

Inquiry-Based Stress Reduction (IBSR): Instructions and Questionnaire

The instructions here and on the following page were reproduced (with minor typographical changes) by SolvingProcrastination.com from the following paper:

Krispenz, A., Gort, C., Schültke, L., & Dickhäuser, O. (2019). How to Reduce Test Anxiety and Academic Procrastination Through Inquiry of Cognitive Appraisals: Investigating the Role of Academic Self-Efficacy. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*, 1917. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01917>

This method is described as follows in the paper (p. 3):

The IBSR method uses a specific set of questions to allow for the identification and exploration of stressful cognitions (e.g., “I am not able to study sufficiently”). In a first step, participants reflect on the emotions (e.g., test anxiety), effects (e.g., procrastination), causes (e.g., negative experiences in school), benefits (e.g., short-term relief from anxiety), and dysfunctionality (e.g., lower achievement) of their stressful cognition in an experiential manner. In a second step, participants are encouraged to imagine reality *without* the distortions caused by the stressful cognition, this way allowing for a new and potentially more positive experience (e.g., feelings of relief or curiosity). In a last step of the IBSR method, participants are guided to find concrete evidence for the validity of the *opposite* of their stressful cognitions (e.g., “I am able to study sufficiently”) and to explore whether the opposite could also be true. This is done in order to help them overcome the tendency to seek or interpret evidence in ways that are biased by already existing beliefs (i.e., the confirmation bias; Nickerson, 1998). This approach can be assumed to be effective as the new-found arguments are self-created and this way more convincing (Briñol et al., 2012). In sum, IBSR should allow for a debate of stressful cognitions through experiential self-exploration and rational persuasion.

In the study, the use of the IBSR questionnaire was preceded by a session where participants identified the stressful thoughts that would later be addressed (e.g., “I am not able to study sufficiently”), by focusing on a specific frightening situation and writing down their individual beliefs about it in a systematic manner.

Investigate each of your statements, using the following questions

Format of answer

Q1: Is this thought true?

yes/no

Q2: Can you absolutely know that this thought is true?

yes/no

Q3: How do you react, what happens when you have this thought?

open

Does this thought bring peace or stress to your life?

What images do you see, past or future, as you think this thought?

What physical sensations arise having these thoughts and seeing these pictures?

What emotions arise when you have that thought?

Do any obsessions or addictions begin to appear when you have this thought (e.g., alcohol, drugs, shopping, food, and television)?

How do you treat others when you have this thought?

How do you treat yourself when you have this thought?

Q4: Who would you be without this thought?

open

Turn the thought around.

Example: My lecturer did not prepare me well enough for the exam.

Possible turnarounds:

(1) To the self. Example: I did not prepare me well enough for the exam.

(2) To the other. Example: I did not prepare my lecturer well enough for the exam.

(3) To the opposite. Example: My lecturer did prepare me well enough for the exam.

Then, find at least three specific, genuine examples of how each turnaround is true for you in the situation.
