The downward arrow

Follow a thought down to the belief underneath it.

Name _____ Date _____

Start with an upsetting thought. Instead of arguing with it, ask what it would mean if it were true. Keep asking until you reach a statement about yourself, other people or the world that feels heavy and familiar. Take your time. If it becomes too much, stop and bring it to our next session.

The situation, and my first thought

↓

If that were true, what would it mean?

↓

And if that were true, what would be so bad about it?

↓

What would that say about me, other people or the world?

The belief I arrived at

How true does it feel right now?

0 — 10 — 20 — 30 — 40 — 50 — 60 — 70 — 80 — 90 — 100

Not at all — Completely

Seeing it written down: where might this belief have come from? Is it the whole truth?

The downward arrow technique was described by David Burns.

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This handout supports your therapy. It does not replace professional advice.