

Patterns of Problematic Thinking Worksheet

Listed below are several types of patterns of problematic thinking that people use in different life situations. These patterns often become automatic, habitual thoughts that cause us to engage in self-defeating behavior. Considering your own stuck points, find examples for each of these patterns. Write in the stuck point under the appropriate pattern and describe how it fits that pattern. Think about how that pattern affects you.

- 1. Jumping to conclusions** when the evidence is lacking or even contradictory.
(Combat veteran) I did a bad job. I didn't save my friend and other people also got killed in the battle. But, I did the best I could, and there was no way I could have saved everyone – that's not realistic. I contributed to the fight and in doing so I may have saved some of my friends' lives. I saved myself too. I guess that's not evidence for doing a "bad" job. I guess that's evidence for doing my job, doing a good job.
- 2. Exaggerating or minimizing** a situation (blowing things way out of proportion or shrinking their importance inappropriately).
I used to say that if I had not been asleep the ambush would not have happened and no one would have died. I would say now that I have minimized the severity and unpredictability of war.
- 3. Disregarding important aspects** of a situation.
I have always felt guilty because I killed people. I have felt bad about myself and have put myself down for years. It didn't occur to me to think about the reality of the situation; it was war. I had to kill. That is the nature of war. I may not agree with the war now, or believe in war, but the fact is that it was war and to survive I had to shoot. It was my duty to shoot back and defend our regiment. In feeling guilty and assuming I was bad, I was disregarding an important factor of the situation—I was disregarding the fact that it was a war.
- 4. Oversimplifying** things as good/bad or right/wrong.
Not everyone is good or bad. I may have done some things in my life that were not that good, but that does not make me a bad person.
- 5. Over-generalizing** from a single incident (a negative event is seen as a never-ending pattern).
That ambush was just one event in the entire war, and one event in my life. Just because that was an awful event doesn't mean that I can't handle things. It doesn't mean I do everything wrong.
- 6. Mind reading** (you assume people are thinking negatively of you when there is no definite evidence for this).
I have always assumed everyone thought I had let them down. I assumed they thought that I had blown it and allowed the ambush to happen. But now I realize I only imagined that—I didn't really know what they were thinking. Since then I have written to some of the guys and none of them ever thought it was my fault. Boy, I guess I was mind reading.
- 7. Emotional reasoning** (you have a feeling and assume there must be a reason).
Since I have always felt guilty I assumed I was guilty. But feeling something is very different from what is really true. I felt guilty because people got hurt, but that doesn't mean it was my fault they got hurt.