

Cognitive Behavioral Distortions Worksheet

A lot of times, our emotions are the result of how we look at things, how we look back and perceive memories, and sometimes originate without thought but stem from experiences and the bodily memory we hold. We can't always control our feelings, but we can become aware of the distortions that form the basis of our emotional difficulties.

Below is a list of 10 very common cognitive distortions. Go through the list and note which distortions you have found yourself using.

1. Rationalization: In an attempt to protect ourselves from hurt feelings, we create excuses for events that don't go our way.

- a. Yes, I do this. _____ or No, I don't find myself doing this _____
- b. Give an example of the last time you remember doing this and how you felt.

2. Overgeneralization: You categorize different people, places, and entities based on your own biases. For example, if you have been treated poorly by men, all men are evil. This is the distortion where the isms (racism, sexism, etc.) are based.

- a. Yes, I do this. _____ or No, I don't find myself doing this _____
- b. Give an example of the last time you remember doing this and how you felt.

3. All-or-nothing thinking: This refers to a tendency to see things in black and white with little room for gray. You see yourself, others, and often the whole world in extremes of negative or positive. For example, if your performance falls short of perfect, you are a total failure.

- a. Yes, I do this. _____ or No, I don't find myself doing this _____
- b. Give an example of the last time you remember doing this and how you felt.

4. Discounting the positive: You reject positive experiences by insisting that they "don't count" for some reason or another. This allows you to maintain a negative belief about yourself and your experiences.

- a. Yes, I do this. _____ or No, I don't find myself doing this _____

- b. Give an example of the last time you remember doing this and how you felt.

- 5. Fortune telling: You anticipate that things will turn out badly and feel convinced that your prediction is already an established fact. Predicting negative outcomes leads to anxiety and negative emotions. Phrases like “what if” contribute to that process.

- a. Yes, I do this. _____ or No, I don’t find myself doing this _____
- b. Give an example of the last time you remember doing this and how you felt.

- 6. Mind reading: This involves predicting that you know what someone else is thinking or feeling when in reality you don’t unless they explicitly tell you. This commonly occurs in communication problems.

- a. Yes, I do this. _____ or No, I don’t find myself doing this _____
- b. Give an example of the last time you remember doing this and how you felt.

- 7. Should statements: You place false or unrealistic expectations on yourself or others, thereby setting yourself up to feel angry, guilty, or disappointed. For example, I should have finished that report last night instead of this morning. You are automatically making yourself feel worse for something that has already happened.

- a. Yes, I do this. _____ or No, I don’t find myself doing this _____
- b. Give an example of the last time you remember doing this and how you felt.

- 8. Emotional Reasoning: You assume that your negative feelings reflect the way things really are when in reality they don’t.

- a. Yes, I do this. _____ or No, I don’t find myself doing this _____
- b. Give an example of the last time you remember doing this and how you felt.

- 9. Magnification: you exaggerate the importance of things, blowing them way out of proportion. This can also be referred to as catastrophizing or awfulizing.

- a. Yes, I do this. _____ or No, I don't find myself doing this _____
- b. Give an example of the last time you remember doing this and how you felt.

10. Personalization: You see yourself as the cause of some external negative event for which, in fact, you were not primarily responsible. You make something about you that isn't about you.

- a. Yes, I do this. _____ or No, I don't find myself doing this _____
- b. Give an example of the last time you remember doing this and how you felt.

Please don't be discouraged if you fall into one or all of these examples. They are very common but they can shape how we see and perceive the world around us.

Becoming aware of what you do is a big first step. It is also okay to see help.

We are here for you at Guided Reflections!