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More About Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

An underlying tenant of Cognitive Therapy is that there exist 10 main “Cognitive Distortions.”¹ One or more of these distortions exist within one’s thinking if one is experiencing negative emotions. Negative emotions can lead to depressed or anxious thinking and panic attacks.

By identifying the distortions in our thinking, we are then able to substitute more helpful thoughts and emotions. This process is referred to as “Cognitive Restructuring.” These helpful thoughts and emotions can help alleviate our anxiety and panic. If we are able to recognize the distortions and then substitute more valid replacements, then we are on the road to recovery.

Many people, in their experience, find the process to be interesting and effective. In order to be able to do “Cognitive Restructuring,” one needs to be able to identify the distortions. Let’s first look at a list of the different types of cognitive distortions and then look at an actual example.

Here is the list:

1. All-or-nothing thinking
2. Overgeneralization
3. Mental filter
4. Disqualifying the positive
5. Jumping to conclusions
6. Magnification and Minimization
7. Emotional reasoning
8. Should statements
9. Labeling
10. Personalization

Someone is having a panic attack. Let’s examine some possible thoughts the person may experience.

During a panic attack we say to ourselves: ”Oh my God, my heart is beating so fast. I’m going to die”

What distortion(s) are present?

“Jumping to conclusions” and probably “disqualifying the positive” are present.

Why?

To begin, jumping to conclusions refers to our tendency to make negative predictions even when there is no real evidence to support them.² Well obviously we've all had our hearts beat fast, at one time or another, and we didn't die. Furthermore we are predicting the future when we state that are going to die.

Also I said probably "disqualifying the positive" was present. "Disqualifying the positive" refers to our tendency to forget all of the positive outcomes in our life and focus only on the negative.²

In other words, we are forgetting about all the times in the past when our heart has beaten fast and we did not die, for example, a time when we we're exercising, or perhaps a time when we were really happy and excited over an event in our life. We did not have a heart attack then.

Now that we've identified the distortions, we then go to the next step and substitute healthier belief(s). Join my newsletter and, for free, I'll discuss the next step of the process in detail and look at all of the cognitive distortions in more detail.

My newsletter also continually discusses many techniques and information that can help your panic attacks and/or agoraphobia and anxiety.

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1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_distortion

2. <http://healthymind.com/s-distortions.html>