

YOUR THOUGHTS AND YOUR FEELINGS	
Emotion	Thoughts that lead to this emotion
Sadness or depression	Thoughts of loss: you learn a child has a difference or a disability, you suffer a romantic rejection, you lose a loved one, or a job, or you fail to achieve an important goal, etc.
Guilt or shame	You believe that you've hurt someone or that you've failed to live up to your own moral standards. Guilt results from self-condemnation ("My child is this way because of my parenting") whereas shame involves the fear that you'll lose face when others find out about your child's or your own shortcomings ("My community will think I'm a terrible parent if they see my child behaving this way").
Anger, irritation, annoyance, or resentment	You feel that someone is treating you unfairly ("That teacher doesn't understand") or trying to take advantage of you ("That doctor is making things sound worse than they are because they just want my money").
Frustration	Life falls short of your expectations. You insist that things should be different. It might be your own performance ("I shouldn't have done that."), what someone else does ("He should have been on time" or "Why does my child behave this way?"), or an event ("Why does my child lose it when I'm in a hurry?").
Anxiety, worry, fear, nervousness, or panic	You believe you are in danger because you think something bad is about to happen ("What if the plane crashes?" "What if my mind goes blank when I give my talk in front of all those people?" "What if this chest pain is the start of a heart attack?" "What if my child never learns this important skill?")
Inferiority or inadequacy	You compare yourself (or your children) to others and conclude that you (or your children) are not as good as they are because you (or they) are not as talented, attractive, charming, successful, or intelligent. "She's really got what it takes." "He's got perfect manners."
Loneliness	You tell yourself that you are bound to feel unhappy because you are alone and you aren't getting enough love and attention from others. ("No one wants to be with our family because of the way my kids are.")
Hopelessness or discouragement	You feel convinced that your problems will go on forever and that things will never improve. ("I'll never feel happy again," or "I'll never be able to find a good job," or "My child will be never be independent.")

Cognitive Distortions

1. **ALL-OR-NONE THINKING** (also known as BLACK & WHITE THINKING): You think in extremes – things are either perfect or a failure; there is no middle ground and no room for mistakes. If your performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself as a total failure.
2. **OVERGENERALIZATION**: You reach a general conclusion based on a single incident or piece of evidence. You exaggerate the frequency of problems and use negative global labels like “always” or “never”. You think that because something happened once it will always happen the same way.
3. **MENTAL FILTERS**: You focus on the negative details while ignoring all the positive aspects of a situation. You may even feel the positive “doesn’t count”.
4. **CATASTROPHIZING**: You expect, even visualize disaster. You notice or hear about a problem and think, "What if [the worst thing] happens?" You inappropriately exaggerate the importance of things. You may feel like you cannot handle it if the worst thing *does* happen.
5. **MAGNIFYING**: You make a problem more important and worse than it really is by exaggerating its degree or intensity.
6. **SHOULD**S: You have a lot of rules about how you and other people should act. You feel guilty when you violate the rules, and people who break the rules anger you. You use words like “should”, “must”, and “ought to”, as if you need the threat of punishment before you can be expected to do anything. The emotional consequence is guilt.
7. **PERSONALIZATION OR BLAME**: You see yourself as the cause of a negative event or someone's reaction when, in fact, it had nothing to do with you. Another distortion is when you blame other people or their circumstances, while overlooking your own contributions to the situation.
8. **MIND READING**: You think you know how other people are feeling, why they act the way they do, and what they are thinking about you, in particular. You arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you, and you don't check the assumption out.
9. **FORTUNE-TELLING**: You predict that things will turn out badly.
10. **EMOTIONAL REASONING**: You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are: "I feel like I'm going to die, therefore it must be true."
11. **MISLABELING**: This is an extreme form of overgeneralization. Instead of describing your error, you attach a negative label to yourself. "I am a loser." When someone else's behavior rubs you the wrong way, you attach a negative label to him or her.
12. **SELECTIVE ATTENTION & SELECTIVE MEMORY**: When you pay attention to information that confirms your beliefs, but ignore evidence that may counter your interpretations. Selective memory is when you only remember certain pieces of information that confirm what you believe.

Adapted from *The Feeling Good Handbook* by David Burns, M.D. and *Anxiety-Free Kids* by Bonnie Zucker, Psy.D.

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DESCRIBE THE UPSETTING EVENT:

Record your negative emotions (e.g., sad, angry, guilty, lonely, hopeless, frustrated, scared, etc.).

Emotion	Emotion	Emotion
1.	3.	5.
2.	4.	6.

Automatic Thoughts	Cognitive Distortion	Rational Response
<i>Write your negative thoughts and estimate your belief in each one (0 to 100).</i>	<i>Identify the distortions in each automatic thought.</i>	<i>Substitute more realistic thoughts and estimate your belief in each one (0 to 100).</i>

How do you feel now?

☐ not at all better ☐ somewhat better ☐ quite a bit better ☐ a lot better

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Countering Cognitive Distortions

Distortion	Rational Thoughts
1. ALL-OR-NONE THINKING	Think in shades of gray. Could the truth somewhere in between the two extremes?
2. OVERGENERALIZATION	Use time-limited words like “this time” or “today”. Avoid words like “always” or “never”.
3. MENTAL FILTERS	Identify the positive parts of your experience, no matter how small. Write them down!
4. CATASTROPHIZING	Collect data on how often the most horrible outcome actually happens.
5. MAGNIFYING	Use the “blow-up technique” – what is the worst possible outcome? Think about whether, if that horrible outcome happens, what will that mean for you. How bad will it be?
6. SHOULD S	Treat yourself with compassion. Be less judgmental. Accept yourself, and others, as they are.
7. PERSONALIZATION OR BLAME	List all the possible reasons why it happened. Be honest about your role in addition to the contributions of other factors beyond your control.
8. MIND READING	Ask the other person what they are thinking. (Don’t assume you know!)
9. FORTUNE-TELLING	Collect data on how often that outcome actually happens. Think about whether, if that horrible outcome happens, what will that mean for you. How bad will it be?
10. EMOTIONAL REASONING	Think about all the reasons someone not involved in the situation would give when explaining what happened (or will happen).
11. MISLABELING	Write out the definition of the label. Can you accurately define it? Think of an alternative label that is time-limited. Practice self-compassion. (I’m not a loser – I made a mistake. That was really hard.)
12. SELECTIVE ATTENTION & SELECTIVE MEMORY	Record your successes. Make sure to list the positives of a situation. Do a cost-benefit analysis of continuing to attend to only the negative. Then do a cost-benefit analysis of attending to the positive. Which outcome do you prefer?