



ABBA Ministries

501 N. Dale Ave. McHenry, IL 60050 (815)347-3928

Illuminating Life through Scripture

Stinkin' Thinkin'

Every emotion we have is directly related to what we believe about the situation we blame for our emotion. Changing our beliefs about the situation will thus change our emotions. The ability to choose our beliefs ultimately gives us complete control over our emotions. One piece of choosing our beliefs is recognizing how our beliefs become distorted in the first place. Aaron T. Beck has identified the following cognitive distortions:

Arbitrary Inference--These thoughts are unrelated or contradictory to the evidence at hand. Obsessed with "there must be some truth to it since I thought it", one sets out to confirm a thought which doesn't deserve consideration at all. An example of such an arbitrary inference is the man who is greeted at the door by his wife at the end of the day and suddenly thinks, "She doesn't love me at all."

Selective Abstraction--These thoughts focus on minor details and cause one to mistrust or ignore far more relevant information. An example of such thought is when a wife concludes her husband doesn't even notice her because he only remarked about how nice she looks but didn't say anything about her new hair cut.

Overgeneralization--These thoughts involve the formulation of broad rules based on isolated incidents. An example of overgeneralization is "my ex-husband cheated on me so all men are creeps just like he is."

Magnification & Minimization--These thoughts involve making far more or less out of a situation than is warranted. An example of magnification is "my wife ruined our new tires by scuffing the sidewalls on the curb!" An example of minimization is "its just a set of tires!" even though they cost \$600.

Personalization--These thoughts involve attributing personal responsibility or relevance to an unrelated event. An example of personalization is seeing a supervisor walking down the hallway with a scowl on his/her face and thinking, "I must have really screwed up!" even though he/she hasn't said anything about a mistake and you can't think of a mistake you've made that would be such a disappointment.

Dichotomous Thinking--These thoughts involve extremes without recognition of gradations between extremes. An example of such thinking is "I'm either the best manager in this company or I'm nothing to this company."

Recognizing these cognitive distortions allows you to restore a more complete and accurate perspective on life. This, in turn, allows one to change undesirable emotions to better reflect reality. Therapists can be invaluable in helping you identify cognitive distortions which effect your psychological and emotional health.