

Session 4: Examining the Index Event

Practice Assignment:

Please choose one Stuck Point each day, and then answer the questions on the Challenging Questions Worksheet (Handout 7.2) with regard to this Stuck Point. Please work on Stuck Points related directly to the trauma first (e.g., “It is my fault,” “I could have prevented it,” or “If I had done X, it would not have happened”). Your therapist will give you extra copies of the Challenging Questions Worksheets, so you can work on multiple Stuck Points. Completed examples of this worksheet are provided as Handouts 7.2a and 7.2b, and a Guide to the Challenging Questions Worksheet (Handout 7.3) is also available.

Session 4 Handouts:

7.1: Levels of Responsibility Handout

7.2: Challenging Questions Worksheet (six copies included)

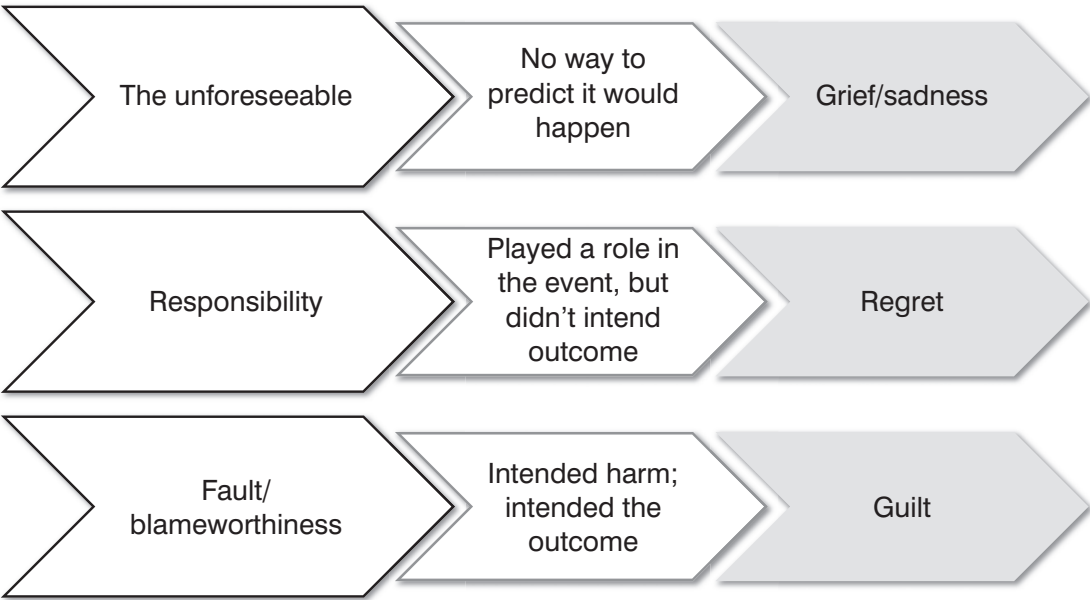
7.2(A-B): Examples of completed Challenging Questions Worksheets

7.3: Guide for the Challenging Questions Worksheet

HANDOUT 7.1
Levels of Responsibility Handout

Date: _____ Client: _____

Your role in the traumatic event: What are the facts?



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HANDOUT 7.2
Challenging Questions Worksheet

Date: _____ Client: _____

Below is a list of questions to be used in helping you challenge your Stuck Points or problematic beliefs. Not all questions will be appropriate for the belief you choose to challenge. Answer as many questions as you can for the belief you have chosen to challenge below.

Belief:

1. What is the evidence for and against this Stuck Point?

For:

Against:

2. Is your Stuck Point a habit or based on facts?

3. In what ways is your Stuck Point not including all of the information?

(continued)

HANDOUT 7.2 (p. 2 of 2)

4. Does your Stuck Point include all-or-none terms?

5. Does the Stuck Point include words or phrases that are extreme or exaggerated (such as "always," "forever," "never," "need," "should," "must," "can't," and "every time")?

6. In what way is your Stuck Point focused on just one piece of the story?

7. Where did this Stuck Point come from? Is this a dependable source of information on this Stuck Point?

8. How is your Stuck Point confusing something that is possible with something that is likely?

9. In what ways is your Stuck Point based on feelings rather than facts?

10. In what ways is this Stuck Point focused on unrelated parts of the story?

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HANDOUT 7.2 *(p. 2 of 2)*

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2. Is your Stuck Point a habit or based on facts?

3. In what ways is your Stuck Point not including all of the information?

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HANDOUT 7.2 (p. 2 of 2)

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10. In what ways is this Stuck Point focused on unrelated parts of the story?

HANDOUT 7.2A
Sample Challenging Questions Worksheet

Date: _____ Client: _____

Below is a list of questions to be used in helping you challenge your Stuck Points or problematic beliefs. Not all questions will be appropriate for the belief you choose to challenge. Answer as many questions as you can for the belief you have chosen to challenge below.

Belief:

It is my fault that my uncle had sex with me. [Therapist asked whether the Stuck Point had a hidden word, "all."]

1. What is the evidence for and against this Stuck Point?

For:

~~*I must have done something that made him think it was OK.*~~ [After more questions by therapist about fault and intent:] *There is no evidence for its being my fault.*

Against:

I didn't want to do it, and I told him so. He threatened to hurt my little sister. He said no one would believe me. He was an adult, and I was a child. He was bigger and stronger than me.

2. Is your Stuck Point a habit or based on facts?

Habit. I have been saying this to myself for 25 years.

3. In what ways is your Stuck Point not including all of the information?

How could it be my fault? I didn't even know what sex was when he started. You don't do that to kids. Just because he read me stories and babysat me didn't give him the right to do that.

4. Does your Stuck Point include all-or-none terms?

Well, we talked about the hidden word "all." I thought it was all my fault and didn't even think about really blaming him. I was too scared of him, and my mother loved him.

5. Does the Stuck Point include words or phrases that are extreme or exaggerated (such as "always," "forever," "never," "need," "should," "must," "can't," and "every time")?

"All my fault."

6. In what way is your Stuck Point focused on just one piece of the story?

Because he did it to me, I assumed it was about me. I didn't think about the fact that I was a child or that what he did was a crime. I told him "No," and he threatened my family.

(continued)

HANDOUT 7.2A (p. 2 of 2)

7. Where did this Stuck Point come from? Is this a dependable source of information on this Stuck Point?

Mostly from me, but I think he said things that made it seem like it was my fault. I was so pretty, that he couldn't keep his hands off of me, I was special, etc.

8. How is your Stuck Point confusing something that is possible with something that is likely?

N/A.

9. In what ways is your Stuck Point based on feelings rather than facts?

Because I felt guilty and shameful, I thought it must be my fault.

10. In what ways is this Stuck Point focused on unrelated parts of the story?

I must have thought that I had more control over the situation than I did.

HANDOUT 7.2B
Sample Challenging Questions Worksheet

Date: _____ Client: _____

Below is a list of questions to be used in helping you challenge your Stuck Points or problematic beliefs. Not all questions will be appropriate for the belief you choose to challenge. Answer as many questions as you can for the belief you have chosen to challenge below.

Belief:

It is my fault that my brother was killed in the car accident, because I should have done things differently.

1. What is the evidence for and against this Stuck Point?

For:

I should have made him wear his seat belt. He refused, and I thought it was only a few blocks so it didn't really matter. We were laughing and talking.

Against:

I didn't cause the crash. The other person was texting and ran the red light. The officer said that even with a seat belt, being hit from the side like that, my brother would have been killed anyway.

2. Is your Stuck Point a habit or based on facts?

Habit. I have been blaming myself for 2 years. I guess it was wishful thinking.

3. In what ways is your Stuck Point not including all of the information?

When the light turned green, I did look both ways before I entered the intersection. He was coming so fast that there was nowhere for me to go.

4. Does your Stuck Point include all-or-none terms?

I thought it was all my fault because my brother died, and I didn't even think about the driver of the other car. I kept saying I should have done something different to avoid the crash.

5. Does the Stuck Point include words or phrases that are extreme or exaggerated (such as "always," "forever," "never," "need," "should," "must," "can't," and "every time")?

"All my fault." "Should have done things differently."

6. In what way is your Stuck Point focused on just one piece of the story?

I was focused on the fact that my brother refused to put on his seat belt, and I didn't really listen when the officer said that with that kind of side crash, it wouldn't have made a difference. I was also focused on the fact that we were talking and laughing, but I overlooked the fact that I did look both ways.

(continued)

HANDOUT 7.2B (p. 2 of 2)

7. Where did this Stuck Point come from? Is this a dependable source of information on this Stuck Point?

The Stuck Point came from me, but when it first happened my parents' first reaction was that it was my fault, and that I shouldn't have started the car until he put his seat belt on. Later they were more supportive, but I think they were so upset at the time that they took it out on me.

8. How is your Stuck Point confusing something that is possible with something that is likely?

I kept thinking that I could have done something different to avoid the crash. Maybe there was something I could have done, but it isn't likely.

9. In what ways is your Stuck Point based on feelings rather than facts?

Because I felt guilty, I thought it must be my fault.

10. In what ways is this Stuck Point focused on unrelated parts of the story?

I was focused completely on the seat belt. I didn't kill my brother. The other driver did. He shouldn't have been texting and driving too fast. Focusing on the fact that we were laughing was irrelevant. I was paying attention and following the rules.

HANDOUT 7.3
Guide for the Challenging Questions Worksheet

Date: _____ Client: _____

Below is a list of questions to be used in helping you challenge your Stuck Points or problematic beliefs. Not all questions will be appropriate for the belief you choose to challenge. Answer as many questions as you can for the belief you have chosen to challenge below.

Belief: *Put a Stuck Point here. You can use your Stuck Point Log to find one.*

*The belief should **not** be a feeling or behavior, and should **not** be too vague. Use “If–then” statements if possible.*

1. What is the evidence for and against this Stuck Point?

*Evidence consists of the type of facts that will hold up in court. We are not challenging that the event happened. We are looking for evidence that **supports** and does **not support** the Stuck Point you have given above.*

For: *Do **not** use another Stuck Point! Make sure you are identifying facts.*

Against: *Only **one** exception is needed to make a belief **not** a fact. A fact is 100% and absolute. If you can identify one exception to your Stuck Point, then it is not a fact, and therefore would not hold up in court.*

2. Is your Stuck Point a habit or based on facts?

*Have you been telling yourself this belief for so long that it **feels** like a fact? It’s like advertising: After a while, you start to believe it. Is this belief something that you have been in the habit of telling yourself for a long time?*

3. In what ways is your Stuck Point not including all of the information?

*Is it **possible** that your Stuck Point is unrealistic or not **completely** accurate or not **completely** true? Does your belief reflect all the facts of the situation? Remember the context of the trauma.*

4. Does your Stuck Point include all-or-none terms?

Does your Stuck Point reflect all-or-none, black-and-white categories? Are things all good or all bad? Are you missing the gray areas in between? Example: If your performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself as a failure.

5. Does the Stuck Point include words or phrases that are extreme or exaggerated (such as “always,” “forever,” “never,” “need,” “should,” “must,” “can’t,” and “every time”)?

These words or phrases may be hidden. Example: “Men can’t be trusted” is actually “All men can’t be trusted.”

(continued)

6. In what way is your Stuck Point focused on just one piece of the story?

This question is about deciding that one piece of information from the event caused the event to happen. Then, you use this one aspect to create your Stuck Point. Example: "If I had been stronger, then this wouldn't have happened." Now think about drawing a pie chart and showing one small slice of that pie as the one aspect you are focusing on. You are probably assigning 100% of the "blame" or "cause" to this "slice" and discounting all the remaining factors (other slices) in the rest of the pie. Other slices might include that you were outnumbered, the perpetrator had a weapon, you were taken by surprise, there were no other options at the time, or similar factors. Why are these other factors/slices not considered here as contributory? Are you discounting them and only focusing on the one factor/slice?

7. Where did this Stuck Point come from? Is this a dependable source of information on this Stuck Point?

Think about the time period when the event happened. Who were you at the time (a scared 20-year-old in combat, a child victimized by an adult, etc.)? Your Stuck Point may be based on a thought that you developed when you were scared or very young. You have retained that Stuck Point all these years, based on how you thought at the time. Or think about the enemy/perpetrator/other sources: Are these people reliable? Can they be trusted to make judgments about the event (or you)? Your Stuck Point might be a statement told to you by a perpetrator. Is a perpetrator to be trusted (reliable) to make this statement? Would we expect that a perpetrator is truthful? Consider your source.

8. How is your Stuck Point confusing something that is possible with something that is likely?

*This question is best for a Stuck Point that is focused on the present or the future. It asks you, "What is the likelihood or percentage/chance that the Stuck Point will happen again?" An example of a present or future-oriented Stuck Point would be "If I trust others, then I'll get hurt." It may actually be a low probability, but you are living your life as if it is a certainty. Yes, it **could** happen, but are you living as if it **will** happen? Of course, in a dangerous environment, you may have to consider everything as a high probability, because the consequences (death or injury) are great. But are you taking into consideration that you don't need to hold this same degree of probability in **all** environments? In other words, are you applying the Stuck Point as if it has a high probability (a certainty) of happening again in **all** situations now? For example, think about driving. We all know that many people die every year in car accidents, yet we still drive. We do this because although we are aware that we could die in a car accident, we don't live as if it **will** happen.*

9. In what ways is your Stuck Point based on feelings rather than facts?

*This question represents the idea that if you **feel** something is true, then it must be. For example, think about hypervigilance: Because you **feel** uncomfortable or under threat in a crowd, you assume (or develop the belief) that it is dangerous. This becomes "I don't like crowds," which translates into the Stuck Point "I am never safe in a crowd," or "If I am in a crowd, then I will be harmed." Another example is that if you **feel** guilty, then you assume you must be at fault.*

10. In what ways is this Stuck Point focused on unrelated parts of the story?

This question is about focusing the cause or blame on something that had nothing to do with the event's happening. For example, "I wore a red dress; therefore, I was assaulted." This is different from question 6 because it is about something that was irrelevant, whereas in question 6 the factor may have contributed to the event but is not wholly to blame. However, even in question 6, the piece may be incorrect rather than factual.