

COMMON MISTAKES IN THINKING

When you are feeling depressed, anxious, or anger, you are typically thinking in a way that creates and sustains these feelings. *Anytime* you are experiencing something you don't want to feel, write down your thoughts, then check this list to see if it fits into one or more of these categories:

1. All-or-nothing thinking: You see things in black and white categories. If your performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself as a total failure. You perceive yourself, others, and situations as all good or all bad. *Example* - If I make a mistake then I'm no good. If someone disappoints me they are horrible.

2. Overgeneralization: You see a single negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat. You use one example to reflect on everyone else. *Example:* That therapist was horrible so all therapists are crazy. That movie was boring so all movies must suck.

3. Romancing the past: You focus on an ideal perception of something that happened in the past and use that to determine how bad the present is. *Example:* In my day things were so much easier. People cared more than they do now.

4. Disqualifying the positive: You reject positive experiences by insisting they "don't count" for some reason or other. You maintain a negative belief that is contradicted by your everyday experiences. *Example:* I did well at the job but that doesn't mean I'm a good worker. I received lots of praise for my performance but that doesn't mean I have any talent.

5. Catastrophizing: You make a negative assumption about something that will go horrendously wrong in the future without concrete evidence. *Example:* I just know I'm going to get horribly sick this year. I know my relationship can't last.

6. Martyrdom: You perceive others as not giving you the special treatment you deserve. You perceive all your good deeds and talents as unappreciated. *Example:* Why can't people treat me like the important person I am? Why can't anyone ever give me the job I deserve?

7. Emotional reasoning: You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are: "I feel it, therefore it must be true." *Example:* I feel my life is never going to get any better. I feel like I'm never going to succeed. I feel like I'll never get through this pain.

8. Personalization. You see yourself as the cause of some negative external event for which, in fact, you were not primarily responsible. You take other people's attitudes and actions personally. *Example:* That sales clerk was rude to me, she must have something against me. That guy didn't call me date, I must be a loser.

9. "SHOULD" STATEMENTS: You carry rigid and inflexible beliefs about yourself, others, and the world, which frequently conflict with what is happening in reality. *Example:* I should be making more money, I should be thinner, that girl should have called me back by now, my boss should treat me better

10. "I need" statements. You tell yourself you need someone or something outside yourself to make you whole and complete. *Example:* I need to be in a relationship to feel valid and important. I need to have an important job to be content. I need to be thin to be loved. I need things to happen right now and not later.