

Challenging Assumptions



Step 1: Identifying the Assumption

Our doubt labels impact the attitude, rules, and assumptions we have about the ways we believe we should behave. For example, if we have the doubt label that we are "unlovable", then we might believe that we have to put on our "game face" at all times to make and keep friends. In addition, we may believe that if we assert ourselves, then we might make someone unhappy, which activates the doubt that we are "unlovable".

This activity can help you identify the positive and negative assumptions that are driving your behaviors.

For Example:

- Positive Assumptions

If I (state the behavior), then (state the positive impact on the doubt).

Example:

- If I keep my opinions to myself, then people will want to hang out with me.
- If I drink wine, then I will feel better and be in control.

- If I am perfect, then people won't find me incompetent.

If I _____, *then*, _____.

- Negative Assumptions

If I (state the behavior), then (state the negative impact on the doubt).

Example:

- If I don't keep my opinions to myself, then people won't like me.
- If I don't do everything for myself by letting people help, then I'll lose all control.
- If I am not perfect, then people will see how incompetent I am.

If I _____, *then*_____.

Core Beliefs / Assumptions can often drive our expectation of what should happen. use the following activity to look at how your assumptions are driving your behavior.

Step 2: Reframe the Expectation

In this exercise, you will look at two hypothetical scenarios to see how you could reword a demanding "should" statement into a more

reasonable

preference statement, reframe the meaning of the unfulfilled demands, and consider more appropriate actions.

A sample scenario is provided below, followed by two blank scenarios for you to fill in yourself.

Sample scenario:

You are going to the store to pick up some necessities and are in a rush to get home. As you are waiting in the checkout line, the cashier starts to engage in a conversation with the customer in front of you, causing a slight holdup in the line.

Demanding Statement.

Reframe:

“The cashier should stop talking so much” —-> “I wish the cashier would stop talking and hurry up, and move on to the next customer.”

Ascribed Meaning

Ascribed Meaning:

“He is purposely going to make me late.”

“He is probably just trying to be friendly.”

“Maybe he doesn’t want to be impolite and cut off the person talking to him.

“He is so inconsiderate.”

“Being friendly is not indicative of being inconsiderate. He doesn't know I am in a hurry.”

Possible Actions

Possible Actions:

Stand there tapping your foot, exasperated that it is taking so long.

Assertively and politely ask the cashier if he could speed things up as you are in a hurry.

Give the cashier the evil eye.

Patiently wait, knowing you chose to run an errand on a tight schedule.

Scenario1:

You are driving home from work and approaching an intersection. You notice that the traffic light has just turned yellow, so you speed up and try to make the light. However, the woman in the car in front of you slams on her brakes, causing you to slam on your brakes too.

Demanding Statement.

Reframe:

“What in the heck are you doing lady?! You shouldn't be so stupid to slam on your brakes at a yellow light. You should have gone.” -->

(I wish, I'd prefer...)

Ascribed Meaning

Ascribed Meaning:

“She has no consideration for others and could have caused a major pileup.”

“She doesn't belong on the road, how irresponsible of her to do that.”

“ _____ ”

“ _____ ”

Possible Actions

Possible Actions:

Honk your horn repeatedly for her to go.

Give her the finger or yell out the window at her.

Scenario 2:

It's your birthday today, and you have been waiting for your son (or important family member) to call you all day long. Although he sent you a Facebook message and a text, he still hasn't picked up the phone to call you, and the day is almost over.

Demanding Statement.

Reframe:

"It is ridiculous that my son didn't take a minute to call me on my birthday because he should have called. My son should have called me on my birthday." — --> (I wish, I'd prefer)

“

”

Ascribed Meaning

Ascribed Meaning:

"He doesn't care about me."

"I am not important enough for him to make my birthday a priority."

“

”

“

”

Possible Actions

Possible Actions:

Act annoyed with him the next time he calls

Avoid him for a while.

I've edited this activity into a workable pdf from my cognitive behavioral therapist Jessica Glasmann, LCSW. Without whom, I would have not been able to make this or any other cbt worksheets available on my site. Thank you Jessica! I am getting better slowly and I hope this helps someone else do the same. :}

Scenario 3:

Demanding Statement.

Reframe:

“

”

“

”

“

”

(I wish, I'd prefer:)

“ _____ ”

“ _____ ”

Ascribed Meaning

Ascribed Meaning:

(I am/he doesn't/she isn't etc...)

“ _____ ”

“ _____ ”

“ _____ ”

“ _____ ”

Possible Actions

Possible Actions:

• _____

• _____

• _____

• _____

• _____

• _____