Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or CBT is designed to help clients understand the connection between thoughts, emotions and behaviors. Our thoughts are our interpretations of the world which influence our emotions and in turn influence our behaviors. In order to change how we feel and our behaviors, we must identify what we’re thinking and then work on changing those thoughts to promote the emotions and behaviors we’d rather experience. For example, if a man thinks to himself often “I’m worthless” then he may feel depressed, sad, agitated, mad etc. In turn this man may self-isolate, act out, hide from social situations, etc. If this man wants to change these behaviors and emotions, he can do so by changing his thought “I’m worthless” to “I’m worthwhile.” While we cannot control the world around us, we can control how we interpret and respond to the world around us.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| I feel …  (emotions) | About…  (Situation) | Because…  (Thoughts) |
|  |  |  |

Example: I am mad that my girlfriend cancelled our date tonight because I don’t feel important to her. Or: I am sad my dad yelled at me because I feel like it’s my fault.

Common Thinking Errors

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| All or Nothing Thinking  C:\Users\Jess\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\HSRG3JIC\MC900251313[1].wmf | Sometimes called ‘black and white thinking’  “If I’m not perfect then I’m a failure”  “Either I do it right or I don’t do it at all” |
| Mental Filter  C:\Users\Jess\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\0GU5BCBM\MC900441948[1].wmf | Only paying attention to some types of evidence  Noticing our failures but not our successes |
| Jumping to Conclusions  2+2=5? | Two key types:  Mind reading: assuming I know what others are thinking  Fortune telling: predicting the future |
| Emotional Reasoning  C:\Users\Jess\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\CWQJF75F\MC900434748[1].png C:\Users\Jess\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\B6QZ3O3E\MC900055181[1].wmf | Assuming because we feel a certain way what we think must be true  “I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot.”  “I feel scared. I must be in danger.” |
| Labeling  C:\Users\Jess\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\1BAROOOB\MC900363172[1].wmf | Assigning labels to other people of ourselves  “I’m a loser”  “He’s just useless”  “They’re idiots” |
| Over-generalizing  Never Everything  Nothing  Always | Seeing a pattern based upon a single event or being overly broad in my conclusions  “Nothing good ever happens”  “All people are like my ex.” |
| Disqualifying the Positive  C:\Users\Jess\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\0GU5BCBM\MC900030187[1].wmf | Discounting the good things that happen or that we’ve done  “That doesn’t count. It was a fluke.” |
| Magnification  C:\Users\Jess\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\1BAROOOB\MC900431579[1].png | Two types:  Catastrophising: blowing things out of proportion  Minimization: inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important |
| Should  MUST | Assuming that there is a rule when none exists  Making unreasonable expectations  “I should always be perfect in what I do.” |
| Personalization  Is it me? | Blaming myself or taking responsibility for things outside my control  Blaming others for something outside their control |