Reality Testing Worksheet Instructions

Name:	Date:

Instructions: Hello! If you were given this worksheet, chances are, you have a tendency to think negatively about things as well as catastrophize situations that haven't happened and you tend to expect the worst possible outcome of something. Well, that's pretty unhealthy!

The purpose of this worksheet is for you to identify your negative thoughts, how you respond to those thoughts, what are more realistic thoughts you can consider when it comes to the situation that made you think negatively, and then provide actionable steps to lead to better outcomes and work towards those better outcomes.

The goal of this worksheet is to help you develop a more discerning way of thinking to combat negative feelings that may arise from negative thoughts. So, let's try to be more "objective" with how you think about certain situations and problems. Take a step back, take a deep breath, calm down, and let's get thinking!

But first, here are some errors in thinking that you should know about:

1. All or nothing thinking: you tend to think in absolutes, that everything is black and white and no in-betweens.

Alternative: Consider the in-betweens and evidence

2. Overgeneralization: when something bad happens to you, you think it's all downhill from there for every aspect of your life.

Alternative: Don't generalize and think it's the end of the world. One bad thing that happens doesn't mean everything will follow suit. Also, what makes you think everything will be bad? Do you have evidence for that?

3. Negative filtering and discounting the positives: you tend to focus more on the negative side of things rather than the positive side

Alternative: Is it really purely negative? What are the positives, if any? Are they outweighed by the negatives?.

4. Jumping to conclusions: you start thinking and assuming what others are thinking despite the lack of evidence, plus, you also expect the worst, out of people or situations.

Alternative: How do you know that that's (whatever that is) is what others are thinking? Do you have any evidence? How do you know that a certain thing is likely to happen? What are the signs? Are there any other possible signs that lead to better outcomes?

5. Magnifying/Minimizing: you are exaggerating something or you are shrinking or dismissing the importance of something.

Alternative: maybe the worst possible thing won't happen? Maybe it's not even possible in the first place? What is more likely to happen based on signs? Are you sure that something doesn't matter or doesn't matter much? What do others think? How might this something be actually significant?

6. Emotional reasoning: It's like saying "I feel like a moron, so I guess I'm a moron." You are making a reasoning based on how you feel.

Alternative: You may feel this way now, but that doesn't really define who you are. You failed a math test, therefore you are stupid? What if you pass all your other tests?

7. Blaming: You tend to blame yourself for something that is not entirely your fault or isn't your fault at all. Or, you tend to blame others for everything even though you have your faults regarding whatever it is you are blaming others for.

Alternative: What are your responsibilities? What are the responsibilities of others? Are you playing the martyr and taking the blame for yourself? Are you being inconsiderate and minimizing your faults compared to others?

8. Comparing: You tend to compare yourself with others because you think you should stand above the rest or you feel like you are nowhere near as good as everyone else. You minimize your achievements or other people's achievements, or you think too highly of yourself that you become condescending and think no one is better than you.

> Alternative: Are your achievements only valid if you compare them to what others have achieved? Is it necessary to downplay others just to elevate yourself? What are you working towards? Does thinking about others and their respective goals

Here's an example of how you are supposed to write:

Situation or Thought:	While on a date with my girlfriend, I noticed that she started to have an angry and worried look on her face while we were talking. She stood up, said she had to go, and then she ran away without telling me why!
How I responded:	I got anxious and started thinking that she was breaking up with me. I cried in the bathroom.
Error in thinking:	I started thinking about the worst possible outcome, which is her breaking up with me. I also started thinking that maybe she hates me and got annoyed during the date.
Alternative thoughts, perspectives, and evidence:	She had an angry and worried look on her face. Maybe she is angry and worried because something bad happened that she needed to attend to whatever it was. Perhaps, it's a work-related emergency? She did say she's been working beyond her mandatory 8 hours because of something complex at work. Maybe something happened that she had to go back to the office? Or maybe there's an emergency at home? Since she had a look of worry, I don't think that look was for me. She said she was looking forward to our date because she missed me.
Actionable steps (and results, if any):	I'll give her some space and time. Then I will call her and ask her why she left (and if she's breaking up with me). EDIT: I called her. She clarified that her brother left the stove on and it set a small fire in their house. So she was both mad at and worried about her brother. She apologized for not telling me because it felt like a life-or-death situation for her, so she had to run. She wasn't breaking up with me and said that was preposterous, then she just laughed and said she wants to move our date to next week.

Now that you know what to consider when working on this sheet, then you're all set to write. Please do so when you have a negative thought or you are going through a negative situation.

Inspired by the Reality Testing Worksheet by the Waterloo Student Success Office.

Reality Testing Worksheet Proper

Situation/Thought 1:

Situation or Thought:	
How I responded:	
Error in thinking:	
Alternative thoughts, perspectives, and evidence:	
Actionable steps (and results, if any):	

Situation/Thought 2:

Situation or Thought:	
How I responded:	
Error in thinking:	
Alternative thoughts, perspectives, and evidence:	
Actionable steps (and results, if any):	

Situation/Thought 3:

Situation or Thought:	
How I responded:	
Error in thinking:	
Alternative thoughts, perspectives, and evidence:	
Actionable steps (and results, if any):	

Situation/Thought 4:

Situation or Thought:	
How I responded:	
Error in thinking:	
Alternative thoughts, perspectives, and evidence:	
Actionable steps (and results, if any):	

Situation/Thought 5:

Situation or Thought:	
How I responded:	
Error in thinking:	
Alternative thoughts, perspectives, and evidence:	
Actionable steps (and results, if any):	

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