

Challenging Negative Thoughts

Depression, poor self-esteem, and anxiety are often the result of irrational negative thoughts. Someone who regularly receives positive feedback at work might feel that they are horrible at their job because of one criticism. Their irrational thought about job performance will dictate how they feel about themselves. Challenging irrational thoughts can help us change them.

Answer the following questions to assess your thought:

- ◆ Is there substantial evidence for my thought?

- ◆ Is there evidence *contrary* to my thought?

- ◆ Am I attempting to interpret this situation without all the evidence?

- ◆ What would a friend think about this situation?

- ◆ If I look at the situation positively, how is it different?

- ◆ Will this matter a year from now? How about five years from now?

Core Beliefs

Everyone looks at the world differently. Two people can have the same experience, yet have very different interpretations of what happened. **Core beliefs** are the deeply held beliefs that influence how we interpret our experiences.

Think of core beliefs like a pair of sunglasses. Everyone has a different “shade” that causes them to see things differently.



Many people have negative core beliefs that cause harmful consequences. To begin challenging your negative core beliefs, you first need to identify what they are. Here are some common examples:

I'm unlovable	I'm stupid	I'm boring
I'm not good enough	I'm ugly	I'm worthless
I'm a bad person	I'm abnormal	I'm undeserving

What is one of your negative core beliefs? _____

List three pieces of evidence contrary to your negative core belief.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Countering Anxiety

Come up with a rational counterstatement for each of the following thoughts:

Anxiety-Producing Thought	Rational Counterstatement
I can't go to the mall with my hair like this—everyone will notice me.	Example: My hair looks a little messy, but everyone will be too occupied with other things to notice. Even if they do notice, I doubt they would care.
I know I won't be able to finish my work on time.	
I can't face my boss. She's going to yell at me.	

Next, think of three examples of anxiety-producing thoughts and rational counterstatements from your own life:

Anxiety-Producing Thought	Rational Counterstatement