Challenge your...

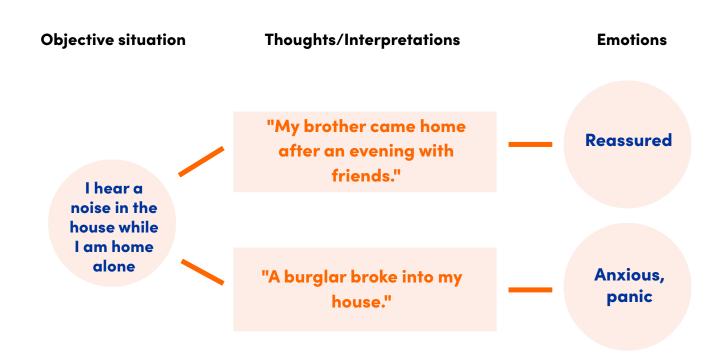
AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

Thinking is a wonderful ability. However, sometimes our thoughts can haunt us when they are negatively loaded and unhelpful. Such unpleasant thoughts can cause all kinds of stress signals (see infographic about <u>stress signals</u>).

How can we cope with these automatic thoughts?

First of all, it is important to know that all thoughts have a survival function. They want to protect us from potential threats. However, it is important to understand that there is a difference between an objective situation and the way we view this situation. An interpretation is not always an accurate representation of reality. In other words, thoughts can be distorted. Interpretations and automatic thoughts are sometimes so frequent that we start to convince ourselves that they are true. In that case, it becomes harder to embrace a different perspective.

Read the example below and reflect upon your way of reacting to certain situations.





"People do not get upset by the events, but by the way they look at those events. What confuses people are not facts, but dogmatic opinions about the facts."

- Epictetus



Exercise

How can we recognise distorted thoughts? And how can we formulate helping alternatives? This exercise only really has a helping effect when you engage in it **daily**! It is normal for these thoughts to **take a while** to diminish. Try to notice when your emotions **change** and **register** what is happening in that moment using the instructions below.

