What Kind of Thinker Are You?

Joe Barton, MA, LPC, NCC www.BartonCBT.com

Cognitive therapists recognize particular thought patterns that individuals commonly engage in when feeling depressed, angry, anxious, or hopeless. These thoughts are often referred to as "Auto-thoughts" or "Cognitive Distortions".

Typically, these auto-thoughts fall into the following categories:

Category	Example	
Black or White /	"This is the <i>worst</i> thing that could possibly happen!"	
Dichotomous Thinking	"I am a total failure because of this!"	
	"Everybody hates me."	
	"I'll never be any good."	
Catastrophizing	"I'm going to flunk out of school, never get a job, and	
	become homeless and miserable."	
	"My spouse is going to cheat on me and leave me broken	
	and alone."	
	"I won't be able to stand it if I mess up."	
Thinking in "Shoulds"	"He <i>shouldn't</i> act like this."	
	"This <i>shouldn't</i> have happened to me."	
	"My life is supposed to be different."	
Emotional Rationalization	"I feel like something bad is going to happen. Therefore,	
	it must be so."	
	"I feel depressed and angry, so something must be	
	wrong."	
The Mind-Reader	"She hates me. She thinks she's better than me."	
	"I know you think I'm just overly dramatic."	
	"People think I'm ugly and they treat me badly because	
	of it."	
Negative Filtering	You hyperfocus on negative events in your life and place	
	a high importance on them. While, on the other hand,	
	you tend to discount or ignore positive experiences.	
Personalizing	"This is all my fault."	
	"He / she is laughing at me."	
	"If I'd stopped him, he would still be alive today."	
Global Reasoning	"This must be the way all marriages are."	
	"All men/women are unfaithful."	
Learned Helplessness /	"There is nothing I can do. I'm not strong / smart / brave	
Hopelessness		
	"I might as well give-up because I've already tried	
	everything and it hasn't worked."	

Of course, people tend to combine these categories into more complex thoughts. Here are some examples:

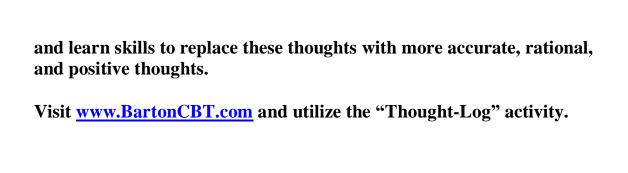
Categories	Example
Shoulds, Black or White,	"I'm a total loser. I can't believe my life turned
Globalization	out this way! It's supposed to be different!
	This isn't fair. This always happens to me,
	everything falls apart in my life."
Learned Helplessness,	"It's hopeless. There's nothing more I can do.
Personalizing, Negative Filtering	I've destroyed any hope of salvaging the
	relationship. The last few months have been
	good, but who cares? Look at all the problems
	I still have in my life."
Mind Reading, Emotional	"I'm terrified to give this presentation at work.
Rationalization, Catastrophizing	Something must be really wrong for me to feel
	like this. I know everyone thinks I'm stupid.
	This is going to be the worst presentation ever.
	I'm going to be mortified!"

Do any of these auto-thoughts sound familiar to you? Have you engaged in these types of thoughts in the past? Are you engaging in them now? Take a moment and list out your own auto-thoughts. First, write down your specific thoughts. Next, identify which category, or categories, your thoughts belong to.

Your Specific Thought	Auto-thought Category	
1	1	
2	2	
3	3 .	
4	4	
5.	5.	

Use extra paper if you need more space.

Hopefully, you now have a better understanding of what kind of thinker you are. The next step is to understand the *patterns* of your thoughts



References

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