

6 Steps in Cognitive Restructuring

STEP ONE – Identify the upsetting situation. Describe the event or problem that's upsetting you. Who (or what) are you feeling unhappy about?

STEP TWO – Record your negative feelings. How do you feel about the upsetting situation? Identify the feeling word precisely. Use words like sad, irritated, annoyed, angry, enraged, anxious, guilty, ashamed, humiliated, regretful, bewildered, confused, flustered, swamped, frustrated, hopeless, despairing, scared, frightened, horrified, intimidated, vulnerable, uneasy, worried, unsure. Rate each negative feeling for intensity on a scale from 0 (for the least) to 10 (for the most).

STEP THREE – Record your automatic thoughts. Tune in to the negative thoughts that are associated with these feelings. Pay attention to what are you saying to yourself about the problem. It may help to ask yourself "why do I feel like this?" Write these thoughts in the third column and record how much you believe each one between 0 (not at all) and 10 (completely).

STEP FOUR - Analyse these thoughts using one of the common thinking errors listed in the *Cognitive Errors* information sheet. Record your observations from this analysis in the fourth column. The analysis should point out how your automatic thoughts are unfair, unrealistic or irrational. Following the analysis, rate your belief in the automatic thoughts again using a different colour ink. If they are less believable, proceed to step five. If not, continue the analysis using another method.

STEP FIVE – Construct realistic and balanced thoughts using one of the *10 Ways to Untwist Your Thinking*. Construct more realistic, objective and balanced thoughts in the fifth column. You may wish to construct a 2-part response beginning with an honest acknowledgement of a realistic negative aspect of the situation, followed by the word, *BUT* and then a realistic positive consideration of the situation. E.G., my friend may not have invited me, **BUT** I know he likes me.

STEP SIX - Evaluate this restructuring process. Rate the degree to which you believe the reconstructed thoughts in column five (0 to 10). Is it higher than your belief in the distorted automatic thoughts (third column)? Rate again the intensity of the feelings in column 2 (0 to 10). Are they less intense than originally? If you are still not satisfied, return to step four.