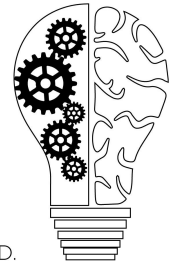


8 Day Cognitive Distortion Journal

COVID-19 Edition

Welcome to the 8 day journal to help you learn how to better identify and process cognitive distortions! Please print out this PDF and share it with others who you think might find it helpful.

Day 1: Read the cognitive distortions below. Highlight or circle the ones that you use most frequently.



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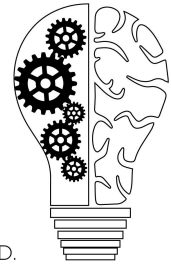
**PSYCHIATRY &
PSYCHOTHERAPY**

1. **All or nothing thinking:** things are black and white, completely without shades of gray. For example you may think, “the world is all chaos,” “I am completely worthless,” “I do nothing right,” or “our country can do nothing right”. “I am always alone.” Or “Everyone hates me.” “I never win.” Always? Never? Everyone? It happens absolutely all the time, without exceptions? In the moment, it can feel like that, but those statements are actually rarely true. Speaking truth to yourself in this case might look like: I am sometimes alone, several people are upset at me, I win sometimes, even if I didn’t this time.
2. **Overgeneralization:** generalizations from one bad experience are made without context, experience or evidence. “I read a story of someone who died of Covid-19, therefore I will die of Covid-19.” “A saw a hospital that ran out of resources, therefore our hospital will run out of resources.”
3. **Mental Filter:** focusing on the negative rather than the whole picture. After receiving multiple positive statements and one negative statement, all you focus on is the negative statement.
4. **Disqualifying the positive:** When you do something good like get a compliment or award, you instantly find ways to make less of it! For example, if someone says, “You are looking good today,” but instantly you assume that person is giving you a false compliment.
5. **Jumping to conclusions** (without evidence): reaching conclusions (usually negative) with little evidence.
 - a. **Mind reading:** assuming you know what the person is thinking about you. Connection occurs from accurately knowing another, and with mindreading you blind yourself without evidence.
 - b. **Fortune telling:** predicting negative things in the future. “I will definitely get Covid-19. The world is heading into chaos,” “things are never going to get better,” or “there is no hope for the future”.
6. **Magnification or Minimization:** you make some weakness of yours much larger than it is or a strength much less than it really is. For example you see your friends as beautiful whereas you see your own beauty as very average.
 - a. Magnification of self and minimization of others (narcissism)
7. **Emotional Reasoning:** believe that your feelings reflect reality. For example, “I fear, therefore we must be in great danger.”
8. **Shoulding:** a thing that you believe you should or should not do, often created to try to

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maintain an image of yourself which is more in line with social pressures. For example, “I should be perfect,” “I should never cry,” “I should always win,” “I should be able to do this on the first try.”

9. **Personalization:** blaming oneself for a bad event without looking at external factors that contributed to the bad event. Attributing personal responsibility to things that you have no control over, or when you do not see all the things that caused something. For example, a friend is upset so you think it is something you caused or are responsible for.
10. **Error Messages:** thoughts that are like obsessive compulsive disorder due to having thoughts that are repetitive, intrusive and not meaningful.



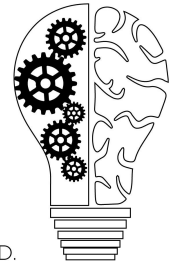
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Journal any thoughts that came up for you while doing this:

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Day 2:

Re-read the cognitive distortions from day one. For the ones that you identified as being the most frequently used cognitive distortions, pick the top 3 and write them below. Then write out some common situations and emotions that they occur with.

1. Cognitive Distortion 1:

Common Situations:

Common Emotions:

2. Cognitive Distortion 2:

Common Situations:

Common Emotions:

3. Cognitive Distortion 3:

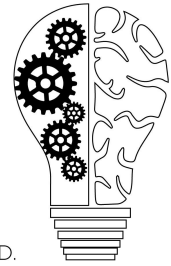
Common Situations:

Common Emotions:

What are some things you have identified as trends or patterns from doing this exercise?

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Day 3:

Re-read the list of cognitive distortions and think about the last 24 hours and the most distressing situation you had.

Describe the details of the situation:

What emotions came up for you (anger, sadness, envy, disgust, shock, fear, shame...)

What thoughts came up for you that were distressing in the midst of the situation (like I always mess up, I am always a failure, I can't do it right ever, ect.)?

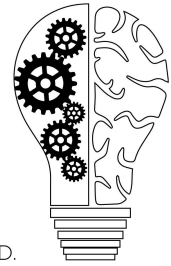
Which three cognitive distortions applied to this situation the most, and how did it specifically apply? (Re-read the cognitive distortions and see which one applies the most to it.)

- Cognitive Distortion 1:
- Cognitive Distortion 2:
- Cognitive Distortion 3:

Were you able to work through and have less distress about the situation after thinking about how the cognitive distortions applied to them?

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Day 4:

Re-read the list of cognitive distortions and think about the last 24 hours and the most distressing situation you had.

Describe the details of the situation:

What emotions came up for you (anger, sadness, envy, disgust, shock, fear, shame...)

Rate the intensity of each of the emotions (1%-100%, where 100% is the most intense it could possibly be).

What thoughts came up for you that were distressing in the midst of the situation?

Which 3 cognitive distortions applied to this situation the most and how did it specifically apply? (Re-read the cognitive distortions and see which one applies the most to it.)

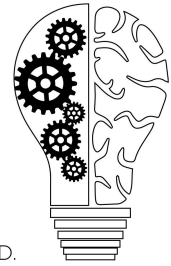
- Cognitive Distortion 1:
- Cognitive Distortion 2:
- Cognitive Distortion 3:

Looking back at the statements, can you now rewrite them more accurately? For example, “our country can do nothing right,” could be seen as having cognitive distortions of: black and white thinking, overgeneralization, and minimizing the positive. The more accurate statement might therefore be, “Our country messes up some things”

Try to re-write one statement here:

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Day 5:

Re-read the list of cognitive distortions and think about the last 24 hours and the most distressing situation you had.

Describe the details of the situation:

What emotions came up for you (anger, sadness, envy, disgust, shock, fear, shame...)

Rate the intensity of each of the emotions (1%-100%, where 100% is the most intense it could possibly be).

What thoughts came up for you that were distressing in the midst of the situation?

Which 3 cognitive distortions applied to this situation the most and how did it specifically apply? (Re-read the cognitive distortions and see which one applies the most to it).

- Cognitive Distortion 1:
- Cognitive Distortion 2:
- Cognitive Distortion 3:

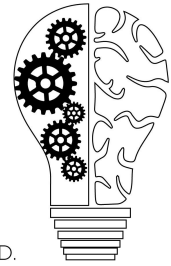
Looking back at the statements, can you now rewrite them more accurately? For example, "I am always messing up," could be seen as having cognitive distortions of: black and white thinking, overgeneralization, and minimizing the positive. The more accurate statement might therefore be, "I messed up once, but mostly do it right."

Try to re-write one statement here:

Now how would you rate the intensity of the emotions? Have they decreased?

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Day 6:

Re-read the list of cognitive distortions and think about the last 24 hours and the most distressing situation you had.

Describe the details of the situation:

What emotions came up for you (anger, sadness, envy, disgust, shock, fear, shame...)

Rate the intensity of each of the emotions (1%-100%, where 100% is the most intense it could possibly be).

What thoughts came up for you that were distressing in the midst of the situation?

1.

2.

Which 3 cognitive distortions applied to this situation the most and how did it specifically apply? (Re-read the cognitive distortions and see which one applies the most to it.)

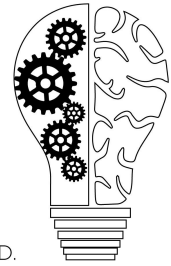
- Cognitive Distortion 1:
- Cognitive Distortion 2:
- Cognitive Distortion 3:

Looking back at the statements, can you now rewrite them more accurately?
Try to re-write two of the thoughts here:

What is one thing you can be grateful for today?

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Day 7: Sometimes cognitive distortions keep us from being grateful.

Re-read the list of cognitive distortions and think about the last couple days and think about one thing that you could have been grateful for but were not for some reason.

Describe the details of the situation:

What emotions came up for you (anger, sadness, envy, disgust, shock, fear, shame...)

Rate the intensity of each of the emotions (1%-100%, where 100% is the most intense it could possibly be).

What thoughts came up for you that were distressing in the midst of the situation?

- 1.
- 2.

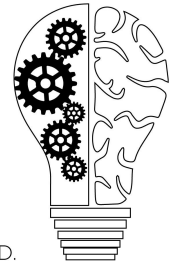
Which 3 cognitive distortions applied to this situation the most and how did it specifically apply? (Re-read the cognitive distortions and see which one applies the most to it.)

- Cognitive Distortion 1:
- Cognitive Distortion 2:
- Cognitive Distortion 3:

Looking back at the statements, can you now rewrite them more accurately?
Try to re-write two of the thoughts here:

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Sometimes cognitive distortions keep us from being grateful. Can you feel the gratitude now that you worked through the cognitive distortions? Think about how you might act upon this gratitude (writing a letter, putting in a good review, telling someone how you appreciate them).



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Day 8: Focus on gratitude on an ongoing basis.

Look back on the last 6 days of journal notes and reflect upon what you have learned, and new ways of seeing the world around you.

What are three things you are grateful for learning, growing, expanding your understanding of things?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Can you feel any of that gratitude in your body? Where do you feel it?

What emotions came up for you (love, happiness, kindness, curiosity, joy, warmth...)

Rate the intensity of each of the emotions (1%-100%, where 100% is the most intense it could possibly be).

What thoughts came up for you in the midst of looking back at the last 6 days?

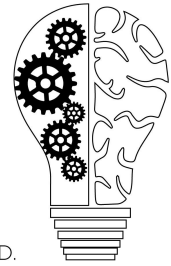
- 1.
- 2.

Acting upon gratitude is very important. What are three ways you can act upon this appreciation?

- 1.
- 2.

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Day 9:

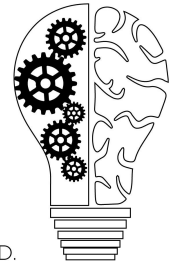
In the celebrated book *Man's Search for Meaning*, author Viktor Frankl wrote about his intimate and horrific Holocaust experience. He found that meaning often came from the prisoners' small choices—to maintain belief in human dignity in the midst of being tortured and starved and bravely face these hardships together.

“The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity—even under the most difficult circumstances—to add a deeper meaning to his life. It may remain brave, dignified and unselfish. Or in the bitter fight for self-preservation he may forget his human dignity and become no more than an animal.”

“We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.”

How might you give to those around you, in a unique way, in this time of need?

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If this was helpful for you, please let me know! I love hearing about how people are learning and growing.

Sincerely,

David Puder, M.D.