

Cognitive Distortion

a little mental health 'zine

What is it?

Cognitive, or thinking, distortions are the stories we believe about ourselves and our lives. Often, they are not very helpful and they hold us back or make us unhappy. This little guide gives some ideas for identifying and challenging the unhelpful stories we tell about ourselves so that we can get on with life!

Labelling

When we label ourselves as being something, it makes it hard to do anything different. We say "I am this" so I must do "this". We often choose unkind or unhelpful labels for ourselves.

Mind reading

We think we know exactly what everyone is thinking about us... and in our imaginations it's usually something bad!

This can leave us feeling isolated and like everyone is against us



If you need help right now...

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Call 111 for NHS advice
Call **0800 008 6516 24** for Black Country 24 hour Urgent NHS Mental Health Helpline
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6pm to midnight every day

Spinning a Yarn
community mental health project



All or nothing

If we can't do something perfectly, it's not worth doing at all. This thinking can talk us out of trying all sorts of things we might enjoy, or sticking with something that feels hard at first. It can also make us feel like we've failed a lot of the time.

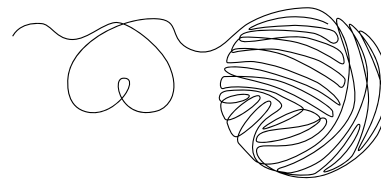
Filtering

We often forget when things go right, and focus on when they go wrong. This makes us feel like everything is wrong, all the time.



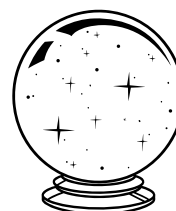
Reset with creativity

When you're feeling stressed or anxious, doing something creative can really help you find calm and focus. Crochet or knitting, drawing, singing, stitching, writing, baking or gardening are all great ways to connect with your feelings and thoughts and take a moment of "me time".



Predicting disaster

Before we go into a situation, it can be useful to think about what might go wrong. But if we're always certain that everything we do will end in disaster or failure that only adds to our stress and makes it harder to plan for success. We get double the stress just by thinking about things going wrong.



Challenging the story

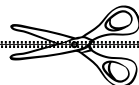
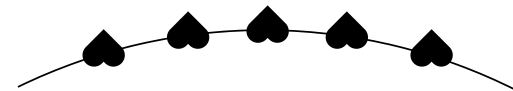
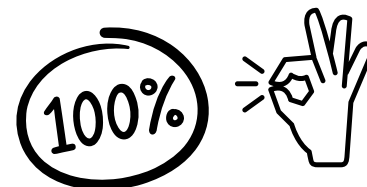
Do you recognise some of those types of distorted thinking? Are they things you do yourself?

Once you learn to spot them and label them, it makes it easier for you to choose whether or not to believe them. Try saying to yourself...

"Oh, that's not true, it's just my brain filtering...idealising... mind reading..." or whichever unhelpful thought pattern you've identified.

Idealising

We all know that what we see people sharing on social media or talking about in public isn't the full story of their lives. But we can get drawn into thinking everyone is living a perfect life and we're the only ones left out. Idealising others lives and comparing them unfavourably with our own can make us feel like we'll never be good enough.



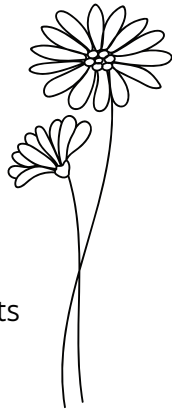


This can help reduce anxiety about the past or future and help us to identify and understand what we're thinking and feeling.

Mindfulness is a way of connecting with what's happening right now; your senses, feelings, thoughts and your body.



Mindfulness
a little mental health 'zine



More about mindfulness...

It's not about emptying your mind
It's not about avoiding your feelings or thoughts
It doesn't have to be all about breathing
You don't need to close your eyes
You don't need to sit still or take time out
You can do it while you're doing other things
You can use all your senses

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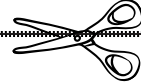
Mindful practices

There's lots of things we can do in everyday life to be more mindful.

Think of it as taking an intentional break from all the noise, information and demands that are put on us.

When we do these practices, we're not trying to "think about nothing". The aim is to be completely present with our feelings, thoughts and sensations, whatever they are.

Let your thoughts go where they want, observe them and try not to filter what comes up.



Using your senses

Take a moment to notice what you can smell, taste, touch, hear and see right now.

Try slowly eating something, noticing the tastes and textures.

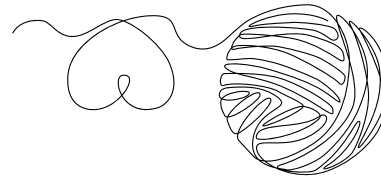
Light a scented candle and enjoy the fragrance, noticing you feel.

Listen to bird song or running water, outdoors or on a recording.



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Being in nature

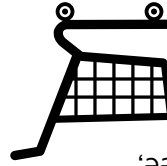
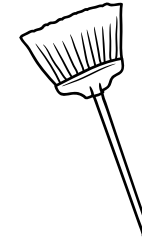
Getting out into nature is a great way to enjoy a mindful moment.

Go for a walk or sit in a garden or park, just being.

Open a window and enjoy the feeling of cool air or sunshine.

Find a leaf, pebble, branch or flower and focus on every detail, the colours, textures, shapes.

Watch animals or birds going about their day.



You can use mindful techniques while you're working, doing chores, exercising, shopping... any time or place!
As you go about your day, notice the things you see, feel, think. Notice sensations in your body, sounds, feelings that come to you.
Try to be fully in the moment, not thinking about the past or future plans.

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Spinning a Yarn

Yarn crafts for wellbeing



5 Ways to Wellbeing...

1 Take notice

Take a moment to enjoy the sunset, flowers, art, music or anything else around you

2 Learn something

Learning keeps our minds active and engaged and gives us a sense of achievement.

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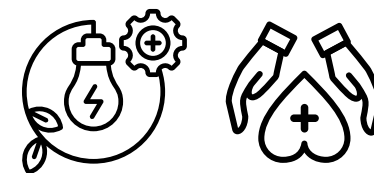
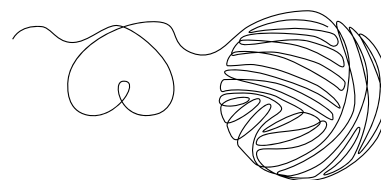
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Great places to connect, give, move, take notice, learn and be creative! You can find wellbeing, health and creative groups and services in Sandwell on www.route2wellbeing.com and www.healthysandwell.co.uk

5 Ways to Wellbeing...

3 Give to others

Giving to others makes us feel good. You could give time, give something away or make something



4 Move more

We know it's hard when we're feeling down or anxious, but physical exercise is a great way to boost our wellbeing and feel better.

5 Connect with others

Calling a friend, going to a coffee morning or greeting a neighbour can give us a wellbeing boost.

Books and more...

Please note these are not medical or diagnostic tools. They may not be right for you as everyone is different!

Books

Kindfulness – Padraig O'Morain
How Not to Worry – Paul McGee
CBT – Elaine Iljon Foreman

YouTube channels

Julia Kristina Counselling
Psych2Go
Therapy in a Nutshell
Anxiety United



Websites

www.mind.org.uk
www.nhs.uk/mentalhealth
www.route2wellbeing.com
www.healthysandwell.co.uk

Podcasts

The Anxiety Podcast – Tim JP Colins
Meditation Minis – Chel Hamilton
We Can Do Hard Things – Glennon Doyle
Happier – Gretchen Rubin
The Hilarious World of Depression - John Moe



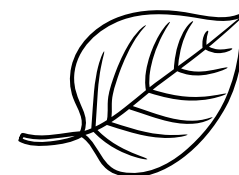
Free mental health Apps

Healthy Minds -

meditation and other techniques for wellbeing

Wysa - Therapy chatbot

who can listen to your problems and suggest ideas to feel better. Used by the NHS.



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