AUTOMATIC NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

Cognitive Distortion	Description	Examples
Overgeneralization (always/never thinking)	Assuming that something always or never happens by assuming a pattern in events or behaviors.	"Phil never shows up on time."
		"I always fail at relationships."
		"Nothing good ever happens to me."
Magnification/ minimization	Emphasizing or exaggerating the importance of negative information or experiences while ignoring or downplaying positive information or experiences.	"I only got that scholarship because I was lucky."
		"Second place is the first loser."
		"The entire vacation was ruined because I forgot my favorite swimsuit."
Dichotomous (all or nothing) reasoning	Thinking in black-and-white terms; focusing on extremes while tending to ignore the middle ground.	"Unless I get straight A's, I will fail out of school."
		"If I receive any negative feedback during my review, then I'm not cut out for this job."
		"Unless I have the perfect job, a house, and a family, then I'm a complete failure."
Fortunetelling	Predicting that bad things will happen with little or even contrary evidence.	"I'm not going to ask her out because I know she'll say no."
		"There's no point in going to therapy since I know it won't work."
		"If I break up with my girlfriend, she's going to try to humiliate me in front of my friends."
Mind reading	Assuming what others are thinking with little or even contrary evidence.	"If I start antidepressant meds, people will think I'm weak or crazy."
		"I won't go to that party because everyone there will hate me."
		"Susan takes hours to return my texts. She must think I'm a complete loser."
Catastrophizing (doomsday thinking)	Assuming that the negative outcome of an event will result in disastrous, irreversible consequences.	"If I don't marry by the time I'm 30, then I'll be alone forever."
		"I'm going to be unemployable with this conviction on my record."
		"My family will disown me when they find out I didn't get into medical school."
Personalizing (guilt thinking)	Irrationally blaming oneself for negative events beyond his or her control.	"My parents divorced because I'm a bad kid."
		"The company is going under because I didn't do my job well enough."
		"If I had only visited my father in the hospital more, he would still be alive."
"Should" statements	Suggesting that there are universal truths dictating the actions or beliefs of oneself or others.	"I should be much further along in life than I am at this age."
		"Boys shouldn't play with dolls."
		"I worked hard and followed the rules, so I should be more successful than I am."
Filtering (selective abstraction)	Taking a detail out of context and dismissing the rest of the situation.	"If he really loved me, then why did he leave that cute waitress such a big tip?"
		"I don't care if all his other grades were A's and B's. He's getting punished for that C."
		"Sure, my boss praised my work on that project, but why didn't he do it in front of our team?"
Emotional reasoning	Attempting to devise factual explanations for an event based on feelings and beliefs rather than logic.	"He didn't vote for the Latino candidate, so he must be racist."
		"They probably picked Rachel over me for the promotion because she's prettier than I am."
		"My wife wants me to stop spending so much money because she can't stand me having a good time."
Finding flaws	Fixating on real or imagined imperfections in oneself or others.	"I canceled my job interview because I couldn't find my yellow necktie."
		"Women won't date him because he's so short."
		"I know this assignment is late, but I just can't turn it in until it's absolutely perfect."