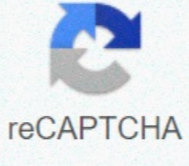




I'm not robot



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thought that can result in disappointment, frustration, anger, and even depression when the awaited reward does not materialize. Cognitive distortions are biased perspectives we take on ourselves and the world around us. They are irrational thoughts and beliefs that we unknowingly reinforce over time.

R.G. Mesner et al. / Journal of Fluency Disorders 34 (2009) 187–200

Cognitive restructuring: learning to attack unhelpful thoughts

Cognitive Restructuring: Learning to attack unhelpful thoughts
Unhelpful Thought

1. What evidence do you have for the thought?

2. What evidence do you have against the thought?

3. What would you tell a friend (to help them) if they had the thought?

4. Think of your calmest, most rational and supportive friend or family member. How would he/she react to the causal thought? What would he/she say?

5. Are you worrying about an outcome that you can't control? Is there any point to this type of worry?

6. What does the thought do for you? How does it make you feel? Is it helpful in any way, or is it just distressing?

7. What good things would you gain if you gave up the thought? How would your life be different if you didn't believe the thought?

8. If the causal thought was true, what is the worst outcome? Is it as bad as you think?

These distortions in our thinking are often subtle, and it is challenging to recognize them when they are a regular feature of our day-to-day thoughts. Importantly also, these distortions have been shown to relate positively to symptoms of depression, meaning that where cognitive distortions abound, symptoms of depression are likely to occur (Burns et al., 1987). But, all is not lost. Identifying and being mindful of when we engage in these distorted thoughts can be really helpful. Ways to tackle this may be by keeping a thought log, checking whether these thoughts are facts or just the opinions of ourselves or others or, even putting our thoughts on trial and actively trying to challenge them. Attempting to recognize and challenge our cognitive distortions can be difficult, but know that we aren't alone in this experience. Shedding a gentle awareness onto our thoughts can be a great first step. Changing Your Thinking: Examples of Techniques to Combat Cognitive Distortions These distortions, while common and potentially extremely damaging, are not something we must simply resign ourselves to living with. Beck, Burns, and other researchers in this area have developed numerous ways to identify, challenge, minimize, or erase these distortions from our thinking. Some of the most effective and evidence-based techniques and resources are listed below. Cognitive Distortions Handout Since you must first identify the distortions you struggle with before you can effectively challenge them, this resource is a must-have. The Cognitive Distortions handout lists and describes several types of cognitive distortions to help you figure out which ones you might be dealing with. The distortions listed include: All-or-Nothing Thinking; Overgeneralizing; Discounting the Positive; Jumping to Conclusions; Mind Reading; Fortune Telling; Magnification (Catastrophizing) and Minimizing; Emotional Reasoning; Should Statements; Labeling and Mislabeled; Personalization. The descriptions are accompanied by helpful descriptions and a couple of examples. This information can be found in the Increasing Awareness of Cognitive Distortions exercise in the Positive Psychology Toolkit©. Automatic Thought Record This worksheet is an excellent tool for identifying and understanding your cognitive distortions. Our automatic, negative thoughts are often related to a distortion that we may or may not realize we have. Completing this exercise can help you to figure out where you are making inaccurate assumptions or jumping to false conclusions. The worksheet is split into six columns: Date/Time Situation Automatic Thoughts (ATs) Emotion/s Your Response A More Adaptive Response First, you note the date and time of the thought. In the second column, you will write down the situation. Ask yourself: What led to this event? What caused the unpleasant feelings I am experiencing? The third component of the worksheet directs you to write down the negative automatic thought, including any images or feelings that accompanied the thought. You will consider the thoughts and images that went through your mind, write them down, and determine how much you believed these thoughts. After you have identified the thought, the worksheet instructs you to note the emotions that ran through your mind along with the thoughts and images identified. Ask yourself what emotions you felt at the time and how intense the emotions were on a scale from 1 (barely felt it) to 10 (completely overwhelming). Next, you have an opportunity to come up with an adaptive response to those thoughts. [new_k53_learners_book.pdf](#)



This is where the real work happens, where you identify the distortions that are cropping up and challenge them. Ask yourself these questions: Which cognitive distortions were you employing? What is the evidence that the automatic thought(s) is true, and what evidence is there that it is not true? [heroes of olympus book 4 pdf weebly](#) You've thought about the worst that can happen, but what's the best that could happen? What's the most realistic scenario? How likely are the best-case and most realistic scenarios? Finally, you will consider the outcome of this event. Think about how much you believe the automatic thought now that you've come up with an adaptive response, and rate your belief. Determine what emotion(s) you are feeling now and at what intensity you are experiencing them. You can access the Automatic Thought Record Worksheet [here](#). [ethiopian grade 11 history student textbook.pdf](#) Enhance wellbeing with these free, science-based exercises that draw on the latest insights from positive psychology. Decatastrophizing This is a particularly good tool for talking yourself out of catastrophizing a situation. [fenotelefeletuparogefar.pdf](#) The worksheet begins with a description of cognitive distortions in general and catastrophizing in particular; catastrophizing is when you distort the importance or meaning of a problem to be much worse than it is, or you assume that the worst possible scenario is going to come to pass. It's a reinforcing distortion, as you get more and more anxious the more you think about it, but there are ways to combat it. First, write down your worry. Identify the issue you are catastrophizing by answering the question, "What are you worried about?" Once you have articulated the issue that is worrying you, you can move on to thinking about how this issue will turn out. Think about how terrible it would be if the catastrophe actually came to pass. What is the worst-case scenario? Consider whether a similar event has occurred in your past and, if so, how often it occurred. With the frequency of this catastrophe in mind, make an educated guess of how likely the worst-case scenario is to happen. After this, think about what is most likely to happen-not the best possible outcome, not the worst possible outcome, but the most likely. Consider this scenario in detail and write it down. Note how likely you think this scenario is to happen as well. Next, think about your chances of surviving in one piece. How likely is it that you'll be okay one week from now if your fear comes true? How likely is it that you'll be okay in one month? How about one year? For all three, write down "Yes" if you think you'd be okay and "No" if you don't think you'd be okay. Finally, come back to the present and think about how you feel right now. Are you still just as worried, or did the exercise help you think a little more realistically? Write down how you're feeling about it. This worksheet can be an excellent resource for anyone who is worrying excessively about a potentially negative event. You can download the Decatastrophizing Worksheet [here](#). Cataloging Your Inner Rules Cognitive distortions include assumptions and rules that we hold dearly or have decided we must live by. Sometimes these rules or assumptions help us to stick to our values or our moral code, but often they can limit and frustrate us. This exercise can help you to think more critically about an assumption or rule that may be harmful. First, think about a recent scenario where you felt bad about your thoughts or behavior afterward. Write down a description of the scenario and the infraction (what you did to break the rule). Next, based on your infraction, identify the rule or assumption that was broken. What are the parameters of the rule? How does it compel you to think or act? Once you have described the rule or assumption, think about where it came from. Consider when you acquired this rule, how you learned about it, and what was happening in your life that encouraged you to adopt it. What makes you think it's a good rule to have? Now that you have outlined a definition of the rule or assumption and its origins and impact on your life, you can move on to comparing its advantages and disadvantages. Every rule or assumption we follow will likely have both advantages and disadvantages. The presence of one advantage does not mean the rule or assumption is necessarily a good one, just as the presence of one disadvantage does not automatically make the rule or assumption a bad one. This is where you must think critically about how the rule or assumption helps and/or hurts you. Finally, you have an opportunity to think about everything you have listed and decide to either accept the rule as it is, throw it out entirely and create a new one, or modify it into a rule that would suit you better. This may be a small change or a big modification. If you decide to change the rule or assumption, the new version should maximize the advantages of the rule, minimize or limit the disadvantages, or both. Write down this new and improved rule and consider how you can put it into practice in your daily life. You can download the Cataloging Your Inner Rules Worksheet. Facts or Opinions? This is one of the first lessons that participants in cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) learn - that facts are not opinions. As obvious as this seems, it can be difficult to remember and adhere to this fact in your day to day life. This exercise can help you learn the difference between fact and opinion, and prepare you to distinguish between your own opinions and facts. The worksheet lists the following fifteen statements and asks the reader to decide whether they are fact or opinion: I am a failure. I'm uglier than him/her. I said "no" to a friend in need. A friend in need said "no" to me. I suck at everything. I yelled at my partner. I can't do anything right. He said some hurtful things to me. She didn't care about hurting me. This will be an absolute disaster. I'm a bad person. I said things I regret. True I'm shorter than him. True I am not loveable. I am not loveable. I'm selfish and uncaring. Everyone is a way better person than I am. Nobody could ever love me. I am overweight for my height. I ruined the evening. I failed my exam. Practicing making this distinction between fact and opinion can improve your ability to quickly differentiate between the two when they pop up in your own thoughts. Here is the Facts or Opinions Worksheet. In case you're wondering which is which, here is the key: I am a failure. False I'm uglier than him/her. False I said "no" to a friend in need. True A friend in need said "no" to me. True I suck at everything. False I yelled at my partner. True I can't do anything right. False He said some hurtful things to me. True She didn't care about hurting me. False This will be an absolute disaster. False I'm a bad person. False I said things I regret. True I'm shorter than him. True I am not loveable. False I'm selfish and uncaring. False Everyone is a way better person than I am. False Nobody could ever love me. False I am overweight for my height. True I ruined the evening. False I failed my exam. True Putting Thoughts on Trial This exercise uses CBT theory and techniques to help you examine your irrational thoughts. You will act as the defense attorney, prosecutor, and judge all at once, providing evidence for and against the irrational thought and evaluating the merit of the thought based on this evidence. The worksheet begins with an explanation of the exercise and a description of the roles you will be playing. The first box to be completed is "The Thought." This is where you write down the irrational thought that is being put on trial. Next, you fill out "The Defense" box with evidence that corroborates or supports the thought. Once you have listed all of the defense's evidence, do the same for "The Prosecution" box. Write down all of the evidence calling the thought into question or instilling doubt in its accuracy. When you have listed all of the evidence you can think of, both for and against the thought, evaluate the evidence and write down the results of your evaluation in "The Judge's Verdict" box. This worksheet is a fun and engaging way to think critically about your negative or irrational thoughts and make good decisions about which thoughts to modify and which to embrace. Click [here](#) to see this worksheet for yourself (TherapistAid). A Take-Home Message Hopefully, this piece has given you a good understanding of cognitive distortions. These sneaky, inaccurate patterns of thinking and believing are common, but their potential impact should not be underestimated. Even if you are not struggling with depression, anxiety, or another serious mental health issue, it doesn't hurt to evaluate your own thoughts every now and then. The sooner you catch a cognitive distortion and mount a defense against it, the less likely it is to make a negative impact on your life. What is your experience with cognitive distortions? Which ones do you struggle with? Do you think we missed any important ones? How have you tackled them, whether in CBT or on your own? Let us know in the comments below. We love hearing from you. We hope you enjoyed reading this article. For more information, don't forget to download our three Positive CBT Exercises for free. Beck, A. T. (1976). Cognitive therapies and emotional disorders. 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