

## 15 Ways to Untwist Your Thinking (long version) \*

| Method                            | Description of Method   | Question to Ask Yourself   | Distortions                                 |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|---|
| 1. Identify the Distortions       | Use the Checklist of Cognitive Distortions to identify the distortions in each thought.   | "What are the distortions in this thought?"  | any   |
| 2. The Straight-Forward Approach  | Substitute a more positive and realistic thought.   | "Is this negative thought really true? Do I really believe this? Is there another way to look at the situation?"   | any   |
| 3. The Cost-Benefit Analysis      | List the advantages and disadvantages of a negative feeling (like anger) or attitude (like "I'm such a loser" or "I should be perfect.")  | "What are the advantages and disadvantages of believing this (or feeling like this)? How will it help me, and how will it hurt me?"                                      | any   |
| 4. The Double-Standard Technique  | Instead of putting yourself down, talk to yourself in the same compassionate way you might talk to a dear friend who was upset.   | "Would I say such harsh things to a friend with a similar problem? What would I say to him or her?"  | any   |
| 5. Examine the Evidence           | Instead of assuming that your negative thought is true, examine the evidence for it.  | "What are the facts? What do they show?"   | jumping to conclusions; emotional reasoning |
| 6. The Survey Method              | Do a survey to find out if your thoughts and attitudes are realistic. If you believe that social anxiety is abnormal or shameful, ask several friends if they ever felt that way. | "How do other people think and feel about this?"   | jumping to conclusions                      |
| 7. The Experimental Technique     | Do an experiment to test the validity of your negative thought, in much the same way that a scientist would test a theory.  | "How could I test this negative thought to find out if it's really valid?"   | jumping to conclusions                      |
| 8. The Pleasure Predicting Method | Predict how satisfying various activities will be on a scale from 0% (the least) to 99% (the most) and record how satisfying each one turned out to be.                           | This technique can help you get moving when you feel lethargic. It can also be used to test self-defeating beliefs such as, "if I'm alone, I'm bound to feel miserable." | fortune telling; emotional reasoning        |

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| 9. The Vertical Arrow Technique | Draw an arrow under your Negative Thought and ask, "why it would be upsetting to me if this were true?" The negative thoughts you generate will lead to your underlying beliefs.   | "If this were true, why would it be upsetting to me? What would it mean to me?"  | any                         |
| 10. Thinking in Shades of Gray  | Instead of thinking about your problems in black-or-white categories, evaluate them in shades of gray.   | When things don't work out as well as you hoped, think about the experience as a partial success and a learning opportunity. Pinpoint your specific errors instead of writing yourself off as a total failure. | all-or-nothing thinking     |
| 11. Define Terms                | When you label yourself as "inferior" or "a fool" or "a loser," ask yourself what these labels mean. You'll see that there's no such thing as a "fool" or "loser." Foolish behavior exists, but fools and losers do not. | "What is the definition of a loser?" "What is the definition of an 'inferior human being?'"<br>"When I say I am hopeless, what claim am I making? What is my definition of someone who is hopeless?"           | labeling                    |
| 12. Be Specific                 | Stick with reality and avoid judgments about reality.  | Instead of thinking of yourself as totally defective, focus on your specific strengths and weaknesses.   | any                         |
| 13. The Semantic Method         | Substitute language that is less colorful and emotionally loaded.  | Instead of thinking, "I <i>shouldn't</i> have made that mistake," you can tell yourself, "it would be better if I hadn't made that mistake."   | labeling; should statements |
| 14. Re-Attribution              | Instead of blaming yourself entirely for a problem, think about the many factors that may have contributed to it. Focus on solving the problem instead of blaming yourself.  | "What caused this problem? What did I contribute and what did others contribute? What can I learn from the situation?"   | personalization             |
| 15. The Acceptance Paradox      | Instead of defending yourself against your own criticisms, find truth in them and accept your shortcomings with complete tranquillity.   | "I have <i>many</i> inadequacies. In fact, there is very little, if anything, about me that couldn't be improved considerably!"  | any                         |