**Problematic Ways of Thinking**

**What is problematic thinking?**

Problematic thinking is the thought process and things such as negative automatic thoughts and thought traps. With anxiety, non-effective thinking can affect us, and even make us feel worse. When you experience problematic thinking, positive and realistic thinking really can automatically help improve your frame of mind.

**Cognitive Distortions**

A cognitive distortion is an exaggerated and often irrational automatic thought. And it’s mighty, having the power to generate chronic depression and anxiety.

**Overgeneralization**

Overgeneralization is making a knee-jerk generalization based upon ultra-poor quality evidence. We must learn that we can’t judge all situations based upon a particular set of past circumstances.

**Disqualifying the Positive**

This is also known as all-or-nothing thinking. And just as the name implies, any positives of a set of circumstances are left behind in its presence. The sole focus is upon the negative.

Consider this example:

My friends, even my therapist, say that I’m doing so much better. Baloney! All I know is I’m completely anxious and depressed, and that’s just the way it is.

Notice how quickly and smoothly the positive was tossed aside. And do you see how the negative was reinforced? And not only did she have no rational evidence upon which to base her assessment and statement, she had strong evidence to the contrary! In her current mode of thought creation and maintenance, do you think there’s a chance of reasoning with her?

**Tossing Overgeneralizations Aside**

Using something known as cognitive restructuring is one of the best weapons in destroying overgeneralization. Work needs to be done on your methods of thinking. Once you’ve gained the insight into what you’re doing wrong, you’re ready to fix it. And then it’s on to learning how to cognitively restructure – and practice, practice, practice.

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| **Trigger**  What specific situation triggered your anxiety? | **Example**  I didn’t get a promotion at work, but John did. Everybody was in the office when our boss announced that John was going to be the new Product Manager. | **Personal Experience** |
| **Negative automatic thought**  What was your negative automatic thought in that specific situation? | **Example**  My boss doesn’t like me; he thinks that I am bad at doing my job. I never get acknowledged for all of my work. | **Personal Experience** |
| **How strongly do you believe in your thought?**  (0-100) 0= not at all, 100=completely | **Example**  90 | **Personal Experience** |
| **Emotion**  What were your feelings? | **Example**  I felt very hurt, depressed, and embarrassed. I absolutely didn’t feel happy for John. | **Personal Experience** |
| **Proofs**  What proofs support your negative automatic response? | **Example**  Looking at it objectively, John getting the promotion instead of me must mean that our boss thinks that John is, in one way or another, more suitable for the job than me. | **Personal Experience** |
| **Disproof**  What proofs go against your negative automatic thought being true? | **Example**  John has worked in the company longer than me and the other aspiring to the position. John has more suitable skills than me or the others. I have been acknowledged for my hard work on prior occasions. | **Personal Experience** |
| **How strongly do you believe in your disproofs?**  (0-100) 0=not at all, 100=completely | **Example**  90 | **Personal Experience** |
| **Alternative thought** | **Example**  John getting the promotion instead of me must mean that our boss thinks that John is more suitable for the job, but it does not exclusively mean that our boss doesn’t like me. Also, there were a lot of other people that also didn’t get the promotion. | **Personal Experience** |
| **How strongly do you believe in your negative automatic thought now?**  Same scale as above | **Example**  1 |  |