



Ms. Deirdre Conlan, School Counsellor

Cognitive Restructuring

What is Cognitive Restructuring?

- Cognitive restructuring is a therapeutic technique that helps students recognise and change negative thinking patterns, known as **cognitive distortions** (Larsson, A. et al., 2016).
- School counsellors use cognitive restructuring in sessions with students presenting irrational thoughts.
- While everyone experiences some cognitive distortions, having too many is closely linked to mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety. (Beck, A. T., 1979).

Working with cognitive distortions

- We all experience cognitive distortions (or irrational negative thoughts)!
- The first step is to **identify** the cognitive distortion.
- This can be difficult to do.
- Cognitive distortions can happen so quickly that they come and go before we've noticed them. They're more like a reflex than an intentional behaviour.

Cognitive Distortions

(Beck, 1972; Burns, 1980)



All or Nothing Thinking

Only thinking in extremes (i.e. if you answered one question wrong in an interview, you view the entire interview as a disaster).



Overgeneralization

Drawing a faulty conclusion about something based on one example (i.e. you get a C in one class and label yourself as stupid or a failure).



Mental Filtering

Focusing on the negative aspects of a situation while disqualifying the positives (i.e. you dwell on a single negative comment from your boss and ignore all the other positive comments).



Disqualifying the Positive

Acknowledging the positive, but rejecting it instead of accepting it (i.e. you land a competitive job but you attribute it to luck rather than your competence).



Mind Reading

Jumping to conclusions by assuming we know what others are thinking (i.e. you see a stranger with an unpleasant facial expression and assume they are negatively thinking about you).



Blaming

An example of a common distortion is known as blaming.

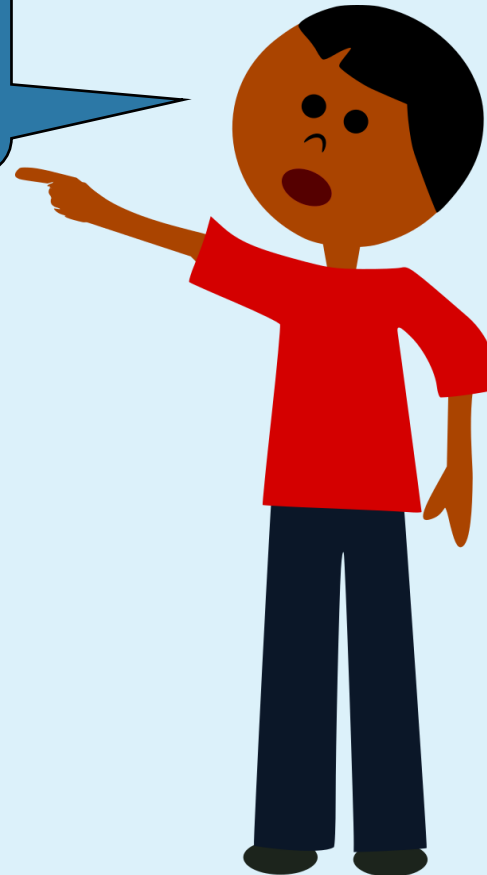
The blaming distortion is when you blame yourself for things that aren't entirely in your control.



It's all my fault we lost the game.

Or you blame others for your own mistakes or things that aren't in their control.

It's her fault I got mad!



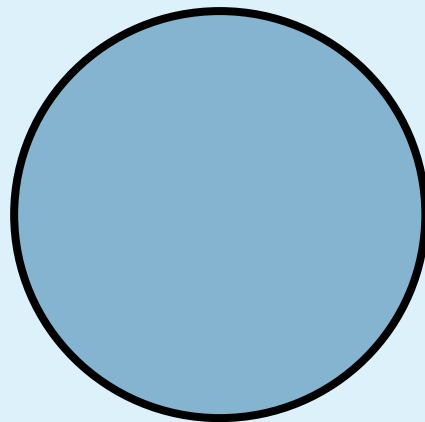
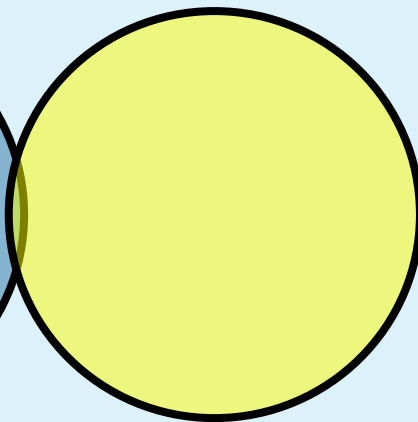
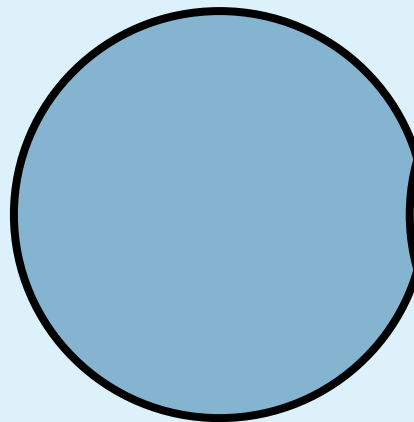
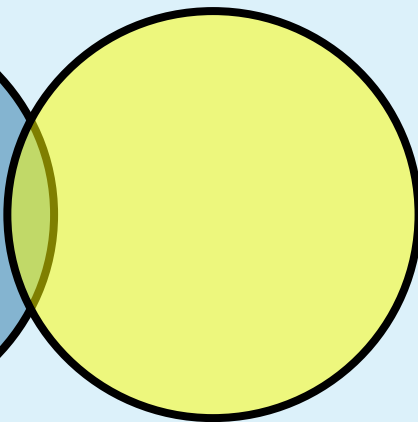
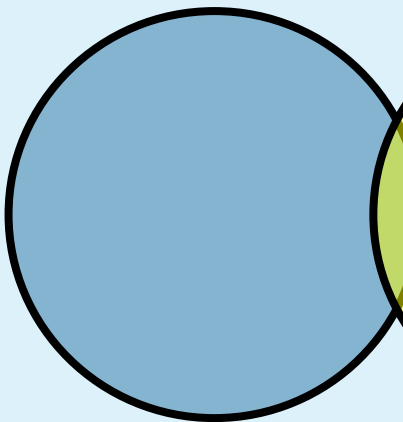
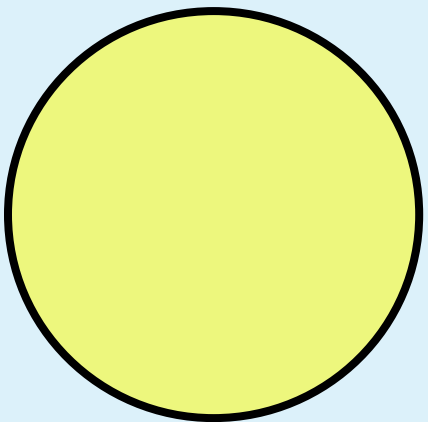
To challenge this distortion, you need to determine what is in your control and what isn't.

Usually there are many reasons something happened. Some are in your control, and some aren't.



Try thinking about all the reasons something happened and be more realistic with how much you are to blame.

The goal isn't to never blame yourself for anything, it's to be more realistic about all the factors that lead to something happening.



Sometimes you have
total control.

Sometimes you
have some control.

Sometimes you don't
have any control.



Let's practice!


“My classmates probably think I'm so boring because I don't talk much in class.”

“If my child gets a B grade, I'm failing as a parent.”

"If I don't get an A on this exam, I'm a complete failure."





Putting the thoughts on trials

Putting Thoughts on Trial

 In this exercise, you will put a thought on trial by acting as a defense attorney, prosecutor, and judge, to determine the accuracy of the thought.

Prosecution and Defense: Gather evidence in support of, and against, your thought. Evidence can only be used if it's a verifiable fact. No interpretations, guesses, or opinions!

Judge: Come to a verdict regarding your thought. Is the thought accurate and fair? Are there other thoughts that could explain the facts?

 The Thought	
 The Defense <i>evidence for the thought</i>	 The Prosecution <i>evidence against the thought</i>
 The Judge's Verdict	

Contact the Counsellor



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Scan the QR code above to make an appointment for your child.



Followed by filling out an informed consent form.



Email