

What's Your Perspective

According to psychologist Albert Ellis and many other cognitive-behavioral thinkers, people primarily bring about their own emotional distress. People generate emotional distress by turning "normal" desires for achievement, approval, success, safety, comfort, survival and happiness into dire and absolute/unconditional necessities.

People make themselves disturbed by insisting that they must have certain things in the same manner they need air or water for survival. Healthy people believe that satisfying wants a reasonable amount of the time is rewarding. People disturb themselves when they believe that life is miserable if they cannot satisfy their wants at all times and under all conditions. People become and stay disturbed when they think that they **should at all times, under all conditions** perform outstandingly, be loved and approved by everyone, be totally self-disciplined and effective, never suffer pain, handicaps, or feelings of discomfort, avoid or conquer all dangers, and have their days filled with immediate and long-term satisfactions. Some people even demand that other people **should** think and act as they want, or be exceptional at everything they do.

Here are the most common areas of faulty thinking:

1. **Irrational beliefs about Competence and Success.**
2. **Irrational beliefs about Love and Approval.**
3. **Irrational beliefs about Fairness and Being Treated Fairly.**
4. **Irrational beliefs about Safety and Comfort.**

Here are 3 common patterns of chronic emotional distress and dissatisfaction

1. "I must do well and be approved by others, or I am no good."
2. "You must do well by me, or you are no good."
3. "The world must be obliging, or I can't stand it."

Pattern #1 leads to feelings of depression.

Pattern #2 leads to feelings of anger.

Pattern #3 leads to low frustration tolerance, depression and anger.

What are your beliefs? Are these things that you want, or things that you believe you must have in order to survive and/or be happy? If you think you cannot be happy unless you have these things at all times, it is pretty likely that you are often unhappy, nervous and/or frustrated. Perhaps you would feel better if you change your perspective.

According to CBT, sometimes you can recognize circumstances in the past when you started having faulty beliefs or unfavorable reactions. Current problems exist, however, because of a continuation of faulty (unhelpful) thinking and response patterns, instead of because "something bad" happened to you in the past.

According to C.B.T., the way to change emotional/behavioral problems is to change the way you think about situations and respond to them. **This takes place by challenging distorted “unhealthy” thinking and replacing it with reasonable “healthy” thinking.**

I Object -- The Art of Disputing Faulty Thinking

Prove it!

Where is (what is) the evidence?

Where is that written, Who says?

Show me!

Define ____!

C.B.T. Interventions

1. Rational Coping Statements/Rational Self-Instruction
(**"I do not need what I want, I only strongly desire it!"**)
2. Imagery (visualization) – **I can picture myself handling this situation?**
3. Reframing: In each negative event that occurs there is the possibility of some personal gain
(**I can learn something from this situation**).
4. Distraction/Relaxation
5. Role-Switching (**I can see things from their point of view -- even if I disagree**).

Each C.B.T. intervention seeks to improve "reality" based thinking by disputing distorted thinking. C.B.T. interventions seek to change unhealthy thinking into healthy thinking, because problem solving is more efficient when healthy thinking prevails.

CHECKLIST OF COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS*

1. **All-or-nothing thinking:** You look at things in absolute, black-and-white categories.

 2. **Overgeneralization:** You view a negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat.

 3. **Mental filter:** You dwell on the negatives and ignore the positives.

 4. **Discounting the positives:** You insist that your accomplishments or positive qualities "don't count."

 5. **Jumping to conclusions:** (A) **Mind reading:** You assume that people are reacting negatively to you when there's no definite evidence for this; (B) **Fortune-telling:** You arbitrarily predict that things will turn out badly.

 6. **Magnification or minimization:** You blow things way up out of proportion or you shrink their importance inappropriately..

 7. **Emotional reasoning:** You reason from how you feel: "*I feel* like an idiot, so I really must be one." Or "I don't feel like doing this, so I'll put it off."

 8. **"Should" statements:** You criticize yourself or other people with "should've or Shouldn't." "Musts," "ought," and "have to" are similar offenders.

 9. **Labeling:** You over identify with your shortcomings. Instead of saying, "I made a mistake," you tell yourself, "I'm a jerk," or -a fool," or "a loser."

 10. **Personalization and blame:** You blame yourself for something you weren't entirely responsible for, or you blame other people and overlook ways that your own attitudes and behavior might contribute to a problem.

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Checklist of Silent Assumptions

Beliefs called **Silent Assumptions** may make people more vulnerable to depression, anxiety, or interpersonal conflict.

1. **Emotional perfectionism:** "I should always feel happy, confident, and in control of my emotions."

2. **Performance Perfectionism:** "I must never fail or make a mistake."

3. **Perceived Perfectionism:** "People will not love and accept me as a flawed and vulnerable human being."

4. **Fear of disapproval or criticism:** "I need everybody's approval to be worthwhile."

5. **Fear of Rejection:** "If I'm not loved, then life is not worth living."

6. **Fear of being alone:** If I'm alone, then I'm bound to feel miserable and unfulfilled."

7. **Fear of Failure:** "My worth depends on my achievements (or my intelligence, or status or attractiveness)."

8. **Conflict phobia:** "People who love each other shouldn't disagree/argue or fight."

9. **Emotophobia:** "I should not feel angry, anxious, inadequate, jealous or vulnerable."

10. **Entitlement:** "People (or events) should always be the way I want (or expect); I don't sometimes see things from the other person's point of view. For example, being really mad at someone for breaking a date when they have a pretty good reason."

Thinking Checklist

Try switching your exaggerated (HOT) thoughts into more reasonable (COOL) thoughts!

Should
Should not
Have to
Must
Must not
Deserve

Like or Want
Do not Like or Want
Would Like
Wish
Wish would not
Desire

Always
Forever
Never

Usually/Frequently
Until/Unless
Rarely

Awful
Horrible
Terrible
Perfect

Disagreeable
Unfortunate
Unfavorable
Successful