

## Cognitive Distortions

**1. Rationalization** – Making excuses for events in life that don't go your way or poor choices you make in an attempt to protect yourself from hurt feelings. You try to convince yourself that just because your wife cheated on you that it's OK because, "that guy probably initiated it" or it's OK for your husband to be abuse because "he just doesn't know how to show his love, and besides, he only did it twice."

**2. Overgeneralization** – You see a single negative event as applicable to *all* or *no* situations. Just because you had a bad experience with a civic group or church, you assume all such organizations or churches are bad.

**3. All or nothing thinking** – You see things in black and white categories. You view yourself, others and/or the world in only positive or negative extremes, and are unable to see positive or negative aspects. Certain family members can do no wrong or co-workers are the worst of humanity.

**4. Discounting the positive** – You reject positive experiences or compliments insisting they don't count for one reason or another. In this way, you maintain a negative belief system that is inconsistent with the "real you," your experiences, or your achievements. When someone gives you a compliment, you respond as "oh, it was nothing anyone else couldn't have done."

**5. Fortune Teller** – You make irrational doomsday predictions about the future based solely on your negative experiences in the past. "I will probably end up unemployed and alone for the rest of my life and my kids will hate me."

**6. Mind Reading** – you assume you know what people are thinking in given situations based upon how others in your past have thought in similar situations. You fail to consider that these are different people, and, perhaps, you are a different person at this point in your life as well. "I know he will say no, so I'm not even going to ask – He probably thinks I'm not consistent enough."

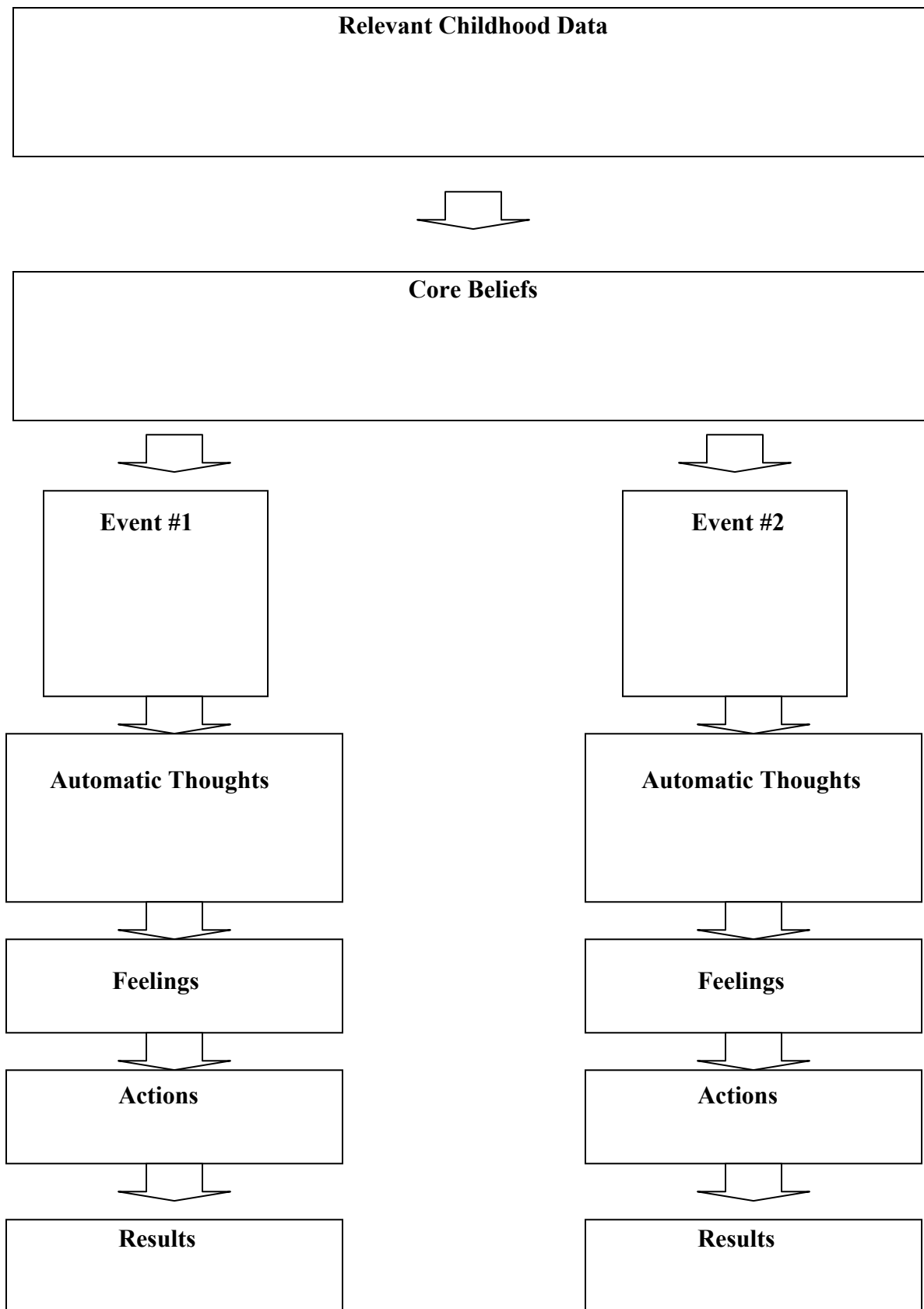
**7. Should Statements**– You place false or unrealistic expectations upon yourself or others, believing that "I should have done" this or they "should have done" that. Then when you or they do not, you have set yourself up to become angry, depressed or anxious.

**8. Emotional Reasoning** – You assume that your negative feelings reflect the way things really are. "If I feel angry, therefore I will yell at my boss," or "I feel depressed, thus the world really must suck."

**9. Magnification** – You blow things out of proportion. You exaggerate the impact/importance of events. "Just because I didn't get this job, there will be a one month gap on my resume' and no one will ever hire me. Nobody will see my skills and I will never get a job and will have to go on welfare!"

**10. Personalization** – You see yourself as the cause of something you had nothing to do with. You lean over and say something to your husband on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 10 during a football game and he does not respond and you think "I must not be important to him" or "he must not love me". Possibly, he loves you more than anything in the world but did not hear you because he was so tuned in to the game. Another examples is that children often believe they are responsible for their parents' divorce.

### Cognitive Conceptualization Diagram



## LISA Case Study

Lisa was born and raised in a small rural Colorado. The closest “real city” as she called it, Boulder, was almost an hour and a half away. She was the youngest of two children, her brother being 5 years older than she. Lisa describes her relationship with her mother as being volatile. “She tried, but she always had such a temper.” Her mother did not work, and was frequently in bed complaining of “some kind of physical ailment,” and was rarely there for Lisa or her brother. She recalls one evening when she was 7 having “a really bad tummy ache” and asking her mom for some medicine. Her mother replied “Ill try to in a few minutes,” but never got around to it. I laid in pain and couldn’t sleep all night but didn’t want to ask my mom again “because I didn’t want to bother her” and “she would probably just yell at me again.” She reports many times remembering her mother yell “you good for nothing little girl – why cant you do it yourself like your brother?” On another occasion, she recalls still being hungry and asking for a second cup of macaroni and getting spanked with a switch and told she was “selfish” and “bad” for asking. “The older people who work and are good for something get what they want first – then if there is any extra you can have some more.” At age 5 she remembers her mother burning her with an iron because she “made a mess on the floor with colors. Another morning she remembers rushing out the door bc she was late for school but running back in telling her mother she forgot to take her medicine. At age 7 Lisa recalls her mother going into a rant screaming “I can believe you are asking your mother to go back downstairs already this morning after I was tired and back in bed” and throwing her down the stairs and breaking her arm.

Her mother committed suicide when she was in middle school.

Lisa’s father worked for the sheriffs department and was a member of the national guard. She remembers him being gone much of the time when she was young. Upon her mother’s death, her father remarried almost immediately and gave most of his attention to his new wife. His new wife took little interest in either of the kids and often became angry when Lisa asked for things. One night when Lisa was a sophomore her first and only “boyfriend” of sorts broke up with her she recalls leaving school early and crying most of the afternoon and evening. When she came out of her room to ask her father for a hug she was scolded for “interrupting” while they were watching a movie on the couch. She remembers well the phrase “you needy girl – can’t you do anything for yourself.”? Routine requests always seemed to be an “imposition.”

Her brother Jared was attractive, social, and charming. He was intelligent and motivated. He made friends easily. He had a paper route in junior high and sold books during the summers while at college. Lisa states “he was always nice to me, but never really had much time for me...He was almost graduated when mom died, had a lot of friends, a job, and a coach and a friend’s youth pastor for mentors.... “I was shy and awkward and had no friends and no one to turn to. “I didn’t do particularly good in school.”

She also reports having few hobbies, talents, or interests, other than making “bead bracelets, necklaces, and crafty things.”

Lisa describes her school years as very lonely years. With few friends, her brother involved with his many extra-curriculars, and her father, when home, consumed with his new wife, ‘companionship was hard to come by” and “I was really kind of a misfit.” The rural area she grew up in was far enough from town it was difficult to get in for activities and she had no transportation. She rarely ask others for a ride into town because “we lived so far out I hated to ask people to go out of their way.”

When Lisa was 17 she met and quickly married a man who was 23 who worked in quality control at a local factory. He was a decent man who rarely treated her poorly, but worked long hours and “was emotionally distant.” After 5 years of marriage, he was laid off, so the couple relocated to Oklahoma where he worked for his father. They struggled with fertility issues, but eventually became pregnant and had a son, Cody, “who became my life.” She immersed herself in Cody’s life doing little else. After 22 years of marriage her husband divorced her for being “needy, clingy, and never getting any better.”

At age 43, Lisa has now been divorced 5 years, has joint custody of Cody, and is struggling to complete a technical degree before her alimony runs out. He husband remarried immediately “a biker chic” and “took on a whole new lifestyle.” Although they often “exposed Cody to things he shouldn’t see,” they did live a more active lifestyle and the means to take him on trips and buy him “expensive toys,” while Lisa struggles to pay the bills in her apartment in a less desirable part of town.

Cody has started to engage in some mild acting out behaviors at school. He has been called to the principal’s office on a couple of occasions and has been suspended once for a day. He has become argumentative at home, started lying at home and school, and has had difficulty taking responsibility for his actions.

Lisa constantly struggles with being a “bad parent” and many times believes “Cody would be better off with his dad...he will probably just leave me like everyone else.”

One day when attempting to discipline him for coming home 30 minutes late from playing in the neighborhood he yells at her stating “you always nitpick at me – Carlos’ mom lets him stay out till midnight - You are the worst mom in the neighborhood!”

## Case Study

Vonnie is a divorced 38 y/o Caucasian female . She has no children and is currently living with her new boyfriend. Her primary complaints at initial assessment are chronic depression, anxiety , and a lengthy history of alcohol and methamphetamine abuse. She reports recently her mood instability had worsened due to relationship concerns that her new boyfriend might leave her as well as conflict with a coworker and she fears she may relapse “and ruin my 3 months sobriety.” She reports “quitting” many times for short stints of time with 7 months being her longest period of abstinence from any substance. Vonnie had maintained a professional career, holding down the same job for the past 7 years for which she made a good salary.

Upon completion of her initial assessment, Vonnie met criteria for Major Depressive Disorder, Moderate, recurrent, Borderline Personality Disorder features, Anxiety Disorder, NOS, Alcohol abuse and Methamphetamine Abuse.

Since her divorce 12 years ago, It was noted that she hadn’t dated a man any longer than 6 months and triggers for usage often centered around these breakups or “relational spats.” A pattern was also identified of “dating men who are in some way less than me so I didn’t have to worry about them leaving me – I could just date them until I got tired of them and them dump them.”

Vonnie’s mother committed suicide when she was 12. She was an only child who from that age forward was raised by her “pillhead dad” who “floundered around doing odd jobs” and barely bringing home enough income to put food on the table. Vonnie recalls “one week when I was in high school I remember we had to share a large can of beans all week.” Vonnie recalls living in fear on a daily basis wondering whether or not her father would come home that night. “After my mom left me and died, I just lived in fear of another loss. She describes a history of “on and off” relationships in high school that “often got me pretty worked up - I felt so bad I could hardly stand it.” When not during one of her dating courses, she describes feeling boredom frequently. “I was home alone a lot and didn’t have anything to do – we lived on a farm and if Dad didn’t come home I was by myself and had no friends close – and I couldn’t text yet then”! Vonnie reports stealing her fathers’s pills as early as age 9. “They just gave me a lot of energy and a high I hadn’t felt before and some excitement for once in my life.” Although she had few friends, Vonnie reports excelling academically, graduating as the salutatorian of her class with a 3.9 GPA. “I began to realize even though I couldn’t keep a boyfriend and girls didn’t seem to like me much, that if I worked hard I could at least be good at something...and dads Ritalin kept me going.”

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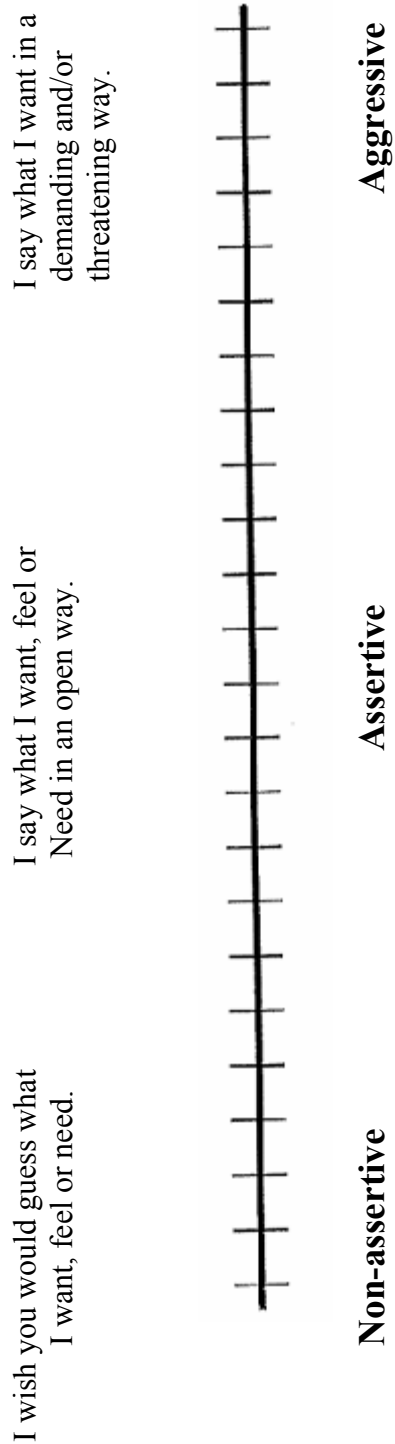
## **101 Things I can do Instead of hurt Myself/To Calm Myself Down**

1. Take a hot bath
2. Put a rubber band around my wrist
3. Cuddle with a stuffed animal
4. Hold a cold ice cube
5. Eat
6. Get in bed
7. Karate/martial arts
8. Fly a kite
9. Arrange flowers
10. Have sex (responsible)
11. Play with a pet
12. Garden
13. Go for a drive
14. Cooking
15. Play golf
16. Recycle
17. Give a hug
18. Receive a hug
19. Burn incense
20. Go grocery shopping
21. Go for a walk
22. Go to church
23. Sing
24. Ride a bike
25. Plug in a heating blanket
26. Go for a run
27. Yoga
28. Walk on a beach
29. Do 50 sit-ups
30. Go to spa
31. Crochet
32. Jumping jacks
33. Photography
34. Journal
35. Use mouthwash
36. Picture getting married
37. Daydream
38. Go to a sporting event

39. Watch a movie
40. Refinish furniture
41. Write a letter
42. Paint
43. Go to a park
44. Get a backrub
45. Deep breathing exercise
46. Listen to a relaxation cd
47. Make a list
48. Clean house
49. Floss your teeth
50. Give a massage
51. Drink hot coffee, tea
52. Read a children's story
53. Blow bubbles
54. Call a friend
55. Quilt
56. Pray
57. Hold a pillow
58. Comb your hair
59. Go for a swim
60. Work with clay
61. Tear paper
62. Wash your hands
63. Knit
64. Lay out
65. Get a haircut
66. Color in a coloring book
67. Do your nails
68. Mow your lawn
69. Sit in a hot tub
70. Swing
71. Workout video
72. Do artwork
73. Window shop
74. Burn a candle
75. Smoke a cigarette
76. Brush your teeth
77. Eat popcorn
78. Drink 6 bottles of water



- 79.Meditate
- 80.Play the piano
- 81.Pop your knuckles
- 82.Call a friend
- 83.Drink coffee
- 84.Do something that will make you laugh
- 85.Play cards
- 86.Sew
- 87.Gambling
- 88.Computer games
- 89.Go to tanning bed
- 90.Daydream
- 91.Talk on the phone
- 92.Make a craft
- 93.Woodworking
- 94.Collections
- 95.Go to a club
- 96.Go to a library
- 97.Sleep
- 98.Stretching exercises
- 99.Bite your fingernails
- 100. Lift weights
- 101. Play with yarn/stress ball



# Letter Format

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

## **Feeling**

## **Assertive Expression**

Anger

“I don’t like it when...” “I hate it when...” “I get pissed off when...” “It frustrates me when...” “When \_\_\_\_\_, I feel enraged”

Depression

“I feel sad when...” “It hurts when...” “I feel lonely because...” “My depression is worst when...”

Anxiety

“It scares me when you...” “I am afraid of...” “I am most likely to panic when...” “I worry the most about...”

Guilt

“I’m sorry that...” “I feel like I should have...” “My life would be different if...” “I wouldn’t have ruined things if...”

Love

“I love you because...” “I appreciate that you...” “I understand that...” “I respect you because...” “I need you in my life for...”

PS

What I need from You is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

## **MY RELATIONSHIPS**

Here are the names or initials of people with whom I have relationships, some with whom I would like to form relationships:

How important are these above people to you? Write the names in initials of the people who are the most important to you in the circle marked "ME". Then, write the initials/names of the people to whom you feel the next closest, and so on.

## **Questions**

- What changes would you like to make to your intimacy circles?
  
- Are there people you would like to have closer in? Farther out?
  
- What steps are you willing to take to begin to initiate these changes?
  
- Would you like to add people to your circles that currently aren't there?
  
- What type of people would you like to add?
  
- Where might you find people like that?
  
- One thing I can do today to improve a relationship is...

I Feel...	Because I thought...

IRRATIONAL	RATIONAL
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	EVENTS	THOUGHTS	FEELINGS	ACTIONS	RESULTS
IRRATIONAL					
RATIONAL					



## REASONS FOR LIVING INVENTORY

Check the statements below that indicate why you would not commit suicide if the thought were to occur to you or if someone were to suggest it to you.

- ☐ I owe it to my family to stay alive.
- ☐ I believe I can learn to manage my problems.
- ☐ I believe I have control over my life and destiny.
- ☐ I believe only God has the right to end a life.
- ☐ I am afraid of death.
- ☐ I want to watch my children grow.
- ☐ Life is all we have and is better than nothing.
- ☐ I have future plans I am looking forward to carrying out.
- ☐ No matter how bad I feel, I know that it will not last.
- ☐ I love and enjoy my family too much and could not leave them.
- ☐ I am afraid that my method of killing myself would fail.
- ☐ There are many experiences I have not had yet that I want to have.
- ☐ It would not be fair to leave the children for others to take care of.
- ☐ I love life.
- ☐ I am too stable to kill myself.
- ☐ My religious beliefs forbid it.
- ☐ The effect on my children could be harmful.
- ☐ It would hurt my family too much and I would not want them to suffer.
- ☐ I am concerned about what others would think of me.
- ☐ I consider it morally wrong.
- ☐ I still have many things left to do.
- ☐ I have the courage to face life.
- ☐ I am afraid of the actual "act" of killing myself (the pain, blood, violence).
- ☐ I believe killing myself would not really accomplish or solve anything.
- ☐ Other people would think I am weak and selfish.
- ☐ I would not want people to think I did not have control over my life.
- ☐ I would not want my family to feel guilty afterward.

### Other reasons for living.

- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

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