

Cognitive Restructuring

by

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This process is recommended to help you restructure your thoughts and gain some healthy perspectives when you are feeling anxious. It is best to do this in the moment when you first notice any symptoms, but you can also use this practice after the situation has already passed.

- 1) What **triggered** me?
- 2) How did I **respond**?
What did I feel?
What did I do?
- 3) What was the **automatic thought**?
What did you say to yourself? The automatic thought can be the “caption” that describes your experience. For example, if you were looking at a cartoon of yourself, what would be written in the “bubble” over your head?
- 4) What was the **cognitive distortion** that was connected to the thought?
Refer to the list of “Cognitive Distortions” to help you identify the thinking error that was associated with the automatic thought.
- 5) What was the **underlying belief**?
This is the automatic thought taken to the next level or even to the extreme. See if you can exaggerate or expound on the automatic thought. Bring it to a general, overarching conclusion about the way life is for you.
- 6) **Compassion.**
Pause. Take a moment to give compassion to the part of you that has been suffering as a result of this belief. If you have trouble with this, think about how you would feel if you were gently addressing a small child who was hurt, someone you love, or your best friend. Then turn that kindness towards yourself.
- 7) How can I **dispute the belief**?
Think about the **wise part of you**. This is the objective, reasoning, insightful part that can offer some arguments against the negative belief. From this perspective, ask yourself:
Is this really true?
What are some other explanations?
Are there other interpretations that are as true or truer?
How might another person look at this?
What are some healthier or more positive ways of looking at this situation?