



ALYSSA MOORE
COUNSELING

Thought Sorting

Sometimes when our brains really get going our thoughts can seem overwhelming. Sometimes we find our selves having thought after thought that is either unhelpful to situation or isn't something we are prepared to really examine and give attention to at the current time. Thought sorting is one way manage those thoughts by noticing them, labeling them, and then putting them away until the time when you can address them.

Picture your mind like a big warehouse of thoughts with a conveyor belt in the middle of the room. Now, picture yourself standing next to the conveyor belt. Notice that the conveyor belt is moving at a speed needed to keep up with the flood of thoughts that you are experiencing. Now, picture those thoughts landing on the conveyor belt one at a time and heading toward the end where you are standing. As the thought approaches you, you want to notice what the thought is about, label it, and then picture yourself putting it in a box at the end of the conveyor belt. Once you have put a thought in a box, you will move on to the next thought coming down the conveyor belt toward you. You will likely end up with more than one thought in a box, since some of the thoughts will have the same label. You will notice that as you begin labeling and boxing thoughts that the speed with which you are having them begins to slow. As the thoughts slow, the conveyor belt also slows. You will continue sorting until you feel you are more in control of the thoughts and that you are able to focus on helpful thoughts or things you need to focus on.

It might go a little something like this:

Here I am standing at the conveyor belt and it is moving really quickly. I see that the thought "I can't stand this" is coming toward me. That is a frustration thought and I am putting it in the frustration box. Now I see that the thought "my coworkers never do their

jobs” is coming next. This is a thought about things being unfair and I am putting it in the injustice box. Next I see the thought “I am a hard worker” coming down the conveyor belt and I notice that the conveyor belt is moving a little slower. This thought is about my work ethic and I am going to put it in the identity box. I see that the thought “why don’t my coworkers care more” is coming down the conveyor. That is a thought about what others should do and I put it in the injustice box.....

Keep going until you feel more in control and are able to turn your attention to something that you need to do or something that is productive or feels good. Noticing the thoughts will make them less persistent and easier to “put away” and since you aren’t letting them go, you can come back to them and revisit the ones that you need to later when you are in a better place to do so.

Like with any skill you are trying to build you need to practice it to get better at it. It is also important to practice it during times when you aren’t overwhelmed by your thoughts. This will help you to learn the skill so that you can use it during the times when your thoughts are running amok.