



Types of Distorted Thoughts

Cognitive errors

Catastrophizing

Always thinking of the worst because that is what will happen. The tendency to create mountains out of molehills.

Examples

- “I better not leave the house today because I will get stuck in traffic or get a flat tire or worse yet end up in an accident.”
- “I am not feeling well. I will probably end up in the hospital.”

Good or Bad, Black or White, All or None

Everything and everyone is either one extreme or another. The tendency to place everything and everyone in one of two opposite categories.

Examples

- “I am not perfect, therefore I am worthless.”
- “He mistreated me, therefore he is awful.”
- “The whole day is ruined because I do not feel well this morning.”

Overgeneralizing

If it is true in one case, it must be true in every case. The pattern of drawing conclusions on the basis of isolated incidences.

Examples

- “The last time I saw a movie it was awful. Why bother anymore. They will all be awful.”
- “The last time I walked for exercise, I ended up sick. So, I’d better not exercise any more.”

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

Pulmonary Rehab
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Selective Attention

The only events that matter are the failures, the mistakes, the faults and the weaknesses. The tendency to magnify the negative and minimize the positive.

Examples

- “I have ruined the whole party because I did not buy enough appetizers.”
- “I made a mistake and I want to quit the project now. It does not matter that I have already put six months into the project.”

Excessive Responsibility Personalization

I am responsible for everything that happens, especially if it is something bad. The tendency to relate events to yourself when there is no basis for such a connection.

Examples

- “It is all my fault that our vacation has been ruined – due to bad weather and cancelled flights.”
- “I should have known that I could not trust this automotive center to fix the car properly.”

Mind-Reading

I know what others think about me and it is not good. The pattern of believing you know what others are thinking or feeling, without even asking.

Examples

- “Here we go again. I know she is mad at me for something or another. I can just tell.”
- “They think it is my own fault that I have COPD and that I deserve to feel bad.”

Predicting without Knowing

I already know what is going to happen and it is not going to be good.

Examples

- “Why bother going? I already know that I will have a lousy time.”
- “Why should I try to eat healthier? I know it will not make any difference in how I feel.”

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