

April 2016

Focus: I Think, Therefore I Am (*or Am I?!*)

Do you often have negative thoughts? Are they weighing you down? Maybe it's time to challenge them.

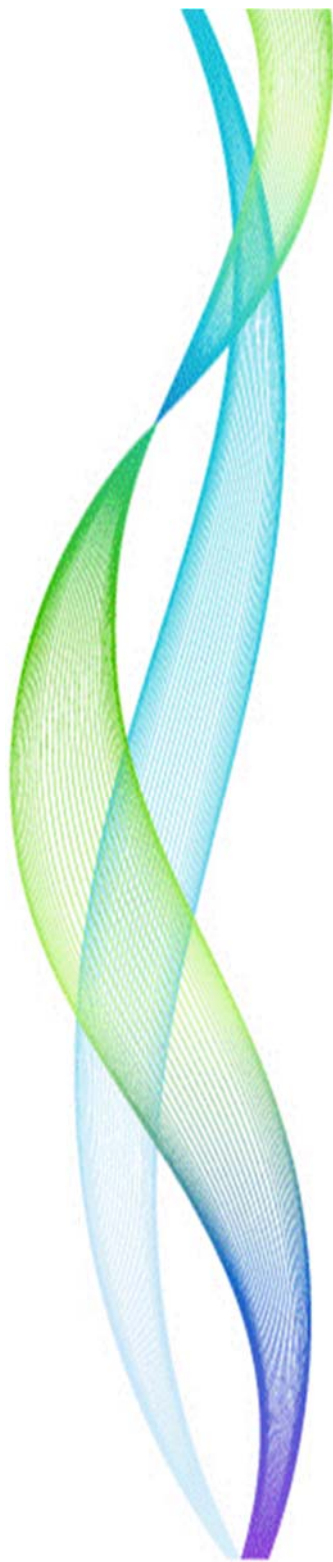
Distorted thinking refers to the way in which our minds convince us of something that isn't really true. While most people engage in a certain level of self-talk, for those with a healthier sense of basic self, that talk might go something like this: *Hey, you did your best today* or *This is a good color on me*. But for others, the voice isn't so kind, delivering instead a constant barrage of negativity: *You really screwed up on that project—you always do*, or, *My thighs are as big as an elephant's trunk*, or, *Why is the world so hard on me?*

One of the first steps in challenging distorted thinking is simply recognizing it. Start with an increased awareness in your daily self-talk. On a scale of 1-10, just how positive or negative is it? Is it judgmental or unkind? Is it an exaggeration of something you're anxious about? For example, could *You really screwed up on that project—you always do* be reframed: *I worked hard on that project; next time I'll ask for more help*. Challenging distorted thinking isn't about becoming a radically different person overnight. If it has become habitual, it's going to take baby steps to break that habit.

Sometimes, distorted thinking is inherited from our parents or other family members. We may not even recognize it until we are well into adulthood. Writing down your own core values—not your parents'—can be very helpful in overcoming distorted thinking. For example, if your father forced you to play sports and you didn't enjoy them, you might still be thinking, *I'm terrible at sports, just like Dad said*. However, when you look at your core values, realizing that relaxation and spending time in nature are more important to you, your thought might change to, *I prefer the outdoors to team sports*. No judgment, just a preference.

With more awareness of and a commitment to challenging distorted thinking, it no longer has to rule your life.

For more information on distorted thinking and how therapy can help, check out [Ready to Talk: A Companion Guide to Psychotherapy](#) by Insights CEO& Founder [Mary Sanger](#).



Reconnect: Take a Trip Together (Without Leaving Home)

One way to reconnect with your partner is by taking a trip down memory lane to a time that was really special in your relationship. Perhaps it was your wedding or honeymoon, the first few years before kids came along, shortly after the birth of your child or even last month during a wonderful vacation. Light a candle, grab your photos or smart device and pour a beverage. Then, take turns telling each other your favorite moments from that time.

Bibliotherapy: *Fool Me Once* by Harlan Coben

Looking for a real page-turner? Try this new release by best-selling author Harlan Coben: “Former special ops pilot Maya, home from the war, sees an unthinkable image captured by her nanny cam while she is at work: her two-year-old daughter playing with Maya’s husband, Joe—who had been brutally murdered two weeks earlier. The provocative question at the heart of the mystery: Can you believe everything you see with your own eyes, even when you desperately want to? To find the answer, Maya must finally come to terms with deep secrets and deceit in her own past before she can face the unbelievable truth about her husband—and herself.”— source: www.Amazon.com

Time-Out: What’s Your Plan?

Getting children to think ahead and for themselves can feel like a chore. But considering the alternatives are either doing kids’ work for them or constantly nagging them about it, it’s worth spending some time and effort helping them achieve more independence. Asking a simple question, “What’s your plan?” (for finishing your homework, picking up your toys, fitting in piano practice, etc.) accomplishes two goals: 1) Instills confidence in them by assuming they already have a plan in place, 2) Fosters independence, allowing them to have some control over their schedule. Give it a try.

Self Care Strategies: Start a Smile File

The next time you’re feeling down or depleted, pull out your Smile File. This is just a folder or box containing snippets of all those nice things people say/do to you that can easily be under-appreciated—an email in which your boss praises your efforts, a thank-you card from a cherished friend, a picture of you in a happy moment, etc. Keep your Smile File handy and use it frequently.

Take Two: *The Lady in the Van*

What could easily have turned into a running cliché in another writer’s hands, Alan Bennett instead delivers a poignant look at an unlikely relationship between a successful playwright (Bennett himself) and Miss Shepherd (played by Maggie Smith), “a woman of uncertain origins who ‘temporarily’ parked her van in Bennett’s London driveway and proceeded to live there for 15 years.” Bennett’s honesty about his own feelings toward the woman, further complicated by a guilt-ridden relationship with his own mother, bring both truth and familiarity to the screen. And Smith’s performance is extraordinary.

— source: www.rottentomatoes.com

Our Time is Up: Stayed tuned for our May issue...