

Tinnitus SA

Changing beliefs about tinnitus

Self empowerment and changing thoughts about tinnitus

Tinnitus may be viewed as a stimulus to which a person responds with a number of thoughts, some of which are conscious but others are automatic. Many of the emotional problems which occur with tinnitus, such as depression and anxiety, are a result of your reaction to the sounds. The source of distress is therefore not the tinnitus itself, but rather the way in which you view and think about the tinnitus.

Thinking about tinnitus

“Consider what options are open to us when we actually encounter a particular problem. At one extreme, we can allow ourselves to be overwhelmed. At the other, we can simply go on a picnic or take a holiday and ignore it. The third possibility is to face up to the situation directly. This involves examining it, determining its causes and finding out how to deal with them” (the Dalai Lama, 1999)

We have a constant stream of self-talk - thoughts and images which go through our minds during waking hours. For example, you might be stuck in traffic. Your thoughts might be:

Neutral - I wonder what’s happening at the intersection ahead?

Negative - I can’t stand all this traffic. Why is it always so busy when I’m in a hurry?

Positive - I have a chance to hear the end of this interesting radio program.

Tinnitus self-talk

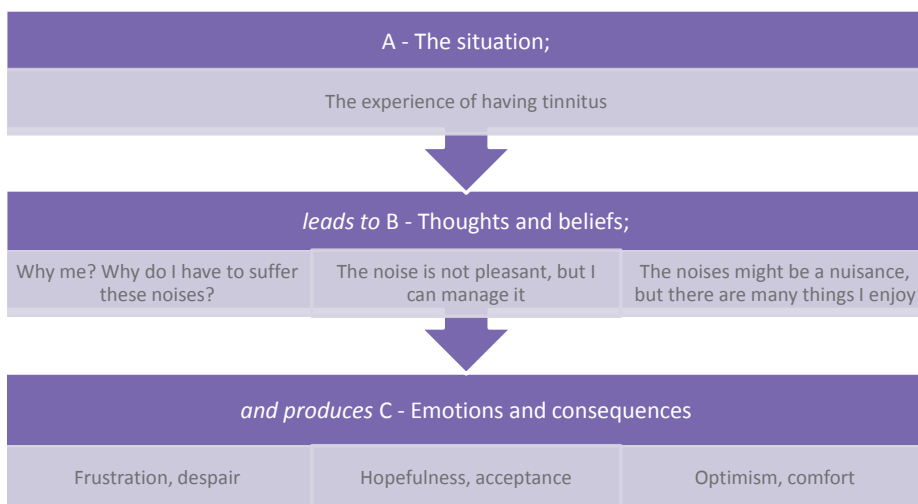
Thoughts can be automatic. We are often unaware of the contents of our thoughts until we deliberately stop and listen to what is going through our heads. Thoughts flow fairly constantly – we rarely pay attention to them. We tend to believe our thoughts without questioning their basis. However, thoughts might be logical, that is based in fact - or illogical, not based in fact. Thoughts can also become stuck, repeating the same sequence.

About Tinnitus SA

Tinnitus SA is a web based tinnitus information service designed to provide awareness, factsheets and information about management options for people with tinnitus and health professionals alike. Tinnitus SA services are provided by non-profit South Australian Audiology business Can:Do Hearing on behalf of the South Australian Government.

tinnitussa.com.au

The ABC Model



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Thinking in a logical manner

Acknowledge the impact of your thoughts upon your feelings, emotions and behaviour

1. Deliberately tune in and listen to what you are saying or thinking to yourself
2. Identify positive, logical and realistic thoughts and neutral thoughts. These are the “safe” thoughts, which will have positive or neutral effects on your subsequent feelings.
3. Identify negative, unrealistic and unhelpful thoughts – these will have negative effects on your feelings. These represent “dangerous” thoughts.
4. Attach a “green flashing light” to positive and neutral thoughts and a “red flashing light” to negative thoughts.
5. Interrupt and stop negative thoughts. By doing this, you can avoid allowing your thoughts to operate like a stuck record going on and on.
6. Challenge the truth and validity of your thoughts – do not blindly accept unrealistic and unhelpful thoughts as true
7. Substitute positive, realistic and logical thoughts for every identified unrealistic and unhelpful thought

Examples of illogical thinking

“Why me? Why do I have to suffer these noises?”
The underlying illogical thought might be “Bad things shouldn’t happen to me”

“Come on traffic, get moving” The underlying illogical thought might be “I’m in a hurry – I shouldn’t have to be held up by a red light”

“The noise ruins everything for me” The underlying illogical thought might be “I cannot do anything because of the tinnitus”



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Challenging illogical thoughts

“No-one can expect only good things to happen to them - I guess it’s just my turn”

“The rules of the road apply to everyone – the lights didn’t turn red just for me”

“The noises don’t really interfere with everything, I can still do most things”

Managing negative thoughts

- Suggestions for pleasant or neutral thoughts:
- Think about what you will have for dinner
- Think about your next holiday
- Think of a place you would like to visit
- Count backward from 100 by 7’s
- Imagine the tinnitus sound is a pleasant external sound, such as rushing water, a radio turned down low, a distant aeroplane

Whenever you notice a negative thought, try the following:

- Instruct yourself to stop the thought
- Imagine a large, red flashing stop sign and mentally shout “stop”
- Wear a thick rubber band around your wrist – snap the rubber band against your wrist
- Mentally say the words ‘one’, ‘relax’, ‘two’, ‘relax’. Relax all of your muscles at the same time and redirect your thoughts to something pleasant or neutral.

Acknowledgements: ‘The Psychological Management of Chronic Tinnitus’ by Henry and Wilson

Contact Us

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