

Cognitive Distortions and CBT desired outcomes

Cognitive Distortion	Example	Desired outcome of CBT	Possible strategies client to learn
CATASTROPHISING	Turning molehills into mountains	Turning mountains back into molehills	Gaining perspective on thoughts, consider more rational explanations, gather evidence, and focus on coping methods and resources.
DICHOTOMOUS THINKING	All or nothing thinking	Finding somewhere in between	Be realistic...you may not be Mother Teresa but neither are you Hitler !! Develop “both and” reasoning skills
FORTUNE TELLING	Assuming you can predict what is going to happen	Stepping away from the crystal ball	Test out your predictions. Be prepared to take risks. What may have happened in the past may not necessarily happen in the future.
MIND READING	Assuming you can read other’s thoughts	Taking your guesses with a pinch of salt	Develop the skill of looking for more rational reasons for an event. Learn to realize that your assumptions may be wrong. Get more evidence.
EMOTIONAL REASONING	Assuming your thoughts and feelings are based on fact	Reminding yourself that feelings aren’t facts	Take note of your thoughts. Ask yourself how would someone else view this event ? Allow time for your feelings to subside, maybe you will feel differently then.
OVERGENERALISING	Drawing global conclusions. e.g. “this always happens”	Avoiding the part / whole error	Gain perspective. Are you sure this “always happens” or just sometimes. Suspend judgement. Be specific about your belief.
LABELLING	Describing someone who has done something bad as bad themselves	Giving up the rating game	Allow for variation. Most people have done bad things in their lives but may not be bad people.
MAKING DEMANDS Albert Ellis.. primary cognitive distortion	Musturbations. Rigid thoughts like; Must, ought, should, got to, have to	Flexible thinking	Replace words like “must”, “need”, “should” with “prefer”, “wish”, “ want”. Limit importance of approval seeking behavior, its good but not life threatening if you don’t get approval all the time. The world doesn’t play by your rules.
MENTAL FILTERING	Focusing on negatives which reinforce your thoughts and ignoring positives.	Keeping an open mind	Examine your filters closely. Gather evidence
DISQUALIFYING THE POSITIVE	Transforming positives into negatives to reinforce the thought distortion	Keeping the baby when throwing out the bathwater	Awareness of your response to positive feedback. Practice accepting positive feedback
LOW FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE	Assuming something difficult is intolerable	Learning that you can bear the unbearable	Pushing themselves to do things which are uncomfortable or unpleasant. Becoming aware of your ability to cope with dreaded situations
PERSONALISING	Ideas of reference; “it must be my fault”, “that happened because I didn’t do *****”	Learning that you are not the centre of the universe and responsible for everything that goes wrong	What else could have contributed to this event ? Awareness of why others respond negatively to you other than you.