

Cognitive Distortions

Core Beliefs

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PURPOSE OF GROUP: to identify our core beliefs
to identify our irrational thoughts

MATERIALS NEEDED: pens/pencils for each group member
piece of paper for each group member
print p. 4-5 of guide; have enough copies for each group member

1.

-Facilitator opens group by introducing short **activity** in which group members will **explore their "inner critic"**.

*Give each group member a piece of paper & pens/pencils. Ask them to tap into their "inner critic"- the voice in their head that puts them down, beats them up, causes them to doubt themselves, etc. Tell them to write down what their "inner critic" tells them

*Examples: "Why can't you get anything right?"; "You should have done a better job";
"Don't bother trying- you'll never be able to do it"

*When they're done, ask group members to put their paper aside for now

-Tell group members that they will be exploring their "**core beliefs**" today. A core belief is essentially **how we see ourselves and the world around us**.

*Give group members handout with examples of core beliefs (print p. 4 of this guide)

-Our core beliefs affect how we relate to others and how we react in different situations. Here is an example:

-Core belief: Mary believes, "I am useless"

-Situation: Mary's best friend, Julie, asks her to help her with a project

-Reaction: Mary tells Julie she should ask someone else for help

2. Ask group members, “Where do you think our core beliefs come from?”

For facilitator to discuss afterwards:

-Our core beliefs usually come from early experiences (i.e. early childhood)

-Example: A child who was neglected by his parents might develop the core belief, “I am a mistake”

-The core belief may not be true, but it *feels* true, so it sticks with us throughout life

3.

-Group members will now participate in an **activity** in which they will further **explore their core beliefs about themselves**.

*Give group members handout, **“Identifying Our Core Beliefs”** (print p. 5 of this guide)

*See if they can identify some of their core beliefs by exploring the thoughts, emotions, & assumptions that a past situation triggered. Read the example provided on the handout

*Allow group members to share when they’re done

-You can now ask group members to review the things they wrote down at the beginning of group (when they were asked to explore their “inner critic”). See if they can identify more core beliefs that they hold about themselves (based on what they wrote down).

4.

-Now that group members have identified some of their core beliefs, you can ask them, “How do these core beliefs connect with your experiences in childhood?”

-For example, someone with the core belief, “I am stupid” may have been criticized often by parents for struggling in school

-If you have some extra time, you can even have the group members participate in a **role-play** in which they play the role of their parent (or someone else from childhood).

-For example, as the parent, they would say the things they wish they were told as a child when they were struggling emotionally

5. Facilitator can conclude group by going over ways to change your core beliefs:

-Journal

a. Journaling is a great way to become more aware of your core beliefs (you can't change them until you're aware of them!)

-Identify cognitive distortions

a. For example, "I am a total failure"= all-or-nothing thinking

-Practice using positive affirmations

a. For example, if one of your core beliefs is, "I am not good enough", practice saying, "I *am* good enough"

-Come up with rational responses to your core beliefs

a. For example, if one of your core beliefs is, "I am a failure", you can point out the times in which you have succeeded (and note that everyone fails once in a while- that's part of life!)

-Eliminate the behaviors that reinforce your core beliefs

a. For example, if one of your core beliefs is, "I am not good enough", eliminate the behaviors in which you try to overcompensate, impress people, prove yourself, etc.

*You can ask group members, "What are some other steps you can take to change your core beliefs?"

Examples of Core Beliefs

I am a failure

I am bad

I am unlovable

I am inadequate

I am not good enough

I am a mistake

I am stupid

I am unworthy/worthless

I am incompetent

I am broken

I am useless

Identifying Our Core Beliefs

EXAMPLE

Situation: My husband was drinking and said hurtful things

Automatic thought: He hates me

Emotion: Shame

Assumption you are making: I've failed at my marriage

Core belief: I am a failure

1.

Situation:

Automatic thought:

Emotion:

Assumption you are making:

Core belief:

2.

Situation:

Automatic thought:

Emotion:

Assumption you are making:

Core belief: