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Think Outside The Box

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Finding Alternative Thoughts

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Application 2

Now that you know how to identify and challenge negative thoughts, it's time to replace them with new, alternative ones. Before we move any further, you'll need your thoughts journal in order to identify the anxiety generating situations.

This application helps you reframe your perspective. You'll no longer stand and watch how negative, irrational thoughts ruin your social performance. Instead, you'll be actively involved in finding 'healthy' rational thoughts to replace the old, 'toxic' ones. Keep in mind that rational thinking is a lifelong process that will not only eliminate your social anxiety, but also prevent it from ever interfering with your daily activities.

The banner features the Explorable logo at the top center. Below it are three quiz cards, each with a different image and title:

- Card 1: Image of red roller skates on a wooden deck. Title: Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2
- Card 2: Image of a fan of colorful pens. Title: Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2
- Card 3: Image of a Ferris wheel at sunset. Title: Quiz: Flags in Europe

At the bottom right of the banner is a link: [See all quizzes =>](#)

Find Evidence That Contradicts Your Negative Thoughts

As we mentioned in our previous articles, your mind had plenty of time to come up with enough evidence to support your negative automatic thoughts and dysfunctional schemas. Now it's time to do the opposite by finding evidence against your negative thinking patterns. Find at least 2 pieces of evidence and write them down.

Replace Your Negative Thoughts With Alternative Ones

Challenging your negative thoughts is not enough. You also need to find alternative thoughts to replace the old ones. In the table with sample questions we provided, that you have written in your journal, fill in an alternative thought to replace the old one. Remember, this alternative thought has to be rational and less disturbing. It must generate a positive or functional emotion.

What's the Result?

Now that you've replaced the negative thought with a rational alternative, what's different? For example, if the previous negative thought generated a certain behavior (e.g. avoiding the situation), the new alternative thought should generate a new behavior (e.g. staying in the situation).

When Is this Applicable?

You can use this exercise for past, present and future situations. If you find yourself in a difficult situation, just take a short break, go somewhere private and use the journal to challenge your negative thoughts. For future situations, use your imagination to anticipate potential negative thoughts and emotions.

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