



Unhealthy Thinking Questionnaire

In order to remove the effects of unhealthy thinking patterns, you must first identify which are most common. Review the statements below and indicate which seem to be true for yourself and then for your spouse.

True for Me

True for my Spouse

- | | |
|---|-----|
| ___ 1. I see things as pretty much black and white. | ___ |
| ___ 2. I tend to make mountains out of molehills. | ___ |
| ___ 3. I often take things personally. | ___ |
| ___ 4. Past disappointments seem to predict the future. | ___ |
| ___ 5. What I'm feeling is more important than the facts. | ___ |
| ___ 6. I often think people make too much out of their problems. They
should just get over it | ___ |
| ___ 7. There's a place for everything and everything in its place. | ___ |
| ___ 8. I seem to make things a "big deal." | ___ |
| ___ 9. It's very important to sense others' approval. | ___ |
| ___ 10. I just know things won't get any better. | ___ |
| ___ 11. I can't really believe I'm loved unless I feel it. | ___ |
| ___ 12. I can handle almost any problem that comes my way. I don't really
need much support from anyone. | ___ |
| ___ 13. Being perfect in what I undertake is essential to me. | ___ |
| ___ 14. I seem to overreact to relatively small irritations. | ___ |
| ___ 15. If someone in my family is upset, I must have been part of the reason. | ___ |
| ___ 16. I tend to write people off if they hurt or disappoint me. | ___ |
| ___ 17. If I feel unloved, it must be because no one loves me. | ___ |
| ___ 18. There's no reason to get so worked up or so emotional. | ___ |



Now look over each of the statements that were true for you. The chart below gives the questions that match the six unhealthy thinking patterns. Find the items that you agreed with, then identify which thinking pattern(s) the statement represents.

	Polarizing	Magnifying	Personalizing
Questions:	#1, 7, 13	#2, 8, 14	#3, 9, 15
	Generalizing	Emotional Reasoning	Minimizing
Questions:	#4, 10, 16	#5, 11, 17	#6, 12, 18

Complete these sentences:

According to the exercise above, I have a tendency toward:

According to the exercise above, my spouse may have a tendency toward:



Polarizing

"Everything is black or white." (No "gray.")

Description: Views life as all-or-nothing, good-or-bad, black-or-white. Holds to rigid rules for evaluating life. Feel little satisfaction in modest performance or genuine effort. Experience little joy when they succeed, since it was expected all along.

Background: Often raised in legalistic, critical, or performance-oriented families, or homes where there were many insecurities and fears. Perhaps whatever the child did was never good enough. Perhaps others around them were consistently criticized and evaluated.

Self-talk: *"If it's not done this way, it won't work."
"You're either totally for me, or you are totally against me."
"If it rains today, the picnic (and my entire weekend) will be ruined."
"My project was criticized; therefore, I'm a total failure."
"My kid didn't make straight A's; there's something terribly wrong."
"We had a fight; he's probably going to leave me."*

Truth: Some issues in life are black or white, but many are "shades of grey." The scriptures encourage discernment, but deciding to hold something against another or myself is "judging" and is warned against (Matthew 7:1-5 and others). The "middle ground" can often be acceptable and enjoyed (Ephesians 5:20)..

Take Thoughts Captive

II Corinthians 10:5

Think About What is True

Philippians 4:8

Replace: (ex.) "If it's not done this way, it won't work."

With: "My way is not the only way; others ways may work OK, too."

Replace:

With:

Replace:

With:

Replace:

With:



Magnifying ***"Making mountains out of molehills."***

Description: Exaggerates events until everything seems like a catastrophe. May be volatile with anger, unmerciful with self-condemnation, or overwhelmed with fear or self-pity. May be viewed as self-absorbed, preoccupied with their own crises, whiny, and over-reactive.

Background: Often raised in an environment in which little things were blown out of proportion. Spilled milk provoked a character attack; discipline may have been excessive and out of proportion to the offense. Possibly a parent was preoccupied with loneliness, rejection, or fear, which contributed to them seeing catastrophes in every situation.

Possible indicators of magnifying: Frequent use of extreme words and phrases, such as always, never, ever, devastated, worst, ruined, terrible, horrible, awful, beyond repair, too late, all, nothing.

Self-talk: *"Everything is ruined." "I'll never have any friends."
"I haven't done anything right all day."
"I might as well give up." "He'll never change."
"It was the worst thing that has ever happened to me."
"You never treat me as well as you should."*

Truth: Molehills are not mountains. Not everything is a big deal. A "50 cent" event needs only "50 cents" worth of reaction. People sometimes treat us badly, but not always. We do some things wrong, but not everything. It is usually too soon to give up. Key scriptural truths include Romans 8:28, James 1:19-20, Colossians 3:15-16, and Galatians 5:22-23.

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Take Thoughts Captive II Corinthians 10:5	Think About What is True Philippians 4:8
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Replace: (ex.) "Everything is ruined!"	With: "This situation isn't so hot, but I can get over it. I wonder what God may be doing right now?"
Replace:	With:
Replace:	With:
Replace:	With:



Personalizing ***"Taking everything personally."***

Description: Overestimates the extent that an event is related to him/ her. Tends to be moody and easily hurt by seeming "rejections." Often insecure, and self-condemned. May blame self for everything. Others may view as fragile, overly sensitive, childish, self-centered, even hysterical.

Background: Often were rejected or neglected in childhood or came from highly critical home environment where he / she was often wrongly blamed for whatever was happening.

Self-talk: *"I'm sure it's my fault." "She's out to get me. "*
"He deliberately did that to hurt me. "
"Nothing ever goes my way." "Life isn't fair. "
"She didn't speak to me-what did I do wrong?"

Truth: We are not the target or cause of everything that happens to us. Usually, what occurs is not aimed at us, or is more a statement about the other person than about us. Biblical truth would include Romans 12:3, Philippians 2:3-4, I Peter 5:7, and others.

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Take Thoughts Captive II Corinthians 10:5	Think About What is True Philippians 4:8
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Replace: (ex.) "I'm sure it's my fault."	With: "I may have contributed to the problem but I want to get some more information before I accept total responsibility"
Replace:	With:
Replace:	With:
Replace:	With:



Generalizing

"History always repeats itself."

Description: Believes that past events always predict the future, generalizing from past to future. Whatever has happened before will unavoidably happen again. Nothing will, or even can change, including the person. Often lack initiative and are usually pessimistic.

Background: Often "trained" in this thinking pattern in home environment as it was modeled by one or both parents. May have been labeled dumb, fatso, weirdo, rebel, the "bad one."

Self-talk: *"I've never made good grades before, why bother? I'll never be a good student. "*
"I've never been able to lose weight—I know I won't this time either."
"I can never count on you when I need you. "
"We've always been unhappy—I know we won't change."
"He's never listened before, why would he now?"

Truth: What has happened before does not have to happen again. If I put forth some effort, things can be different, and even better. Key scriptural truths would include I Timothy 4:7-8, II Corinthians 5:17, Romans 8:29, and Philippians 2:12-13.

Take Thoughts Captive II Corinthians 10:5	Think About What is True Philippians 4:8
Replace: (ex.) <i>"I've never made good grades before, why bother? I'll never be a good student."</i>	With: "My low grades before were probably the result of not studying well. I can learn how to study and with effort raise my grades."
Replace:	With:
Replace:	With:
Replace:	With:



Emotional Reasoning

"If I feel it, it must be true." ("If I don't feel it, it can't be true.")

Description: Believes that one's feelings are the equivalent of truth. Feelings are confused with facts. Feelings are often also confused with thoughts. A person may say, "I just don't feel that you care," which means that since I don't feel your care, the fact is, no matter what you say, you don't care. A more precise statement might be, "I don't think you care," or "I'm afraid that you don't care." In this latter statement, the real emotion—fear—is honestly expressed.

Background: Person may have suffered deep emotional trauma in childhood, such as physical or sexual abuse. May have frequently felt afraid but didn't receive any help dealing with their fears. May have seen emotional reasoning modeled. May have experienced frequent broken promises, prompting, "I'll believe it when I see it."

Self-talk: *"That's just how I feel."
"I just don't feel that you..."
"I just know that you won't..."
"I'll believe you love me when I feel it."*

Truth: Even though I "feel it," it may not be true. Feelings are feelings, no more and no less. They are not facts. When I say "I feel that ...", I'm really expressing a thought, and I may be feeling important emotions such as hurt, fear, or anger. If so, I need to identify what the real feelings are and then vulnerably express them. Key scriptural truths would include Romans 5:8, Romans 8:28-39, John 8:31-32, Romans 12:2, Matthew 5:4, I John 4:19-20.

Take Thoughts Captive

II Corinthians 10:5

Think About What is True

Philippians 4:8

Replace: (ex.) *"That's just how I feel."*

With: *"My feelings are important, but they may not be consistent with truth. I need to live accordingly to truth, even if my feelings don't line up."*

Replace:

With:

Replace:

With:

Replace:

With:



Minimizing

"It doesn't really matter—nothing is a big deal."

Description: Most if not all important or significant events are denied or discounted. The person tends to not feel or express feelings, so he / she tends to expect or demand the same from others. Even during life's major events, little emotion is shown. The person denies that anything is wrong or that anything troubles him / her. Much effort may be expended to "put a good face on things." Often are impatient with others who show emotions.

Background: Often come from homes where personal needs were neglected or overlooked. To cope with pain, they "shut down" and acted as if nothing was wrong. May have learned or been encouraged to deny their own needs, which promotes losing touch with their own feelings. May have become self-reliant or self-sufficient. May have seen this pattern modeled by significant others.

Self-talk: *"It's no big deal."*
"It'll go away."
"This happens to everyone. I'll get over it."
"That's life."
"That's just the way it is. Deal with it."
"I guess I just better move on. No point in feeling sorry for yourself."

Truth: Some of life's events are a big deal and thus are worth a significant emotional and/ or behavioral response. Jesus came to give "abundant life." Pain needs to be mourned and comforted. Key scriptural truths would include Matthew 5:4, Romans 12:15, and Hebrews 5:7.

Take Thoughts Captive II Corinthians 10:5	Think About What is True Philippians 4:8
Replace: (ex.) <i>"This happens to everyone; I'll get over it."</i>	With: <i>"As I feel my pain, grieve the hurt, and receive comfort from God and others, I'll get over it."</i>
Replace:	With:
Replace:	With:
Replace:	With:



How These Six Thought Patterns Might Be Displayed

A Comparison

John Smith has worked at a Fortune 500 company for the past three years. He just received notice that due to a down-tum in the economy, the company will be laying off 400 employees, and he's one of them. What kind of thinking might John have in response to this news?

If he "polarizes:"

"So that's the decision—layoffs. Well, this company is obviously going down the tubes. If they don't want me, then I sure don't want them!"

If he "magnifies:"

"This is the worst thing that could possibly happen! My life is over! I'm ruined. What am I going to do?"

If he "personalizes:"

"I knew my boss didn't like me. He's been waiting for a chance to get rid of me. What did I do wrong?"

If he "generalizes:"

"This was bound to happen sooner or later. Big companies never care anything about their employees. This always seems to happen to me—I'll never keep a steady job."

If he "emotionally reasons:"

"Don't talk to me about economic downturns—I just feel like there's something else going on here. It feels like they are not telling us the whole truth about all this and I'm really angry about it."

If he "minimizes:"

"Well it's no big deal, these things happen. No need to even talk about it. What's done is done—not much any of us can do about it."



A Model for Renewing your Mind

We'll use an A → B → C → D → E model to explore the impact of our "self-talk".

A THE ACTIVATING EVENT LEVEL

This level of the A-B-C model is where "reality" occurs. Reality can take place in different shapes and sizes, from the very small, minor events like being seeing stuck in a long line to very large, major events like death of a loved one. Some days are largely made up of positive events (what we call a "good" day), some days are largely made up of negative events (what we call a "bad" day), while most days are a mixture of both (what we call an "OK" day). Examples of major and minor life events include:

MAJOR LIFE EVENTS:

marital
separational/divorce;
personal injury or illness;
bankruptcy

MINOR LIFE EVENTS:

concern about weight;
misplacing/losing things;
delays

B THE BELIEF SYSTEM OR SELF-TALK LEVEL

This level of the A-B-C model is where the evaluation of the event takes place. The way we evaluate or judge the things that happen to us can be based on irrational and unrealistic standards or rational and realistic standards. When we think irrationally or unrealistically, the result is often emotional turmoil. When, on the other hand, we think rationally and realistically, the result is emotional stability and appropriateness.

EXAMPLES OF IRRATIONAL SELF-TALK:

"I must be perfect"; "I must have everyone's love and approval"; "My unhappiness is caused by the things that happen to me."

COMMON DISTORTIONS:

Personalization;
Magnification;
Polarization; Emotional
Reasoning

C THE CONSEQUENCE OR RESPONSE LEVEL

This level of the A-B-C model is where our reaction to "A" and "B" is usually threefold: physiological, emotional, and behavioral. The A-B-C model teaches that our reactions at "C" are caused by our self-talk at "B", not the event/events that happened to us at "A." Examples of physiological, emotional, and behavioral reactions to self-talk include:

PHYSIOLOGICAL: fatigue, stomach problems, restlessness, insomnia, headaches

EMOTIONAL: anxiety/fear, depression, anger, guilt, obsessiveness

BEHAVIORAL: yelling, nervous, hitting, pacing, withdrawing



A



B



C

**ACTIVATING
EVENT**

What happens to you
can be major or minor,
real or imagined.

**BELIEF SYSTEM
(self talk)**

The way you think about/
evaluate what happened to
you. Can be rational/realistic
or irrational unrealistic.

**CONSEQUENCES
(response)**

The way you react to the
interaction of "A" and "B",
is physiological, emotional
and behavioral.

D



E

DISPUTING

Taking "unhealthy" thoughts
captive; replacing irrational
thoughts, half-truths and lies
with rational, truthful thinking.

ENJOY NEW RESPONSES

New thoughts produce new
emotions like peace, joy, hope
and contentment and even new
behaviors like speaking words
that edify; or unselfishly giving.



Marriage Staff Meeting - Session 13

In addition to any calendar coordination, planning, confessing and forgiving, or goal evaluation you need to do, set aside at least one hour to:

1. Husbands, begin by sharing with your partner the one or two faulty thinking patterns you would most like to see changed in yourself: *"I realize that I have a problem with _____.*
I'd really like the Lord to help me change this."
2. Then share the particular false "self-talk" that you will seek to "dispute" from your worksheets. Also, share the truths you will strive to replace them with.
3. Wives, do the same.
4. Talk about some of the childhood experiences that may have contributed to these thinking patterns. How did you observe these patterns in your own family? What did you experience which may have prompted your faulty thinking patterns? Do any of the possibilities described in the "Background" section of the sheet for your thinking patterns "ring true?"

If there are any painful memories which begin to be expressed, let the feelings come out. Express them and receive your partner's comfort. Partners, remember to emotionally respond to any expressions of hurt and sadness.

5. Ask for your partner's assistance in overcoming faulty self-talk associated with these thinking patterns. Be sure to tell your partner how he / she can best help you. What would you want your partner to say to you? How would you want your partner to say it?

Example: *"Honey, when I am magnifying—overreacting to something—I think I'd like you to approach me this way: 'Dear, I'm sensing that you may reacting a little out of proportion to what's happening right now. Is there something I can do to help you right now?' I think that might help me."*

6. Close your time by praying for yourself that God would give you His truth and the ability to take any lies captive to the obedience of Christ. Pray specifically that God would enable you to overcome the particular faulty thinking pattern that you struggle with.