel like we've failed completely because we didn't do it perfectly.

Ask: Is this really so black and white? Is there a more reasonable way of seeing this?

Emotional Reasoning

The way we think can depend on how we're feeling. If you're feeling good you might think the world is great, if you're feeling down, you might think the world is an awful place.

If chronic pain is particularly bad on one day, it might lower your mood and make everything seem awful.

Ask: Would I think the same way if I were feeling differently?

Catastrophising

Our brains sometimes scale up the consequences of what might happen, and jump to the worst case scenario.

When we notice a small change in our symptoms, and worry that it could be an emergency.

Ask: What's the most likely thing to happen?

Memories

Something that we're experiencing in the present can remind us of the past. Whether it's a pleasant or painful memory, it stops us from focusing on the situation at hand.

When going back to a place where we felt unwell before makes us more conscious of our symptoms now.

Ask: Am I reacting to the situation that's happening now, or could it be bringing up emotions from the past?