

Chapter 1 : 10 Proven Methods for Fixing Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are irrational thoughts that influence our emotions. Everyone experiences cognitive distortions to some degree, but in their more extreme form they can be maladaptive and harmful. Use this CBT worksheet to help educate clients and help them recognize irrational thought patterns.

A cognitive distortion takes place in our minds when we experience an upsetting event in our lives – a disagreement at work, an argument with a partner, a poor result in school – and we think about it in a way that reinforces negativity and feeling bad. This can lead to lower self-esteem and a self-fulfilling prophecy in future interactions. If you want to stop the irrational thinking, you can start by trying out the exercises below.

How to Fix Common Cognitive Distortions You can use any one or a combination of the methods described below to combat irrational, automatic thoughts and cognitive distortions. Try a few of them out and look for the one that seems to work best for you, because different people respond to different ways of fixing their irrational thoughts.

Identify the Cognitive Distortion The most important step of fixing any problem in your life is identifying exactly what the problem is and how extensive it is in your life. An auto mechanic starts with a diagnostic assessment of your car when it has a problem. In this same manner, you need to identify and track the cognitive distortions in your daily thinking first, before you start working to change them. This will allow you to examine them later for matches with a list of cognitive distortions. An examination of your cognitive distortions allows you to see which distortions that you prefer. Additionally, this process allows you to think about each problem or predicament in a more natural or realistic manner.

Examine the Evidence Much like a judge overseeing a trial, the next step is to remove yourself from the emotionality of the upsetting event or episode of irrational thinking in order to examine the evidence more objectively. A thorough examination of an experience allows you to identify the basis for your distorted thoughts. If you are overly self-critical, you should identify a number of experiences and situations where you had success. One effective method for examining the evidence is to look at individual thoughts connected to the event, and objectively decide whether those statements reflect an opinion or stone cold fact. Segregating facts from opinions can help you determine which are likely to be a component of a cognitive distortion the opinions and therefore need your focus and efforts to undo.

Fixing Cognitive Distortions Worksheet 3. We are frequently much harder on ourselves than the people we care about in our lives, whether it be a friend or family member. We would never think of speaking to a close friend in the way we speak to ourselves in our own mind. Instead of treating yourself with a different standard than what you hold everyone else to, why not use one single standard for everyone including yourself? Give yourself the same encouragement that you would a trusted friend. Can you answer such automatic, negative thoughts back with a rational response? You studied hard for it and did your best to memorize the material. I believe in you.

Thinking in Shades of Gray Learning to undo black-and-white or polarized thinking can be challenging, because our minds take cognitive shortcuts to simplify processing of stimuli in order to hurry our ability to make a decision or choose a response. Black-and-white thinking can sometimes serve a good purpose, but it often leads a person down a path of irrational belief too. Instead of thinking about a problem or predicament in an either-or polarity, thinking in shades of gray requires us to evaluate things on a scale of 0 through 100. When a plan or goal is not fully realized, think about and evaluate the experience as a partial success on this kind of scale. You just blew your diet by having that second bite of ice cream. On our scale of 0 through 100, it might be about 1 percent likelihood.

Experimental Method Can you test whether your irrational thoughts have any basis in fact outside of a trial? You sure can, by using the same kinds of methods that science uses in order to test a hypothesis. In another example, imagine a person who believes over time that she is no longer liked by her friends because they never connect with her on social media or call. Could that person test whether it was true that her friends no longer like her? What if she reached out to them and asked them out to lunch or for drinks one day?

Survey Method Similar to the experimental method, the survey method is focused on asking others in a similar situation about their experiences to determine how irrational our thoughts might be. Using this method, a person seeks the opinions of others regarding whether their thoughts and attitudes are realistic. And if they do fight, they should never go

to bed angry at one another. A few friends who appear to be in happy relationships might be a good start. That person would soon realize that all couples fight, and while it may be a good idea not to go to bed angry, plenty of people do and their relationship is just fine despite that. If you want to double-check on the rationality of your thought, check in with a few trusted friends to see what their opinions and experiences are. Shoulds make a person feel bad and guilt about themselves. Definitions For people who are more intellectual and like to argue about minutiae, this method of arguing with your cognitive distortions might come in handy. When a person starts delving into the definition of a label and asking questions about those definitions, the results can be surprising. Others at your workplace? What are their specific work experiences and backgrounds? The more questions you ask when challenging a definition or label, the more you may come to realize the uselessness of such labels especially when applied to ourselves. Re-attribution In personalization and blaming cognitive distortions, a person will point the finger to themselves for all of the negative things they experience, no matter what the actual cause. In re-attribution, a person identifies external factors and other individuals that contributed to the problem or event. From an objective perspective, you are not entirely to blame for the missed deadline. Cost-Benefit Analysis This method for answering an irrational belief relies on motivation rather than facts to help a person undo the cognitive distortion. In this technique, it is helpful to list the advantages and disadvantages of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. A cost-benefit analysis will help to figure out what a person is gaining from feeling bad, distorted thinking, and inappropriate behavior.

Chapter 2 : Cognitive Distortions Worksheets - Printable Worksheets

Cognitive distortions, or Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs) are important for patients to understand when they are learning to challenge their thoughts and Learn more about and download our Cognitive Distortions Worksheet.

This is when we focus on the negative, and filter out all positive aspects of a situation. For example, you get a good review at work with one critical comment, and the criticism becomes the focus, with the positive feedback fading or forgotten. Things are either all good or all bad, people are either perfect or failures, something new will either fix everything or be worthless. We come to a general conclusion based on a single incident or a single piece of evidence. If something bad happens only once, you expect it to happen over and over again. Without individuals saying so, we know what they are thinking and why they act the way they do. We believe we know what the future holds, as if we have psychic powers. We make negative predictions, feeling convinced these are unavoidable facts. Examples of fortune telling: This is a particularly extreme and painful form of fortune telling, where we project a situation into a disaster or the worst-case scenario. You might think catastrophizing helps you prepare and protect yourself, but it usually causes needless anxiety and worry. You see yourself as the cause of some negative event for which you are not primarily responsible, and you conclude that what happened was your fault or reflects your inadequacy. For example, if somebody seems upset, you immediately assume it was because of something you said or did. We compare ourselves to others, with ourselves coming out short. We might think that comparisons help motivate us, but they usually make us feel worse. We have ironclad rules about the behaviors of ourselves and other people. We take our emotions as evidence for the truth. We blame ourselves for every problem, or hold other people entirely responsible for a negative situation or feeling. Also, blaming can result in staying stuck in negative feelings, rather than moving towards action and solutions. We generate negative global judgments based on little evidence. Instead of accepting errors as inevitable, we attach an unhealthy label to ourselves or others. Human beings are complex and fallible, and in truth cannot be reduced to a label.

Chapter 3 : Cognitive Distortions Worksheet | PsychPoint

This worksheet is an excellent tool for identifying 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.

These inaccurate thoughts are usually used to reinforce negative thinking or emotions – telling ourselves things that sound rational and accurate, but really only serve to keep us feeling bad about ourselves. The person is only seeing things in absolutes – that if they fail at one thing, they must fail at all things. Cognitive distortions are at the core of what many cognitive-behavioral and other kinds of therapists try and help a person learn to change in psychotherapy. By refuting the negative thinking over and over again, it will slowly diminish overtime and be automatically replaced by more rational, balanced thinking. The Most Common Cognitive Distortions In , psychologist Aaron Beck first proposed the theory behind cognitive distortions and in the s, David Burns was responsible for popularizing it with common names and examples for the distortions. For instance, a person may pick out a single, unpleasant detail and dwell on it exclusively so that their vision of reality becomes darkened or distorted. When a cognitive filter is applied, the person sees only the negative and ignores anything positive. A person with black-and-white thinking sees things only in extremes. Overgeneralization In this cognitive distortion, a person comes to a general conclusion based on a single incident or a single piece of evidence. If something bad happens just once, they expect it to happen over and over again. A person may see a single, unpleasant event as part of a never-ending pattern of defeat. For instance, if a student gets a poor grade on one paper in one semester, they conclude they are a horrible student and should quit school. Jumping to Conclusions Without individuals saying so, a person who jumps to conclusions knows what another person is feeling and thinking – and exactly why they act the way they do. In particular, a person is able to determine how others are feeling toward the person, as though they could read their mind. Jumping to conclusions can also manifest itself as fortune-telling, where a person believes their entire future is pre-ordained whether it be in school, work, or romantic relationships. Another example involving fortune-telling is when a person may anticipate that things will turn out badly in their next relationship, and will feel convinced that their prediction is already an established fact, so why bother dating. Catastrophizing When a person engages in catastrophizing, they expect disaster to strike, no matter what. This is also referred to as magnifying, and can also come out in its opposite behavior, minimizing. In this distortion, a person hears about a problem and uses what if questions e. With practice, you can learn to answer each of these cognitive distortions. Personalization Personalization is a distortion where a person believes that everything others do or say is some kind of direct, personal reaction to them. They literally take virtually everything personally, even when something is not meant in that way. A person who experiences this kind of thinking will also compare themselves to others, trying to determine who is smarter, better looking, etc. A person engaging in personalization may also see themselves as the cause of some unhealthy external event that they were not responsible for. In the first, if we feel externally controlled, we see ourselves as helpless a victim of fate. Is it because of something I did? Blaming When a person engages in blaming, they hold other people responsible for their emotional pain. They may also take the opposite track and instead blame themselves for every problem – even those clearly outside their own control. People who break the rules make a person following these should statements angry. They also feel guilty when they violate their own rules. The emotional consequence is guilt. When a person directs should statements toward others, they often feel anger, frustration and resentment. If a person feels stupid and boring, then they must be stupid and boring. Emotions are extremely strong in people, and can overrule our rational thoughts and reasoning. Fallacy of Change In the fallacy of change, a person expects that other people will change to suit them if they just pressure or cajole them enough. A person needs to change people because their hopes for success and happiness seem to depend entirely on them. This distortion is often found in thinking around relationships. For example, a girlfriend who tries to get her boyfriend to improve his appearance and manners, in the belief that this boyfriend is perfect in every other way and will make them happy if they only changed these few minor

things. Global Labeling In global labeling also referred to as mislabeling , a person generalizes one or two qualities into a negative global judgment about themselves or another person. This is an extreme form of overgeneralizing. Instead of describing an error in context of a specific situation, a person will attach an unhealthy universal label to themselves or others. Always Being Right When a person engages in this distortion, they are continually putting other people on trial to prove that their own opinions and actions are the absolute correct ones. This is a riff on the fallacy of fairness, because in a fair world, the people who work the hardest will get the largest reward. So now that you know what cognitive distortions are, how do you go about undoing them? The good news is that you can correct your irrational thinking, and we can help you do that with our next article which includes worksheets you can print out to help you.

Chapter 4 : Cognitive Distortion Worksheets - Printable Worksheets

Cognitive distortions are irrational thoughts that can influence your emotions. Everyone experiences cognitive distortions to some degree, but in their more extreme forms they.

If something is less than perfect, you see it as a total failure. You believe this a terrible report card. You think of a single negative event as a never-ending pattern. You stumble on your way into work and believe you are a clumsy, stupid loser. You dwell on a single negative detail, and ignore moderate or positive things that may occur. You mispronounce one word in a speech, yet you receive many unsolicited praises from your colleagues for the same speech. You ignore the praise and view it as a total failure. You maintain a negative view in spite of contradictory evidence. Several colleagues ask you for tips on delivering good speeches, telling you they want to emulate your excellent public speaking ability. A party guest is looking elsewhere as you are talking to her. You assume she is bored and wants to get away from you, so you leave. Another friend later tells you that the party guest was hoping to exchange phone numbers with you, liked you very much and wonders why you left so abruptly. You anticipate that things will turn out badly, and feel convinced that your prediction is a fact. You turn down a party invitation, convinced that no one would be interested in talking to you anyway. You believe the worst-case scenario will happen. Someone turns you down for a date. You are convinced you will lead a life of loneliness. You assume that the way you feel reflects the way things are. You feel inadequate and fatigued, and assume that things are useless and require too much effort. You believe you must live up to certain perfectionist expectations. You may have perfectionist expectations of others. I must do this, or I am inadequate. They must do this, or they are inadequate. A woman behind you at a store knocks over a display, and you apologize for possibly contributing to the incident. Any belief you have that is not useful to you in a given situation. Maladaptive thoughts are excessive in nature and are not substantiated by external evidence. The belief that you need to inflate your achievements to be socially successful. Telling people you graduated from Harvard, when you did not. Believing that you are inadequate as you are.

Chapter 5 : Lynn Martin | Cognitive-Behavior Therapy | Client Handouts

Cognitive Distortions. Showing top 8 worksheets in the category - Cognitive Distortions. Some of the worksheets displayed are Cognitive distortions, Fixing cognitive distortions, Cognitive distortions handout, Challenging cognitive distortions, Adobe photoshop pdf, As included in nrepp, Identifying cognitive distortions, Cognitive restructuring work.

Chapter 6 : Cognitive Restructuring Archives - Psychology Tools

Download the "Challenging Cognitive Distortions" worksheet. As you can see, there are 4 columns to fill-out: Thoughts, Feelings, Cognitive Distortions, and Challenges. As you can see, there are 4 columns to fill-out: Thoughts, Feelings, Cognitive Distortions, and Challenges.

Chapter 7 : Therapy Worksheets: Cognitive Distortions Handouts

This worksheet is an ATR that breaks down how cognitive distortions impact our core beliefs and how we react to situations. The worksheet highlights the thoughts, emotions, and cognitive distortions of a given situation and how reconstructing how we approach the situation can affect the outcome.

Chapter 8 : Unhelpful Thinking Styles Worksheet PDF | Psychology Tools

Many of the most popular and effective Cognitive Behavioral Therapy techniques are applied to what psychologists call "cognitive distortions" (Grohol,). Cognitive distortions: inaccurate thoughts that reinforce negative thought patterns or emotions.

Chapter 9 : Cognitive Distortions (Worksheet) | Therapist Aid

The Most Common Cognitive Distortions. In 1960, psychologist Aaron Beck first proposed the theory behind cognitive distortions and in the 1980s, David Burns was responsible for popularizing it.