

Be Kind to Yourself Worksheet

For challenging negative self-talk

Negative thoughts are often triggered by events that happen to us, cognitive distortions, or beliefs about ourselves we've adopted overtime based on our experiences.

Some trigger events could be: failing at something, making a mistake and feeling embarrassed about it, being taken advantage of or having a negative outcome.

"*Cognitive distortions*" are exaggerated or irrational thought patterns that cause us to perceive reality in an inaccurate and negatively biased way. It's often a habitual way of thinking that we don't notice, and it impacts how we see ourselves, others and our experiences of the world.

The most common ***cognitive distortions*** are:

1. **Catastrophizing:** when we imagine the worst-case scenario in any given situation and start feeding off the fear. For example, imagining we'll get fired because we came late to work one day a month ago and start worrying.
2. **All-or-nothing thinking:** you view everything as entirely good or entirely bad: If you don't do something perfectly, you've failed.
3. **Comparative thinking:** you compare yourself to others and feel inferior, even though the comparison may be unrealistic.
4. **Overgeneralization:** you see a single negative event as part of a pattern: For example, you always watch TV when you're sad.
5. **Mental filtering:** You see only the negative aspects of any experience and ignore the positives.
6. **Fortune telling:** You predict that things will turn out badly.
7. **Minimization and magnification:** You downplay your achievements, while exaggerating the significance of minor problems.
8. **"Should" statements:** You focus on how things should be, leading to severe self-criticism as well as feelings of resentment toward others. For example, you think thoughts like "I should have been in a higher level of my career" "I should have been in a serious relationship by now".
9. **Mind reading:** You think you know what people think about you or something you've done — and it's always bad.
10. **Personalization:** You blame yourself for negative events and ignore the responsibility of others.

11. **Assuming:** You assume that your negative feelings reflect reality: Feeling bad about your eating habits could mean "I'll get overweight and die from a heart attack"

Cognitive distortions hold us back from reaching our potential or taking action, when we believe them as fact, internalize the fear and give them life like a self-fulfilling prophecy.

To overcome or invalidate cognitive distortions, we must restructure our thinking and beliefs about them. Practicing this thought restructuring takes away their power and helps us regain the control and motivation to take action towards more productive outcomes. Find below the worksheet to help tackle negative self-talk.

The goal of this worksheet is to train your mind to reframe negative thoughts with positivity and self-compassion, thereby diminishing their power over you. Practice makes better and consistency is key.

Definitions:

"Automatic thought" is that little voice in your head telling you all the negative things that could happen, criticizes you and reminds you of all the mistakes you've ever made.

"Cognitive distortions" are exaggerated or irrational thought patterns that cause us to perceive reality in an inaccurate and negatively biased way. It's often a habitual way of thinking that we sometimes don't notice, and it impacts how we see ourselves, others and what's going on in our lives.

"Rational response" is you looking at the situation objectively and logically, from a place of positive compassion towards yourself, to reframe the automatic thought and restructure the cognitive distortion.

How to complete the worksheet

1. The worksheet is a page with three columns; Automatic thoughts, Cognitive Distortions and Rational Response.
2. Whenever you notice you're beating yourself up or feeling especially anxious, complete the worksheet.
3. Write down your "automatic thought(s)" aka negative self-talk in the first column.
4. Read the statement(s) you've written down and look for the cognitive distortions that match that statement and write it down in the second column. It could be more than one.
5. Think for a second and write your rational response in the third column.
6. Upon completion, review data with your therapist for further self-work.

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Automatic Thoughts	Cognitive Distortions	Rational/Compassionate Response
Example: “That social outing made me very anxious” “I struggled to talk with people” “This means I’m bad with people and I’ll never be in a relationship”	<i>Catastrophizing</i> <i>Fortune telling</i>	<i>My people skills could be better, but I’ve had lots of amazing conversations in the past and I can learn from this one. There is no evidence that this one mistake means I would never find someone who I can communicate easily with.</i>
