**Cognitive Distortions and Restructuring Worksheet**

**What Are Cognitive Distortions?**

Cognitive distortions are biased, irrational ways of thinking that can contribute to negative emotions and behaviors. Recognizing and restructuring these distortions is a key part of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and can improve mental well-being.

**Common Cognitive Distortions and Restructuring**

| **Cognitive Distortion** | **Definition** | **Example** | **Restructuring** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **All-or-Nothing Thinking** | Seeing things as all good or all bad, with no middle ground. | “If I don’t get this job, I’m a failure.” | Recognize the gray areas: “What are the other possibilities?” |
| **Overgeneralization** | Making broad conclusions from one event. | “I didn’t pass the exam. I’ll never succeed.” | Look for evidence to the contrary: “What past successes can I reflect on?” |
| **Mental Filtering** | Focusing only on the negative aspects, ignoring the positive. | “I made a mistake in the presentation.” | Identify positives: “What went well, even if I made a mistake?” |
| **Disqualifying the Positive** | Discounting positive experiences or accomplishments. | “I only got the promotion because no one else wanted it.” | Acknowledge your role: “What skills helped me earn this?” |
| **Jumping to Conclusions** | Assuming you know what others are thinking or that things will turn out badly. | “She’s probably mad at me.” | Challenge assumptions: “What evidence do I have?” |
| **Catastrophizing** | Expecting the worst possible outcome. | “If I mess up this meeting, my career is over.” | Reality-check: “What’s the actual risk? What’s a more balanced perspective?” |
| **Minimization** | Downplaying your positive qualities or achievements. | “It was just luck that I did well on the project.” | Acknowledge your strengths: “What was my role in making this success happen?” |
| **Emotional Reasoning** | Believing that emotions reflect objective reality. | “I feel anxious, so something bad will happen.” | Separate feelings from facts: “What evidence supports or contradicts my feelings?” |
| **Should Statements** | Using rigid "should" or "must" statements that create unrealistic expectations. | “I should always be perfect at my job.” | Reframe: “What is a more realistic expectation?” |
| **Labeling** | Attaching negative labels to yourself or others based on one event. | “I failed the test; I’m a loser.” | Challenge the label: “Is this label accurate? What’s a more balanced way to describe myself?” |
| **Personalization** | Blaming yourself for things beyond your control. | “It’s my fault the team didn’t succeed.” | Consider external factors: “What else contributed to the outcome?” |
| **Blaming** | Placing responsibility for negative events solely on others. | “My partner stressed me out.” | Take shared responsibility: “What part of the situation can I control?” |

**Steps to Restructure Cognitive Distortions:**

1. **Identify the Distortion**:
Recognize which distortion is present in your negative thought.
Example: “I feel anxious; I must be catastrophizing.”
2. **Examine the Evidence**:
What evidence supports or challenges the thought?
Example: “What past experiences show that I can manage anxiety?”
3. **Consider Alternative Perspectives**:
What might another person or perspective say?
Example: “What are other possible outcomes?”
4. **Ask Yourself: What’s the Worst that Could Happen?**
What is the likelihood? Can you handle it?
Example: “What would happen if I fail? How would I cope?”
5. **Restructure with a Balanced Thought**:
Reframe the thought into a more realistic statement.
Example: “I didn’t get the job this time, but I’ve succeeded before and will try again.”