

COGNITIVE DISCUSSION STRATEGIES FOR THE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

1. Questions to debate the **evidence**:
 - What kind of proofs do I have about the truth of my thoughts?
 - What kind of proofs do I have about the false of my thoughts?
 - If I were not (sad, depress...) would I think in the same way?
 - Are there any other possible interpretations about this situation?
 - Am I reading someone's mind? Am I guessing the future?
 - Am I focusing on the negative details and forgetting the rest?
 - What percentage did I contribute to make this happen?
 - What other factors are contributing to this situation?

2. Questions about the **intensity** of the emotion:
 - How makes me feel thinking that way?
 - What is the level of my being upset?
 - What kind of physical sensations do I feel?
 - How this affects my mood, my spirit?
 - What do I feel like doing thinking that way?
 - Is my reaction proportional to the fact that caused it?

3. Questions to debate the **utility** of the thoughts
 - What is used thinking that way for?
 - Does it help me to feel better?
 - Does it help me to be a better person, to do better my job, to improve my relationships?
 - Does it help me to get my goals in life, to be happy?
 - Is really worth thinking that way?

4. Questions to debate (or to think about) the **form** of the thoughts
 - What kind of **cognitive distortions** (errors in reasoning) am I doing?

COMMON ERRORS

- **Focusing on the negative** part of the situation. They focus in the "black part". They see the small mistakes and make them bigger. They forget the good choices, the skills, the valuable things and make them smaller.

- **Personalizing.** They think they are responsible 100% for the events they have hardly participated in. They assume there is a cause-effect relation between the consequence and their own actions (many times

there is not any relation between them). Because of that way of thinking they feel very guilty.

- **Dichotomous thinking.** They see everything as good or bad, a success or a failure, black or white, everything or nothing, perfect or disaster, love or hate. They do not see middle points. They evaluate the situations only with one of these extremes...and if is not perfect (and that is not possible...) will be a complete disaster.
- **Generalizing.** The error consists of drawing general conclusions from a specific detail of a concrete situation. From a small mistake in one situation they think "they don't do anything right".
- **Drawing conclusions without data.** They reach conclusions that have nothing to do with the reality. They think they can read others mind or guess the future.
- **Over use of expressions such us "I should", "I have to", "never", "always", "everything", "nobody"...**