

negative automatic thoughts

ALSO KNOWN AS COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

We all have automatic thoughts that occur in response to situations or events.

Sometimes, these thoughts can be harmful to our mental health.

Here are some examples:

MENTAL FILTER

FOCUSING ON ONLY ONE ASPECT OF A SITUATION (OFTEN NEGATIVE) WHILE OVERLOOKING OTHERS (POSITIVE).

PERSONALIZING

BLAMING YOURSELF UNNECESSARILY FOR EXTERNAL NEGATIVE EVENTS.

EMOTIONAL REASONING

INTERPRETING CURRENT EMOTIONS AS FACT.

ALL OR NOTHING

ABSOLUTE THINKING FOCUSING ON EXTREMES. THERE IS NO IN-BETWEEN.

GENERALIZATIONS

INTERPRETING A SINGLE, NEGATIVE EVENT AS THE NORM, OR ENDURING PATTERN.

LABELING

USING SWEEPING, NEGATIVE STATEMENTS TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF OR OTHERS.

SHOULD-HAVE AND MUST-HAVE STATEMENTS

PUTTING UNREASONABLE EXPECTATIONS ON ONESELF.

CATASTROPHISING

EXAGGERATING A SITUATION IN THE NEGATIVE.

MAGNIFICATION AND MINIMIZATION

MAGNIFYING THE POSITIVES IN OTHERS, WHILE MINIMIZING YOUR OWN.

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

MIND READING:
ASSUMING WE KNOW
SOMEONE ELSE'S
THOUGHTS OR MOTIVES.



PREDICTIVE THINKING:
OVERESTIMATING
NEGATIVE EMOTIONS OR
OUTCOMES.

The cognitive model of therapy (CBT) has been shown to be effective in decreasing anxiety, depression and improving mental health. One technique is to challenge these negative automatic thoughts, or cognitive distortions, with true and positive thoughts.

By crushing the distortions with truth, we relieve our suffering.

THOUGHT CHALLENGING GUIDE

SITUATION

Identify what happened

1

IDENTIFY THE THOUGHTS

Identify the thoughts you had when this situation happened. Be sure it's a thought and not a FEELING..

2

IDENTIFY DISTORTIONS

Is this thought one of the common cognitive distortions? If so, which one (or ones-- it can be several types)

3

CHALLENGE THE DISTORTION

Is it true? What's another possibility?
What would a trusted friend tell you about this?
Do you have any evidence for the thought?
Are you being too hard on yourself?
What would you tell a friend if this happened to them?

4

WHAT'S THE TRUTH?

Based on challenging the distortion, what can you say that is true and positive about the situation?

5

DO YOU BELIEVE IT?

If your thought challenge isn't believable, it won't work. Try another way to challenge the thought.

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THOUGHT CHALLENGING GUIDE

EXAMPLE

SITUATION

I lost my train of thought during a presentation and I am really embarrassed

1

IDENTIFY THE THOUGHTS

I'm such an idiot.
Everyone must think I'm stupid
I should have been more focused

2

IDENTIFY DISTORTIONS

Labeling
Mind reading
"Should's"

3

CHALLENGE THE DISTORTION

I'm not stupid; I know what I'm talking about. I just got distracted. I'm not perfect and that's OK. Everyone makes mistakes. I don't know what people actually thought. In fact, maybe they were pulling for me because they have had it happen to them.

4

WHAT'S THE TRUTH?

Truth is, I'm not stupid. I just lost my place for a minute. I recovered. And people usually understand this. The rest of the presentation went well.

5

DO YOU BELIEVE IT?

Absolutely 100%. I'm going to choose to give myself a break!

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THOUGHT CHALLENGING WORKSHEET



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