

Cognitive Distortion: Fortune Telling

Fortune-telling is a common cognitive distortion where a person predicts negative outcomes without any concrete evidence. This kind of thinking often fuels anxiety. Here are some strategies to address fortune-telling, along with alternate thoughts and affirmations:

1. Identify the Fortune-Telling Thoughts

- Strategy: Write down the specific thoughts where you are predicting a negative outcome. This could be thoughts like, “I just know I’m going to fail this presentation,” or “Everyone will think I’m incompetent.”
- Alternate Thought: “I cannot predict the future, and there is no evidence that things will go poorly. There’s a chance things could go well, too.”
- Affirmation: “I am capable and prepared. I trust myself to handle whatever comes my way.”

2. Examine the Evidence

- Strategy: Challenge the fortune-telling by asking yourself, “What evidence do I have that this will happen?” Write down all the evidence for and against your prediction.
- Alternate Thought: “There’s no solid evidence that things will go wrong. In fact, I have succeeded in similar situations before.”
- Affirmation: “I choose to focus on what I can control and let go of the need to predict the future.”

3. Consider the Best-Case Scenario

- Strategy: Instead of focusing on the worst-case scenario, ask yourself, “What’s the best that could happen?” Visualize a positive outcome.
- Alternate Thought: “There’s also a possibility that things could go better than I expect.”
- Affirmation: “I am open to positive outcomes and trust that things can go well.”

4. Practice Mindfulness

- Strategy: Bring your focus back to the present moment by practicing mindfulness. Ground yourself by noticing your surroundings or focusing on your breath.
- Alternate Thought: “Right now, I am safe, and nothing bad is happening. I’ll deal with the future when it comes.”
- Affirmation: “I am grounded in the present moment, where everything is okay.”



5. Set Realistic Expectations

- Strategy: Acknowledge that the future is uncertain, and it's impossible to predict with 100% accuracy. Remind yourself that expecting perfection is unrealistic.
- Alternate Thought: "It's okay if things don't go perfectly. I can handle whatever comes."
- Affirmation: "I release the need for perfection and embrace the flow of life."

6. Challenge the Catastrophic Thinking

- Strategy: Ask yourself, "What's the worst that could happen? How would I cope with it?" Realizing that you have the resources to cope can reduce anxiety.
- Alternate Thought: "Even if the worst happens, I have the strength and resources to get through it."
- Affirmation: "I trust in my resilience and ability to adapt to any situation."

7. Use Cognitive Restructuring

- Strategy: Reframe the negative prediction into a more balanced thought. For example, instead of "I'll never get better at this," think, "I'm learning, and it's okay to make mistakes."
- Alternate Thought: "I'm making progress, and each experience is helping me grow."
- Affirmation: "I am on a journey of growth and learning. I am patient with myself."

8. Develop Self-Compassion

- Strategy: Be kind to yourself when you notice fortune-telling thoughts. Understand that it's a common response to anxiety but not a helpful one.
- Alternate Thought: "It's okay to feel anxious, but I don't have to let it control my thoughts."
- Affirmation: "I treat myself with compassion and understanding. I am doing the best I can."

Incorporating these strategies, alternate thoughts, and affirmations can help disrupt the cycle of anxious thinking and create a more balanced and positive outlook.

