

Kick Butt Therapy

RESTRUCTURING COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

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1. **OVERCOME ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING**: Instead of seeing things as black or white, look for the middle ground. Replace thoughts of always with *frequently, often* or *usually*. Instead of never, use *rarely, seldom* or *almost never*. Evaluate whether you have a “*but...*” or “*and...*” situation. BUT cancels out what came before it; AND includes and validates it. Avoid any terms that indicate absolutes are included in this category.
2. **MINIMIZE OVERGENERALIZING**: See a single negative event as a single event, not as the beginning of a downward spiral. Try to contain feedback to be regarding what is actually said and referred to. Hear the actual words. Ask for an explanation, especially if you have or receive an emotionally-charged reaction. Think containment.
3. **CHANGE YOUR MENTAL FILTER**: Instead of dwelling on a single negative detail, create a broader focus. See the forest and the trees. Step back and see the big picture. Again, think containment.
4. **RECLAIM THE POSITIVE**: Instead of diminishing or discounting your accomplishments or qualities, count them. Get off the pity pot by reminding yourself of the positive things in your life. Making a mental or physical list will restore balance quickly. Utilize an “attitude of gratitude.”
5. **LOOK AT THE EVIDENCE BEFORE JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS**: Instead of automatically making negative interpretations, get the facts. Is this source viable? Trustworthy? Of value to you?
 - a. **Avoid Mind Reading**: Instead of arbitrarily concluding that someone is reacting negatively to you, check it out by asking directly or, at the very least, getting a trusted person’s interpretation. Clearing the air with another person creates a bond and eliminates the guesswork and avoidance. Address the concern and stay connected.
 - b. **Don’t play Fortune Teller**: Instead of anticipating that things will turn out badly, keep an open mind to more realistic probabilities. Remind yourself of what actually has happened in the past and what may or may not happen. Now, ask what the odds are that your prediction will come true, and give it an arbitrary percentage. The realistic odds are often in your favor.
6. **DO AWAY WITH CATASTROPHIZING**: Instead of blowing things out of proportion or exaggerating goof-ups or imperfections, be realistic. Answer the questions: What is the worst that could happen if the worst that could happen really happens? What is the best that could happen if the worst that could happen really happens? When you answer these, you are likely to realize that you can handle it. This works for the “fortune teller” error as well. **DO AWAY WITH MINIMIZING**: Instead of inappropriately shrinking what is important, be honest and realistic. Don’t allow minimization to result in avoidance, ignoring or procrastinating. Get feedback from a reliable source until your gauge becomes more accurate.
7. **INSTEAD OF USING EMOTIONAL REASONING, BALANCE EMOTIONS WITH FACTS**: “I feel it, therefore it must be true” is inaccurate if the facts aren’t also factored in. Think realistically instead of assuming that your negative emotions reflect the way things really are. Balance your emotional reaction with what really is. Trust your gut and evaluate the entire situation. Remember: feelings are not facts. The flip side is relying on facts alone and being emotionally detached or unaware. Improve your Emotional Quotient (EQ), and find your healthy balance.
8. **AVOID “SHOULD” STATEMENTS**: Instead of using “should,” “must,” “ought,” and “have to,” replace them with “*could,*” “*might,*” “*can,*” “*want*” or “*will.*” You can minimize feelings of guilt, anger, frustration, and resentment with choices: “*Next time I might ...*” Consider offering suggestions instead of ‘shoud-ing’ on others or assuming to know what is best for them. Let go of the outcome and they can take what they want and leave the rest.
9. **STAY AWAY FROM LABELING and MISLABELING**: Instead of this extreme form of overgeneralization, state specifically what was said or done. Name-calling is inappropriate and unnecessary. Do you do it to others? Yourself? Both? Instead of using terms like loser, identify what was done and how it came about.
10. **AVOID PERSONALIZING**: Instead of blaming yourself for something you aren’t entirely responsible for, take a look at how much of a role you really played. Ask yourself: “What part is really about me?” Be accountable for your part and no more. This one may only apply to a specific area of your life, such as work or a particular relationship.

Change a thought... change a feeling and enjoy the empowerment.

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