Changing Your Thinking
Handout: Unhelpful Thoughts

Unhelpful Thought Pattern	***Example***	***Challenge Questions***
Shoulds: rules about how you/others should or must act. ("I should ___"; "They must ___")	I should be able to keep my house cleaner than this!	Can I accept myself/others as they are now? Are my standards realistic? Do I need to lower my expectations?
All-or-nothing thinking: thinking in absolutes (always, never, perfect, terrible).	My partner never helps around the house.	Does this *really* happen always or never? Is this actually awful? Are there examples of times when this did not happen?
Filtering: filtering out the good/okay things about a situation; when the good things "don't count" and the negatives are magnified.	This project was a complete failure!	What were the positive parts of my day today? What went okay? Am I sure that *nothing* good happened (nothing is too small)!
Labeling: assigning labels to ourselves or someone else, discounting a lot of information.	I am not a patient person.	Do I/they *really* fit the definition of this label (lazy, failure, selfish, etc.)? Are there examples that do *not* fit the label?
Disqualifying the positive: rejecting positive experiences by insisting they "don't count" for one reason or another.	That only happened because…	What good things happened that I am forgetting? Am I focusing too much on one detail?
Jumping to conclusions: making a negative interpretation without any definite facts to support your conclusions.	If I invite them to a social activity, I know they'll say no.	Is my prediction reasonable? How often am I right when I jump to the conclusion that something bad will happen?
Catastrophizing: overestimating the likelihood that the worst outcome will occur.	I will lose my job (after making a mistake at work).	How likely is the worst-case scenario? What is more likely to happen? If something bad *did* happen, how would I handle it?
Mind reading: thinking that someone is reacting negatively to you without checking out whether it is true.	That person thinks I am a bad parent.	How do I know for sure what they are thinking? What are some more likely interpretations of the situation? What would I tell a friend who had this thought?
Emotional reasoning: assuming negative emotions reflect the truth. ("I feel it, therefore it must be true")	I feel worried, so something must be wrong.	What are the facts in this situation? (Remember, thoughts are not facts!) Is this feeling leading to a helpful action?
Personalization: seeing yourself as the cause of some negative external event that you are not primarily responsible for.	My child is unhappy because I haven't done enough.	What am I *actually* responsible for in this situation? What factors are out of my control? What is a fair assessment of my part?

Changing Your Thinking
Handout: Strategies

Decreasing Unhelpful Thoughts

Thought interruption • When you notice a thinking error or unhelpful thought, interrupt it • Say "STOP!" or "I'm not going to think that right now" • Try to say it loudly – either yelling out loud or "yelling" in your mind	**Acknowledgement and "talking back"** • Notice the unhelpful thought; remember that everyone has unhelpful thoughts and that thoughts are not facts • "Talk back" to your brain ("That's an interesting thought", "Maybe, maybe not", or "Thank you brain).
Worry time • Schedule a time to worry and limit your worrying to this time • If worries come up outside of worry time, you can write it down if you're afraid you'll forget about it • Limit worrying time to 30 minutes at most	**Blow-up technique** • Train your brain to recognize unhelpful thought patterns by taking your thoughts to a ridiculous extreme

Increasing Helpful Thoughts

Write down positive thoughts • Write down positive/helpful thoughts • Read over these thoughts several times per day • Consistency is important to help make these thoughts "automatic"	**Use cues** • Write down positive/helpful thoughts • Use physical cues (e.g., sticky notes on your bathroom mirror) • Use digital cues (e.g., phone alarms) • When you see the cue, review the positive thoughts
Pay attention to your successes • Write down 3 things you are grateful for every day (gratitude journal) • Talk with someone about your favorite part of the day (e.g., with your family at dinner, with a friend at the end of the workday) • Nothing is too small to count!	**Time projection** • Imagine a future after a difficult/ challenging situation is over or when your current problem will be gone (e.g., if you have an upcoming deadline at work, picturing a time in the future when the project has already been submitted)