

COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

Worksheets to help you explore
unhelpful thinking styles

AGES 10 +



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Unhelpful THINKING STYLES



Mental Filter

Focusing on your failures while avoiding to see your success, or focusing only on the negatives of a situation whilst filtering out the positives.



Labelling

Defining yourself and others based on a single event or behavior, such as reducing yourself or other people to a single, negative, characteristic or descriptor, like "crazy" or "stupid."



Overgeneralizing

The process of concluding that just because something happened to you once before, it will occur over and over again. It is negative thinking based on only 1 or 2 experiences. The words "always" or "never" appear frequently.



Personalization

Taking things personally and thinking that what other people do is a result of your own actions. You may blame yourself for things that were totally out of your control.

For example, you blame yourself for your child's bad grade at school.



Jumping to Conclusions

Assuming that you know what other people are thinking. Making negative predictions about the future or what others think about you.



Blaming

Placing the blame on other people instead of owning up to your mistakes or sharing the responsibility. Taking on the victim mentality.



Black and White

Seeing things as either good or bad, right or wrong or all or nothing. You fail to see the whole picture and by only seeing black or white you ignore the middle ground, possible the more reasonable ground.



Fallacy of Change

You expect that other people will change to suit you if you just pressure or manipulate them enough. This distortion is usually accompanied by a belief that your happiness and success rests on other people, leading you to believe that forcing those around you to change is the only way to get what you want.



Emotional Reasoning

Believing that just because you feel a certain way, then thinking that your thoughts must then be true. Thus, you base your view of situations, yourself, or others, on the way you are feeling.



Catastrophizing

Only seeing the worst possible outcome of an event or situation and then deciding that if this outcome does happen, the results will be a disaster. Worries become escalated and thoughts become exaggerated.



Should Statements

Believing that things should be a certain way. Using 'should', 'must' or 'ought' statements directed at yourself. For example, "I should have arrived to the meeting earlier" or, "I must lose weight to be more attractive."



Fallacy of Fairness

This cognitive distortion refers to measuring every behavior and situation on a scale of fairness. You believe that things should be fair, and if they aren't, then you believe it's not your fault.

AUTOMATIC THOUGHT RECORD



Date	Situation	Automatic thought	Emotions I felt	My response	New adaptive response	Intensity of my automatic thought



FACT OR OPINION?

FACT

A truth known by an experience or observation. Something that is known to be true. For example, the planet is round; it is spherical in shape.

OPINION

Someone's view or judgment of someone or something is only sometimes based on knowledge or fact.

HOW DOES FACT OR OPINION AFFECT OUR THINKING?

Even though we know the difference between facts and opinions, in times of emotional distress, such as when we feel anxious, the rational part of our brain gets 'taken' over by the emotional part of the brain. In these times, our brains can have difficulty differentiating the difference between facts and opinions.

With more practice, you can help yourself become more robust and better at identifying the difference between the two.

	FACT	OPINION
<i>No-body likes me</i>		
<i>I'm going to fail my presentation</i>		
<i>The doctor called me in because they have bad news</i>		
<i>My boyfriend is going to break up with me</i>		
<i>My friends are all talking behind my back</i>		
<i>I'm a total failure</i>		
<i>I'll never be able to get a job</i>		
<i>There are rumors going around about me</i>		
<i>My teacher is picking on me</i>		

DISQUALIFYING THE POSITIVES

HOW ACCURATE IS YOUR THOUGHT?



THE THOUGHT



WHAT IS MY WORRY OR THOUGHT?

THE DEFENCE



WHAT EVIDENCE DO I HAVE THAT MY
THOUGHT IS TRUE?
FACTS, NOT OPINIONS

THE PROSECUTION



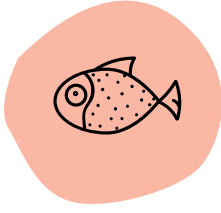
WHAT EVIDENCE DO I HAVE THAT MY
THOUGHT IS NOT TRUE?

THE JUDGE'S VERDICT

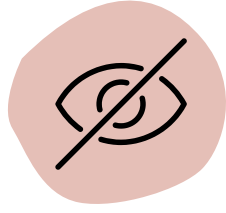


WHEN I EXAMINE ALL OF THE EVIDENCE, BASED ON THE
FACTS, CAN I DECIDE WHETHER MY THOUGHT IS LIKELY
TO COME TRUE OR UNLIKELY?

IDENTIFYING YOUR SYMPTOMS



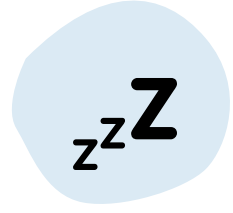
Memory issues



Avoidance



Headaches



Insomnia



Needing reassurance



Procrastination



Rapid heartbeat



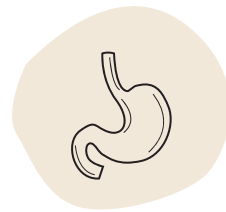
Lack of patience



Overthinking



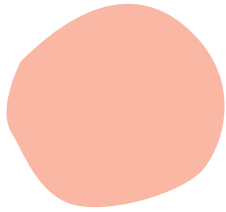
Sweating

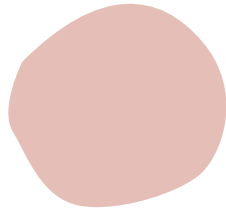


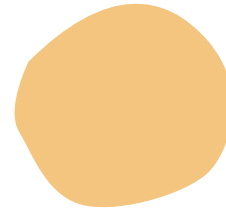
Stomach issues

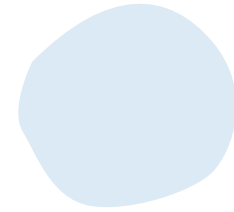


Constant worrying









Challenging negative **THOUGHTS**



**WILL THIS THOUGHT MATTER IN A
DAY OR IN A WEEKS TIME?**

AM I MAKING ASSUMPTIONS?

**IS THERE ANOTHER WAY
TO LOOK AT IT?**

**WHAT ARE OTHER
POSSIBLE OUTCOMES?**

**IS THERE EVIDENCE FOR
THIS WORRY?**

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD I
GIVE TO A FRIEND?**

**IS THIS WORRY IN OR
OUT OF MY CONTROL?**

WHAT IF?.....

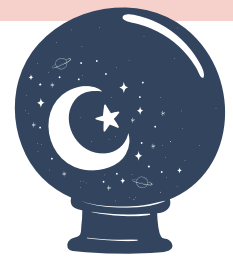


Often when we have an anxious thought, we attach it with "what if?" for example, "what if I fail my test" "what if the doctor has bad news," "what if I'm late." When doing this, we predict a terrible situation and fail to see any other possible outcomes. If you find yourself saying "What if," catch your thought and think of a positive "what if" situation instead.

NEGATIVE WHAT IF?.....

POSITIVE WHAT IF?.....

PREDICTING THE FUTURE



DIRECTIONS: THINK OF A SITUATION WHERE YOU PREDICTED THE FUTURE AND ASSUMED THE WORST.

WHAT WAS THE SITUATION AND HOW DID YOU FEEL?

WAS THE OUTCOME AS BAD AS YOU PREDICTED? EXPLAIN WHAT THE OUTCOME WAS.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WHEN YOU PREDICT THE FUTURE AND JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS?

CAN ANYBODY REALLY PREDICT THE FUTURE?

WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF PREDICTING THE FUTURE AGAIN, WHAT CAN YOU SAY TO YOURSELF?

IF YOU HAD A FRIEND 'PREDICTING THE FUTURE', WHAT ADVICE COULD YOU GIVE THEM?

DECATASTROPHIZING



What am I worried about?

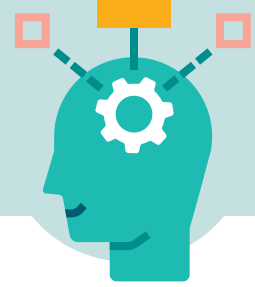
When I think about all the evidence and my past experiences, how likely is it that this worry will actually come true?

If my worry does come true, what is the worst possible outcome?

If my worry does come true, what is likely to happen? How will it affect me?

Will this worry matter tomorrow, next week, in a month or even in a years time?

LABELLING



Defining yourself and others based on a single event or behavior, such as reducing yourself or others to a single negative characteristic or descriptor, like "crazy" or "stupid."

We are putting labels on ourselves and others.

For example:

- "I'm unlovable."

- "They are an idiot."

List 3 things that can challenge your labelling thought.

Do you have any triggers that make you 'label' thoughts?

What are the consequences of 'labelling' thoughts?

BLAMING



Placing the blame on others instead of owning up to your mistakes or sharing the responsibility. Taking on the victim mentality.

You are assigning guilt or responsibility for how you feel to someone else.

For example, "He makes me feel bad about myself," or "She makes me feel inadequate."

Do you often blame others for your mistakes?

Describe a time when you 'blamed' others or a situation for your own mistake.

What are the consequences of 'blaming'?

SHOULD



Believing that things should be a certain way. Use 'should,' 'must,' or 'ought' statements directed at yourself.

For example, "I should have arrived at the meeting earlier," or "I must lose weight to be attractive."

This thinking results in feelings of guilt, shame, and self-loathing.

Describe the times when you used 'Should' statements. Can you notice any triggers?

What can help challenge 'should' statements?

What are the consequences of using 'should' statements?

PERSONALIZATION



You are taking things personally and thinking that what others do results from your actions. As a result, you may blame yourself for things that were totally out of your control.

For example, you blame yourself for your child's bad grade at school.

What thoughts do you have that fall into this cognitive distortion?

What can help challenge 'personalization' statements?

What are the consequences of 'personalization'?

EMOTIONAL REASONING



Believing that just because you feel a certain way, then justifying that your thoughts must then be confirmed. Thus, you base your view of situations, yourself or others, on how you feel.

For example, "I feel ugly today, so I am not good-looking."

or

"My partner must be cheating on me because I feel jealous."

**Describe a situation in which you used emotional reasoning?
Do you have any triggers that lead to this unhelpful thinking style?**

How do you think your physical symptoms impact the way you think?

What are the consequences of emotional reasoning?

BLACK AND WHITE THINKING



Seeing things as either good or bad, right or wrong, or all or nothing. You fail to see the whole picture, and by only seeing things as black or white, you ignore the middle ground and possibly the more reasonable basis.

Extremes of thinking blind you from seeing reality and can cause you significant distress.

For example, your co-worker was a saint until she accidentally ate your lunch. Now, you cannot stand her.

Describe a situation in which you used black and white thinking?

What coping skills can you implement to help combat black and white thinking?

What are the consequences of black and white thinking?

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS



Assuming that you know what other people are thinking.

Making pessimistic predictions about what others think about you.

For example, a friend doesn't return a phone call, and you assume they no longer like you.

Describe a situation in which you jumped to a conclusion?

Did you know all of the facts or information before you came to your conclusion?

What are the consequences of jumping to conclusions?

What can you do to ensure you don't jump to conclusions next time?