

Psoriasis...
you won't stop me!

Feel good about yourself



see psoriasis:
look deeper

NHS

Royal Free London

NHS Foundation Trust

Psoriasis... You Won't Stop Me

This booklet is part of the Psoriasis... You Won't Stop Me series: six booklets designed to help people with psoriasis recognise and manage the feelings and emotions that are often associated with the condition. The booklets have been produced by the See Psoriasis: Look Deeper collaboration and authored by experts in dermatology and psychology who have supported many people with psoriasis. The booklets have also been reviewed by people living with psoriasis.

To view all the booklets in this series and to find out more about See Psoriasis: Look Deeper, visit www.seepsoriasislookdeeper.co.uk. Other titles in this series are:

- Overcome your embarrassment
- Say what you feel
- Overcome anxiety & fear of uncertainty
- Overcome social isolation
- Overcome your need for acceptance & approval of others

Not all people with psoriasis feel all or any of these emotions, and so only use those booklets that are most relevant for you. Whilst these booklets may help, if you feel unable to cope, it is important to make an appointment with your GP.

For more information, or a list of resources used in the production of this booklet, please contact the Psoriasis Association.

About the authors



Dr Alexandra Mizara

Dr Mizara is a Chartered Psychologist, practising both in the NHS and the private sector. She is the Clinical Lead of the Psycho-Dermatology Service at the Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust, an innovative psychology service especially founded to help patients with skin diseases.



Kasmindar Badsha

Kasmindar is a Trainee Health Psychologist within the Psycho-Dermatology Service at the Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust.

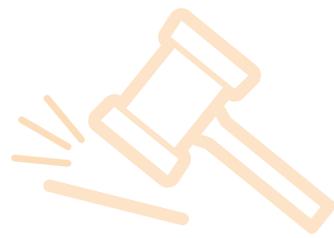
About this booklet

***"I feel like a failure"* is something we hear people say but few truly believe. How you feel is determined by what you think about yourself and others. Feeling low or not good about yourself may suggest you have some unhelpful thoughts about how successful you are in relation to others.**

Common areas for comparison are skin, career, financial status and education, but there are many more! People may describe themselves as unintelligent, unskilled, uneducated and untalented even when they are actually very successful.

Some people feel bad about themselves because of their psoriasis and worry about being judged by others. They do not put themselves forward for opportunities and then miss out. This can lead to people with psoriasis not achieving their full potential.

10
10



Unhelpful behaviours

People who feel a failure often believe that they will be judged negatively, attract disapproval or perform poorly when faced with an event or assessment. This leads to feelings of anxiety, embarrassment and even depression surrounding, for example, social occasions and work tasks such as presentations and meeting clients.

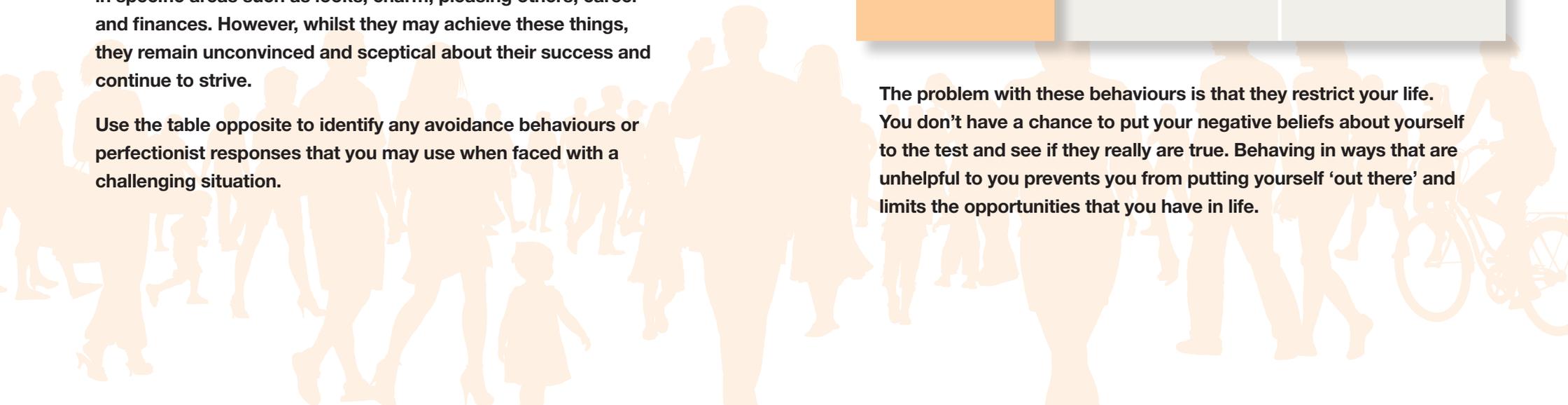
A common response to this is avoidance. This may take the form of procrastination, where individuals delay, or completely avoid, potentially challenging situations. Avoidance can lead to behaviours such as not accepting promotions, not going on dates and not promoting oneself.

Another approach, at the other end of the scale, is to over-compensate by working very hard in order to hide any sense of failure. With this approach people seek perfection and to excel in specific areas such as looks, charm, pleasing others, career and finances. However, whilst they may achieve these things, they remain unconvinced and sceptical about their success and continue to strive.

Use the table opposite to identify any avoidance behaviours or perfectionist responses that you may use when faced with a challenging situation.

	How	
Things I tend to put off/avoid		
Things I tend to try to be perfect about		

The problem with these behaviours is that they restrict your life. You don't have a chance to put your negative beliefs about yourself to the test and see if they really are true. Behaving in ways that are unhelpful to you prevents you from putting yourself 'out there' and limits the opportunities that you have in life.



Confront biased, negative self-beliefs



We all tend to have a dominant way of thinking and some people have a tendency to think negatively. You may not even be aware of how you think, but paying attention to it will help you to acknowledge it, and change if necessary.

Confronting the way you think is important, i.e. challenging the ways in which you think. Typically your thought processes can be consumed by predicting the worst or jumping to negative conclusions about yourself or about how a situation will pan out. For example, “I can’t do it”, “I will fail”, “Others will criticise me”, “I won’t do a good job”, “X is better at this...”. Does this sound familiar?



Take a moment to think about this issue. Ask yourself if being harsh and critical of yourself is typical of you. Write down the type of negative self-evaluations you may make:

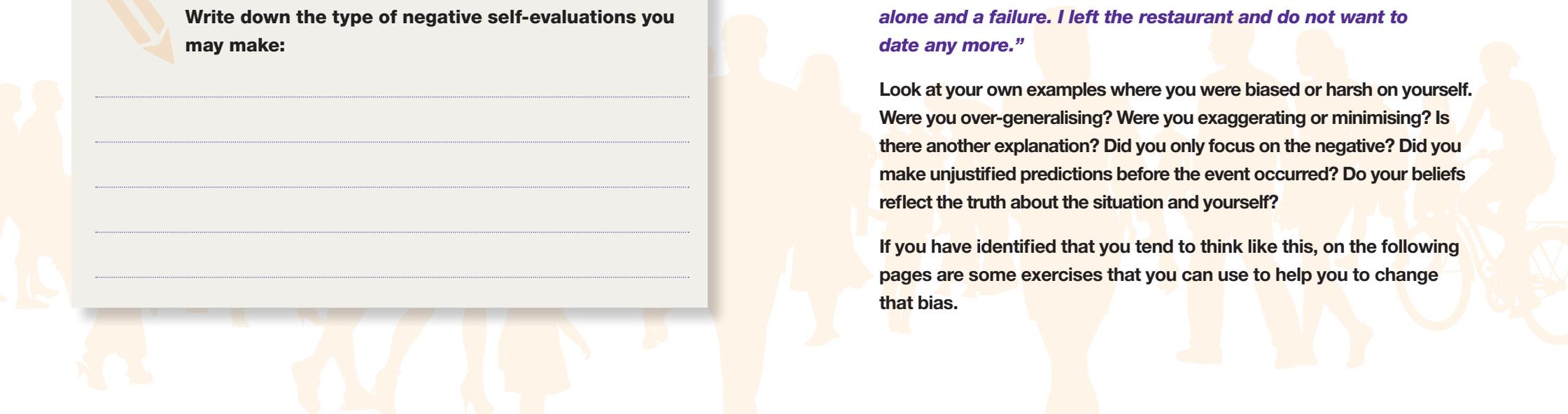


Think about how talking to yourself in this way affects you. Does it prevent you from doing certain things? Does it make you feel a certain way? Are you being unfair to yourself in any way? Use the space below to help you to jot down your answers to these questions:

“A time I felt a failure was when I was going on a date and the person did not show up. I believed I was horrible, ugly, not interesting and could never be loved and that this was why they did not show up. The outcome was I felt depressed, embarrassed, alone and a failure. I left the restaurant and do not want to date any more.”

Look at your own examples where you were biased or harsh on yourself. Were you over-generalising? Were you exaggerating or minimising? Is there another explanation? Did you only focus on the negative? Did you make unjustified predictions before the event occurred? Do your beliefs reflect the truth about the situation and yourself?

If you have identified that you tend to think like this, on the following pages are some exercises that you can use to help you to change that bias.



Express!

I feel I 

To stop your thoughts of being a failure and to start feeling good about yourself, it may be helpful to write a letter to the part of you that thinks you are a failure. Within the letter express how this thought makes you feel and how the feeling and belief that you will fail has led to suffering and missed opportunities. Express any anger you may have towards it.

This exercise can be very therapeutic, as well as giving you the **confidence** and **conviction** to **fight** against it.

Value yourself

To start feeling good about yourself, it is essential to stop making comparisons with others, to be grateful for what you have and to embrace your strengths and accomplishments. Research shows that focusing on what you are grateful for will help you to feel happier. Remember, psoriasis is just one very small part of who you are. Make a list of your positive qualities. What qualities, skills, talents or achievements do **you** have that you value or others value in you? Record them in a journal so that you can revisit them every day.

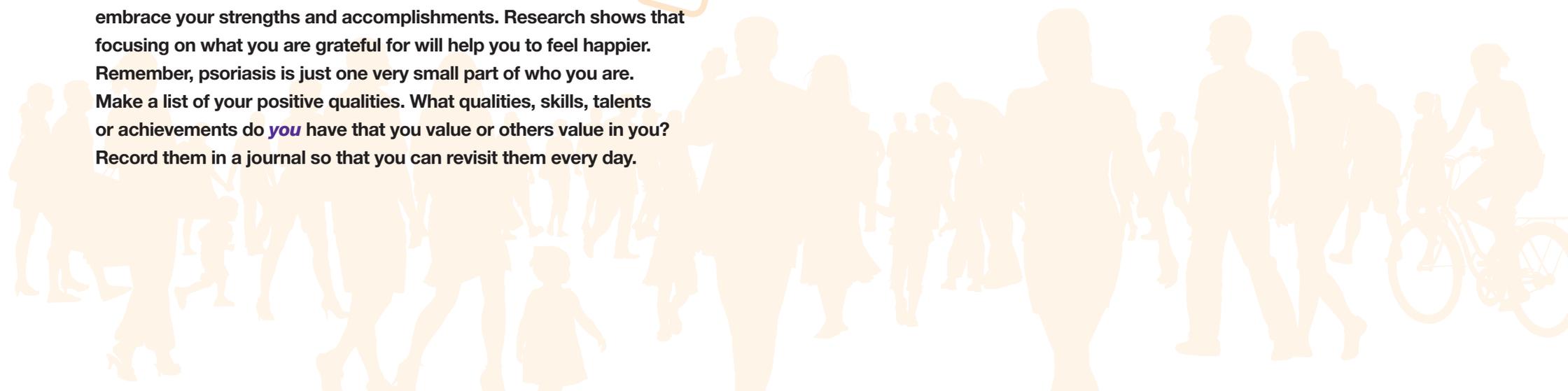
Taking action!

TO DO LIST


The key is to **stop putting off** and **start doing** things. Procrastination involves choosing not to complete something despite knowing that it is needed and that not doing it will have negative consequences.

If you **make excuses** for putting things off, it is important to practise **stopping this**. Practise with small things. Do something ahead of time and notice how good it feels. With time you will start to spot which things you tend to leave to the last minute. By practising **'doing now'** it will become easier for you. It's all about the practice!

Remember each time you overcome your procrastination **praise yourself** as you have achieved something huge!



About See Psoriasis: Look Deeper

See Psoriasis: Look Deeper is a collaboration made up of The Psoriasis Association; Mental Health Foundation; Dr Sandy McBride, Consultant Dermatologist, Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust; Dr Christine Bundy, Senior Lecturer in Behavioural Medicine, University of Manchester and Toby Hadoke, actor, writer, comedian and psoriasis patient.

The aim of the collaboration is to look beyond the physical aspects of psoriasis and recognise the bigger life impacts associated with the disease, including emotional wellbeing and quality of life. The collaboration's ongoing work continues to raise awareness of the full impact of psoriasis and provide helpful resources for both patients and healthcare professionals.

For more information, please visit www.seepsoriasislookdeeper.co.uk

For more information and help contact:

Your GP

The Psoriasis Association* **Telephone:** 08456 760076 or 01604 251620
Online: www.psoriasis-association.org.uk
For under 21s: www.psoteen.org.uk

Mental Health Foundation* www.mentalhealth.org.uk

*AbbVie does not own the content of these websites

The logo for AbbVie, featuring the word "abbvie" in a lowercase, blue, sans-serif font.

See Psoriasis: Look Deeper is organised and funded by AbbVie Ltd

Date of preparation: October 2014

Date of Review: July 2016 AXHUD131632a(1)