



## Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are irrational thoughts or unhelpful thinking patterns that can influence our emotions. We all experience unhelpful thinking patterns to some level; however, experiencing cognitive distortions in extreme forms can be harmful.

**Magnification (Catastrophizing) and Minimization:** Exaggerating or minimizing the importance of events.

One might believe their own achievements are unimportant, or that their mistakes are excessively important.

**Overgeneralization:** Making broad interpretations from a single or few events.

“I felt awkward in my class. I am always so awkward.”

**Personalization:** The belief that one is responsible for events outside of their own control.

“My roommate is always upset. They would be fine if I did more to help them.”

**Jumping to Conclusions:** Interpreting the meaning of a situation without having all the facts.

“Someone cut me off on the freeway, they must be a jerk.”

**Mind Reading:** Interpreting the thoughts and beliefs of others without adequate evidence.

“The professor did not call on me. They must not like me.”

**Fortune Telling:** The belief that you can predict the future outcome of a situation without evidence.

“If I go to the mall I will have a panic attack.”

**Labeling:** Using a label to describe a behavior or mistake.

“I’m stupid” or “They’re a bad person.”

**Emotional Reasoning:** The assumption that emotions reflect the way things really are.

“I feel like I messed up, therefore I must be a bad person.”

**Disqualifying the Positive:** Recognizing only the negative aspects of a situation while ignoring the positive.

“I only passed the exam this time, it was luck.”

**“Should” Statements:** The belief that things should be a certain way.

“I should always do my assignments.”

**All-or-Nothing Thinking:** Thinking in absolutes such as “always”, “never”, or “every”.

“I always fail my exams.”

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1. Identify the cognitive distortion(s) that you experience (circle or mark above)
  2. Write examples of the unhelpful thinking patterns that you experience the most.
    - I.
    - II.
    - III.

# Challenging Negative Thoughts

Irrational or unhelpful thinking styles can lead to low self-esteem, anxiety, or depression. Irrational or negative thoughts can also impact academic, relational, or work functioning. For example, a student who has studied for an exam might think they will fail their final. The irrational thought about academic performance will impact how they feel as they prepare for the exam or how they feel about themselves. Challenging unhelpful thinking patterns can allow us to reframe a thought into a healthier belief.

Answer the following questions to challenge your unhelpful/irrational thought:

- ❖ What negative thought about a situation/incident/experience am I having?
  
- ❖ What evidence/facts support my thought? Is there evidence contrary to or against my thought?
  
- ❖ Am I interpreting/judging/labeling the situation or experience without examining all of the evidence?
  
- ❖ How would a friend think about this situation? What would a friend say?
  
- ❖ How can I think about the situation/incident in a positive way?
  
- ❖ Will this situation or experience matter six months from now? How about one year from now? Five years?

## Cognitive Therapy Techniques to Change Your Thoughts

1. **Identify Distortions** in automatic thoughts.
2. **Examine the Evidence** – Instead of assuming that your negative thought is true, examine the actual evidence for it.
  - ❖ For example, is it true that I never do anything right? What are some things I do well? What are the things I'm not so good at?
3. **The Double-Standard Method** – Ask yourself, “Would I say this to a close friend who was very much like me and had a similar problem?” “What would I say to a friend?” Practice saying that to yourself.
4. **The Experimental Technique** – When you have a negative thought, ask yourself if there is a way you could test it to find out if it is really true.
5. **Thinking in Shades of Gray** – (*useful for all-or-nothing thinking*) Remind yourself that things are usually somewhere between 0 and 100 percent.
  - ❖ Instead of insisting “I am perfect and never make a mistake” or “I am a horrible person, I messed up/I'm giving up....”
  - ❖ acknowledge a mistake, forgive yourself, and move forward with your life
6. **The Survey Method** – Ask yourself “Would other people agree that the thought is valid?”
  - ❖ Or ask people in your life you trust questions to find out if your thoughts and attitudes are realistic.
7. **Define terms** – (*useful if you are labeling yourself*). Instead of putting yourself down as “a failure” or “a loser” or “a fool.” Ask yourself:
  - ❖ What does failure mean? What is a loser? What is a fool?
8. **The Semantic Method** – (*useful for “should statements”*). Substitute a phrase like “it would be nice” or “it would be preferable” in place of “I should.”
  - ❖ This may help you look at the thoughts without having expectations, and decrease times of being too self-critical.
9. **Re-attribution** – (*useful for personalization*). Ask yourself what other factors may have contributed to this problem.
  - ❖ Focus on solving the problem one step at a time, instead of using up energy towards feeling guilty or blaming yourself.
10. **Cost-Benefit analysis.** Ask yourself, “How will having this thought/belief help me, and how will it hurt me?”
  - ❖ You can also use this question on negative behavior patterns (i.e. lying in bed, spending too much time on social media) or self-defeating beliefs like “I must always try to be perfect.”

## Challenge Anxiety

❖ Practice identifying a rational statement for the following anxiety-producing thoughts:

Anxiety-Producing Thought	Rational Thought/Belief/Statement
I know I won't be able to finish my work on time.	<b>Example:</b> I can work for 30 minutes and see how far I get; I might get most of my work finished and can complete the rest after a short break.
I can't go to class like this – everyone will notice me.	
I can't face or ask the professor for help. They're going to be upset with me.	

❖ Now, practice identifying unhealthy/unhelpful thoughts you experience and reframing it to a more balanced rational thought:

Anxiety-Producing Thought	Rational Thought/Belief/Statement

# Thought Log

Event/Trigger	Thought	Emotion/Behavior	Reframe/Alternate Response

## Online Resources

Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society

[umassmed.edu/cfm](http://umassmed.edu/cfm)

Mayo Clinic Stress Reduction Website

[mayoclinic.com/health/mindfulness-exercises/MY02124](http://mayoclinic.com/health/mindfulness-exercises/MY02124)

Meditation Oasis

[meditationoasis.com](http://meditationoasis.com)

Mindful

[mindful.org](http://mindful.org)

UC San Diego Center for Mindfulness

[health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness](http://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness)

## Apps for your Smartphone, Tablet, or Computer

**ACT Coach** — Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) aims to help you live with unpleasant thoughts, feelings, and impulses without avoiding/being controlled by them. Learn exercises, tools, information, and practice with tracking logs.

**Breathe2relax** — Stress management tool provides detailed information on the effects of stress on the body with practice exercises to help you learn a stress management skill called ‘diaphragmatic breathing’.

**CBTi-Coach** — Learn the process of sleep, positive sleep routines, and improve sleep environments. This structured program will teach strategies to improve sleep and help alleviate symptoms of insomnia.

**Mindfulness Coach** — Learn how to reduce stress, improve emotion regulation, increase self-awareness, manage anxiety/depression, and cope with chronic pain through the practice of Mindfulness.

**Mindshift** — Learn skills to manage everyday anxiety. Develop helpful ways of thinking and learn tools to tackle: Sleep, Intense Emotions, Perfectionism, Social Anxiety, Performance Anxiety, Worry, Panic, and Conflict.

**T2 Mood Tracker** — Monitor and rate your mood on six pre-loaded scales (anxiety, stress, depression, brain injury, post-traumatic stress, general well-being) or build your own custom scale. The ratings will be displayed on graphs to help you track your mood over time.

**Take a break!** — Enjoy and learn the deep relaxation, stress relief and benefits of meditation. Choose from two audios: Work Break Relaxation (7 min.) or Stress Relief Meditation (13 min.), and listen with or without music/nature sounds.

## **CSUF Counseling and Psychological Services: (657) 278-3040**

Free, confidential services to CSUF students.

Walk in and urgent appointments available Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Closed on weekends.

After-hours support; ProtoCall available anytime after 5 p.m., Weekends, and Holidays

## **CSUF University Police: (657) 278-2515**

Available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, including evenings and weekends.

## **Local Emergency Facilities**

*St. Jude Medical Center* – (approximately 3.7 miles)  
101 E. Valencia Mesa Dr.  
Fullerton, CA 92835  
(714) 871-3280; [stjudemedicalcenter.org](http://stjudemedicalcenter.org)

*Placentia Linda Hospital* – (approx. 3.7 miles)  
1301 N Rose Dr.  
Placentia, CA 92870  
(714) 993-2000; [placentialinda.com](http://placentialinda.com)

*Kaiser Permanente* – (approx. 6 miles)  
3440 E. La Palma Ave.  
Anaheim 92806  
(888) 988-2800; [kp.org](http://kp.org)

## **Crisis Hotlines:**

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)

OC Warm Line: (714) 991-6412; 1-877-910-WARM (9276)

Suicide Prevention Center of Los Angeles (1-877-727-4747)

Suicide Prevention Center of Riverside County: (951- 686-4357)

Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-8255, press 1).



The following are some agencies in Orange County that provide sliding scale services:

## **Fullerton Area**

### **Shiloh Community Counseling Center**

101 S. Kramer Blvd., Suite 122  
Placentia, CA 92870  
(714) 223-1601

Sliding scale available. Individual, family, and groups (dependent on needs). Counseling is provided by Marriage and Family Therapist Interns. It is open Monday thru Friday 9 a.m. – 8 p.m. and Saturday by appointment only. There is a one-time \$35 for the first-appointment.

### **City of Brea Family Resource Center**

695 E. Madison Way  
Brea, CA 92821  
(714) 990-7150  
breafrc.com

Sliding scale available: Brea Residents: \$15-25, Non Brea: \$25-35, CSUF Students: \$10. Individual, family, couples, children and group counseling services provided. Counseling is provided by Marriage and Family Therapist Interns. It is open Monday thru Thursday 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. and Friday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

### **The Gary Center**

341 South Hillcrest Street  
La Habra, CA 90631  
(562) 691-3263

Provides free emergency crisis counseling. Family, individual, and group counseling services offered. In addition substance abuse programs (state certified and probation approved 38 week program) and parent education program (24 week court ordered or voluntary) are available. Services are offered on a sliding scale fee starting at \$25.

### **Anaheim Harbor Family Resource Center**

819 South Harbor Boulevard  
Anaheim, CA 92805  
(714) 399-0590

Their mission is to “provide a comprehensive array of social, educational, and health services that will empower families and children with the necessary skills to increase self-sufficiency and confidence resulting in optimal academic and social success.” Counseling services are available, including USC Telehealth ([usctelehealth.com/](http://usctelehealth.com/)) an online therapy service that may be free for qualified individuals.

**F.A.C.E.S.**

1651 East Fourth St., Suite 128  
Ave Santa Ana, CA 92807  
(714) 547-7345

721 W. Kimberly  
Placentia CA 92870  
(714) 993-2237

30011 Ivy Glenn Dr., Suite 218  
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677

1015 E. Chapman Ave., Ste. A  
Fullerton, CA 92831  
(714) 447-9024

[www.facescal.org/home.html](http://www.facescal.org/home.html)

Locations also in Santa Ana, Fullerton, Placentia, and Laguna Niguel. All FACES programs focus on the needs of the family and helping the child after divorce or separation. Programs include: The Family Preservation, Counseling services, The BACK & FORTH CHILD, groups for single parents and their children, COMMON GROUND, Monitored visits, safe visits, Supervised exchanges, Transitions and Parent/Child relationship Building. Educational Institute: Training and Public Education regarding domestic violence prevention and intervention.

**Frances Smith Center for Individual and Family Therapy**

501 W. Palm (Crean Building on Chapman campus)  
Chapman University  
Orange, CA 92866

(714) 997-6746

[chapman.edu/crean/academic-programs/graduate-programs/ma-marriage-family/frances-smith-center.aspx](http://chapman.edu/crean/academic-programs/graduate-programs/ma-marriage-family/frances-smith-center.aspx)

Counseling services include individuals, couples, families, and children and are provided by graduate students. Fees are established according to a sliding scale, based on the individual or family's monthly gross income (employment, unemployment, disability, SSI/SSA, worker's compensation, alimony/child support, etc.). Fees may range from \$10.00 to \$60.00 per session. These fees cover only a small portion of the cost of providing services. Payment is due at the time of the session, cash or check only. The Center has a 24-hour cancellation policy or the full fee will be charged for the late cancellation. An assessment will be conducted over the phone to determine eligibility for services.

**Argosy University**

601 South Lewis Street, Suite 302  
Orange, CA 92868  
(714) 620-3810  
[AUTAPS@gmail.com](mailto:AUTAPS@gmail.com)

Provides individual, couple, and family counseling and assessments for individuals 18 and older. Fees are from \$5-50 per session, based on monthly income. For psychological testing and learning disorder assessment, the sliding fee is \$100-\$500. There are no limits to the number of sessions. All therapists have either a Master's degree in clinical or counseling psychology. The therapists are currently completing their Psy.D. degrees and are supervised by licensed clinical psychologists.

**Hope Counseling Center**

2400 E. Katella Avenue, Suite 900  
Anaheim, CA 92806  
(714) 879-3901 ext. 1266  
[hiu.edu/hcc/](http://hiu.edu/hcc/)

To make an appointment, please call and leave a message. Your calls will be returned within 24 hours. After the initial intake you will be assigned to a counselor to help you with your unique needs. HCC has a standard office fee for counseling services. A sliding scale fee is available based on family income for those who are unable to afford the full fee. Counseling services may be provided by Masters level students or a non-licensed clinician under the supervision of a licensed clinician.

**Mariposa Women and Family**

**Center** 812 West Town & Country  
Road Orange, CA 92868  
714-547-6494  
<http://www.mariposacenter.org>

Mariposa Women and Family Center provides high quality, low cost mental health and substance abuse counseling, life skills, and supportive services to women and families. Services provided are: parenting skills, anger management, bereavement groups, outpatient substance use treatment (women & adolescents), women's eating disorder process group, trauma group, friends and family addict support group. Fees start at \$15 per session and are dependent on income.

**Family Enrichment Center**

Ronald Zishka, Ph.D.  
760 N. Euclid, #108  
Anaheim, CA 92801  
(714) 758-1884

Individual, family, and couples counseling services available. Areas identified as specialties include: abuse, domestic violence, trauma, PTSD, acculturation issues, LGBT population. All therapists are licensed a minimum of two years. Fees payable by cash, credit, check. Insurance is accepted from most major carriers. A sliding scale fee is available for those who qualify.

**Straight Talk**

5712 Camp Street  
Cypress CA 90630  
(714) 828-2000  
[straighttalkcounseling.org](http://straighttalkcounseling.org)

Program provides mental health counseling for families, individuals, and groups. Among the groups offered are Adult Anger Management, Teen Anger Management, and Parenting Classes. There is a \$25 intake fee. Services are on a sliding scale ranging from \$20-\$95.

## **Irvine Area**

### **Pepperdine University Counseling Center**

1811 Von Karman Avenue, Suite 401

Irvine, CA 92612

(949) 223-2570

[gsep.pepperdine.edu/about/clinics/irvine/](http://gsep.pepperdine.edu/about/clinics/irvine/)

Services are provided by Pepperdine's master and doctoral level interns and include individual, couples, and family counseling. A brief over the phone assessment is conducted. Sliding scale fees are available. Additional locations are in West Los Angeles and Encino. (Note: Clinic closed last 3 weeks of August).

### **Chicago School of Professional Psychology Community Counseling Center**

4199 Campus Drive.

University Tower 4<sup>th</sup> floor

Irvine, CA 92612

949-769- 7747

<http://counseling.tcscenters.org/>

Services are provided by Psy.D. interns and includes individual, couples, family, and court mandated programs. Sliding scale fees are available starting with an intake (\$50 initial fee) and counseling from \$15 and up.

### **The Mental Health Center at Hoag**

1501 Superior Avenue, Suite 311

Newport Beach CA 92658

(949) 764-6542

The mental health and psychotherapy program provides services on a low sliding scale to the surrounding community. There is an additional one time intake fee. No one will be turned away due to lack of funding. Services include family, couple and individual counseling and are provided by a team of bilingual and bi-cultural psychotherapist who hold Master's degrees in Social Work, Licensed Clinical Social Workers or Master's in Social Work Interns. Services are available in English, Spanish and Farsi.

### **Turning Point Center for Families**

2101 E. Fourth Street, Suite 150B

Santa Ana, CA

(714) 547-8111

[turningpointsantaana.org](http://turningpointsantaana.org)

A non-profit, bi-lingual counseling center that provides counseling services to youth, individuals, couples, groups, and families. The center offers affordable fees based on a sliding scale starting at \$25. Income verification may be required. Counseling services may be provided by Masters level students, under the supervision of a licensed clinician.