

THE ROLE OF THOUGHTS IN THE RELAPSE CYCLE

Session 5: Seeing Thoughts as Thoughts

Trigger:
Physical pain and stress
from a worsening health condition

Automatic Pilot
*Believe thoughts
Act on thoughts*

Mindful Mode
*See thoughts as thoughts
Don't need to act on thoughts*

Initial Thought:
"I can't deal with this. Getting high would make things a lot better."

Believe thoughts.
Feel upset and have urge to use.
Go get some alcohol or drugs.

Go back home and take one pill/drink/hit ("Just one")

The "Ah, Screw it" Thought
"I'm a failure. I might as well give up and have another."

The Relapse Cycle

Next day...
Another "Screw it!" Thought:
"I knew I would go back to using. There's no hope for me."

Take use/drink more and eventually fall asleep

Pause. Notice your thoughts as just passing thoughts, not truths or commands. ("This is just a thought. I don't need to believe it or act on it right now")

Focus on your breathing for a few moments to "ground" yourself.

Respond with awareness. Make some tea. Call a supportive friend.

Never too late to switch to mindful mode