

CBT Thinking Biases Worksheet

Cognitive distortions, or thinking biases, are common patterns our minds fall into—especially under stress. Learning to spot them is a key part of CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) and helps us challenge unhelpful thoughts before they spiral.

Common Thinking Biases

All-or-Nothing Thinking: Seeing things in black-and-white terms. Example: 'If I'm not perfect, I'm a failure.'

Catastrophising: Expecting the worst possible outcome. Example: 'If I make a mistake, I'll get fired.'

Mind Reading: Assuming you know what others are thinking. Example: 'She didn't say hi—she must be angry with me.'

Emotional Reasoning: Believing something is true because you feel it. Example: 'I feel worthless, so I must be.'

Overgeneralisation: Seeing a pattern based on a single event. Example: 'I failed once, so I'll always fail.'

Personalisation: Blaming yourself for things outside your control. Example: 'It's my fault they're upset.'

Labeling: Using harsh labels about yourself or others. Example: 'I'm a loser.'

Should Statements: Using 'should', 'must', or 'have to' to pressure yourself. Example: 'I should always be calm.'

Mental Filtering: Focusing only on the negatives and ignoring the positives.

Discounting the Positive: Rejecting positive experiences. Example: 'That compliment doesn't count—they were just being nice.'

Why Identifying Thinking Biases Matters

Our thoughts shape how we feel. If we consistently think in distorted ways, it can fuel anxiety, low mood, and conflict. Noticing these patterns helps us challenge and reframe our thoughts so we can respond to situations more calmly and realistically.

Reflection Prompts

- Which of these thinking patterns do you recognise in yourself?

- How does this thinking style impact your emotions or behaviour?

- Can you think of a recent moment when one of these biases showed up?

- What might be a more balanced or helpful alternative thought?

This worksheet is designed to help you begin noticing unhelpful thought patterns. For support learning to challenge and reframe these thoughts, consider working with a CBT-informed therapist.

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