

## Why are we concerned with “Thinking and Reasoning” in depression?

- In the USA and Germany, one in five people suffers from depression at least once in their lifetime.
- Many of them process information differently from people without depression.
- These depressive thinking patterns are often very one-sided and are called “thought distortions.” They can contribute to the development or maintenance of depression.

## Thought Distortion 1: Mental Filtering

### “Mental Filtering”, or “Searching for the Fly in the Ointment”: What does this mean?

- Searching for and paying attention only to negative details.
- Perceptions of reality are clouded, like a single drop of ink which clouds an entire glass of water.

During the next week, pay attention to situations in which you perceive reality through a “mental filter” and describe an example of one of those situations on the following pages. The example may be helpful.

#### Example

*“While participating in a group session, many people are listening to you but one participant yawns and closes her eyes.”*

*Mental Filtering: “I bore people; I have nothing interesting to contribute.”*

In your own situation:

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Your “mental filter”:

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What are the consequences of this mental filtering; how did it influence your feelings and actions?

**Example**

*“I feel bad. I am losing my self-confidence. I probably won’t participate anymore.”*

In your own situation:

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Is this thought justified? NO! Therefore: What could be a helpful alternative thought?

**Example**

*“Some people listened to me and responded to my contribution. Perhaps not everyone felt it was relevant to them. The person who yawned may have been tired and not having a good day themselves. I can’t expect everyone to be excited.”*

In your own situation:

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What are the consequences of this alternative thought for your feelings and actions?

**Example**

*“I may be annoyed with that person for a moment, but I can get into a conversation with the other participants. I am happy with myself and will participate again in the future.”*

In your own situation:

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**If others whom you trust were also present during this situation:**

Find out how others may have perceived the situation by asking a person whom you trust if they evaluated the situation the same way.

**Example**

*“A fellow patient yawned and closed her eyes during group therapy. Why do you think she might have yawned and closed her eyes?”*

Who was present during this situation? What could you ask that person?

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What could be his/her answer? (Sometimes it’s enough to ask in one’s mind’s eye.)

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**Thought Distortion 2: Overgeneralization****“Overgeneralization”: What does this mean?**

- A single negative event is seen as part of an ongoing series of failures.
- In describing such events, words such as “always” or “never” are often used.

During the next week, pay attention to situations in which you are overgeneralizing, and try to reach a more helpful appraisal.

The following examples are meant to aid you with this task:

**Example**

If you forgot the birthday of a friend, instead of telling yourself:

*“I can never remember anything. I’m always a bad friend.”*

...try to make concrete statements about a specific situation, for example:

*“I forgot her birthday this year. That is unfortunate, but I can also belatedly congratulate her with all my heart!”*

In what situation have you used the words “always” or “never”?

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In your own situation, what would be a more concrete statement?

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#### Example

When a dish you cook does not turn out well, instead of making a negative prediction, such as:

*“I will never learn how to cook properly. It’s hopeless.”*

... try to remain in the here and now:

*“It didn’t work today. That’s annoying, but it doesn’t mean that it won’t work the next time I try.”*

In which situation do you predict a negative future (see also module 7, jumping to conclusions)?

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In your own situation, what would be a statement in the here and now?

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#### Example

You aren’t able to put together a new piece of furniture. Instead of being hard on yourself and saying something, such as:

*“I am a failure, I can’t do anything properly.”*

... change your perspective and think about what you would tell a good friend, for example:

*“Well, it’s pretty tough to put the piece together all by yourself, and the manual was very difficult to understand.”*

When do you tend to be hard on yourself?

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What would you say to a good friend in the same situation?

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### Example

A single negative aspect of an event overshadows all the positive.

**Situation:** You've made all of your Christmas tree decorations yourself this year. You notice that a straw star is misshaped.

You tell yourself: *"I'm a failure and can't do anything right. Christmas is ruined."*

**Deliberate exaggeration:**

Imagine the scenario in an absurd or funny way. Have a little fun with your own thought distortions. This may help you to gain a different perspective:

*A friend of yours discovers the misshaped star. He is excited about your creative take on "traditional rituals" and manufactures similar stars for sale. Your decorations become popular, and the whole country is decorated with the misshaped straw stars.*

Your own example (of a time when you used a mental filter in which all the positive was overshadowed by the negative):

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Your deliberate exaggeration:

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## Additional Tipps

Pay attention to situations in which you succeeded right away at making a helpful appraisal, and reward yourself for it!

It's alright if it doesn't work on your first attempt. You can save this task for later, for example when the training is completed.

### Example

You used a foreign word incorrectly. You could tell yourself:

*"Using one word incorrectly has nothing to do with my intelligence. It can happen to anyone."*

Reward:

*"I allow myself half an hour of rest on the balcony with a cup of my favorite tea."*

In your own situation:

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Your reward:

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**Overview****Summary of Learning Points:**

- Pay attention to your depressive appraisals (mental filtering and overgeneralizations) in everyday life!
- Generate more helpful appraisals. For example:
  - Avoid generalizations (e.g., never, always). Make concrete statements about a specific situation that relate to the here and now!
  - Change your perspective (“What would I say to a good friend if they experienced the same or a similar situation?”).
  - Gain a different perspective by trying to deliberately exaggerate your appraisal (imagine the situation in an absurd or funny way).
  - Do a reality check by asking others for their assessment and perception of the situation.

**Comments**

Open questions, problems that occurred, or experiences that you would like to report in the next meeting:

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Other comments:

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**Why are we concerned with “Memory” in depression?**

- Many individuals with depression complain of having problems with concentration and memory.
- Decreased concentration may even be a symptom of depression.

**Is it theoretically possible to remember everything?**

- **No!** The storage capacity of our memory is limited!
- On average, only about 60% of the information from a story can be actively recalled (40% cannot!).
  - Advantage: Our brains are not overloaded with irrelevant information, but ...
  - Disadvantage: ... A lot of important information is also lost (appointments, vacation memories, information learned in school).

**Memory & Concentration**

- Our attention works like a spotlight, only one object on the stage at a time can be illuminated.
- We can only correctly remember things that we have previously focused our attention on!
- It is impossible to focus our attention on all the information in our environment at the same time.
- How well we are able to remember things depends on how well we concentrate in the moment and what we focus on.

**How do memory and concentration problems occur during depression?**

- During strong ruminations, circling thoughts often claim all of our attention.
- There is hardly any attentional capacity left that can be focused on other (more important) things in the environment. The spotlight is focused “virtually inward.”
- As a result, we can later barely remember some of the details in our environment.

**A frequent concern: Am I getting Alzheimer's?**

- **No!** Memory problems in the context of depression are explainable.
- In depression, memory problems are more closely related to decreased information intake than to “forgetting.” Also, they are severe than in Alzheimer's.
- The loss of motivation, apathy, and lack of energy that often occur during depression can also explain reduced information intake.
- Often, memory problems in depression are subjective, a result of self-imposed perfectionism, and cannot always be detected in tests.
- When ruminations/depression are reduced, individuals can attend to other things again and remember them.



**Do we all see and remember the same things?**

- **No**, every person perceives things differently!
- In general, we focus our attention on information that is personally meaningful, sometimes because it fits our mood.

**Try the following:**

Play “I spy” with friends, e.g. while in a coffee shop. You will notice, everyone pays attention to different things.

**False Memories**

- Not everything we remember really happened the way we remember it
- Our memory doesn’t work like a “video camera”
- Our brain fills in and mixes current impressions with past similar events. Many memories are supplemented via “logic” (remember the examples from the session)

**Memories and Depression**

- Depressive moods often lead to remembering more negative experiences - pleasant or neutral experiences are not so easily remembered.
- Events are experienced and remembered through gray-tinted glasses much more often than through rose-colored glasses.
- **Example:**  
During a concert, a man clears his throat frequently. In hindsight, only the disturbance is remembered, not the beautiful music.

**False Memories and Depression**

- The emotional coloring of memories also relates to false memories!
- This can impede a realistic view of the world and encourage depressive processing (thus providing additional “evidence” through depressive processing).

**Does this mean I can no longer trust my memories?**

- **No!** False memories are normal and affect everyone.
- Keep in mind that (like everyone else) you will make errors because memory is not like a video camera.
- Consider that negative situations might be remembered through gray-tinted glasses.
- In everyday life, train yourself to remember positive events more frequently, and keep a joy-diary in which you write down every night the pleasant events that happened during that day.

**What helps with memory problems in everyday life?**

- (1) Try to incorporate as much structure into your daily schedule as possible. The more routine your behavior is, the less risk there is of

forgetting something.

- (2) It is also helpful to maintain the best possible “external order.” You can find items more quickly and remember better when everything has a specific place.
- (3) Post important notes in logical places (e.g., put your medication schedule on the refrigerator or bathroom mirror; put a list of items to remember to take with you on the front door).
- (4) Use an appointment calendar or other types of memory aids, such as a Smartphone or email program.
- (5) Make it a habit to write things down (digitally or in a notebook).
- (6) When you are traveling and want to remember an idea but have no way to write it down, try to anchor it by linking the idea to an object (e.g., tie a knot in your handkerchief).
- (7) The more senses and methods used while learning, the better the retention rate. Therefore, try to use various “channels,” such as hearing, seeing, discussing and applying.

### Personal follow-up:

On the following pages you will find suggestions on how to implement what you have learned in this module in everyday life. You can use the provided examples or come up with some of your own.

## Concentration

What can I do to concentrate more easily?

### Example

*“Doing only one task at a time, e.g. turning off the television while reading.”*

What I want to do and **exactly** when (day, time) I want to implement it:

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### Example

*“To specifically pay attention to the things around me while taking a walk, and try to remember the positive things in particular.”*

What I want to do and **exactly** when (day, time) I want to implement it:

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## Memory

Which (of the introduced) memory tips do I want to try out this week (see above: “What helps with memory problems in everyday life?”)?

### Example

*“Decide on a special place in the apartment for the front door key: leave the key in the lock.”*

What do I want to try?

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What strategy can I utilize to remember things without a memory aid?

### Example

*“I read an interesting article, and in order to better embed the material, I will look up further information, i.e. on the internet, or I tell a friend about what I have read.”*

What strategy I want to try and **exactly** when (day, time):

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## Memory and Mood

What can I do to improve my memory of positive events?

### Example

*“I keep a joy-diary, in which I note down positive events every evening.”*

What I want to do and **exactly** when (day, time) I want to do it:

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What preparations do I need to make for it and when exactly do I want to do this?

### Example

*“I need a nice notebook and a pen. I will buy both tomorrow afternoon.”*

In your own situation:

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### Overview

#### Summary of learning points

- Memory problems in depression can be explained and partly traced back to other problems (for example, concentration problems, frequent rumination).
- Unlike in dementia, the concentration and memory problems in depression are less severe and can improve if the depression decreases.
- In general, our memory is deceptive! Our memory is prone to bias. Memory is especially dependent upon our current mood.
- Use memory aids during periods of depression (calendars, sticky notes) and keep a joy-diary.
- Nobody’s perfect; we all forget things. This is normal and sometimes even a good thing!

**Comments**

Open questions, problems that occurred, or experiences that you would like to report in the next meeting:

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Other comments:

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## Why are we concerned with “Thinking and Reasoning” in depression?

- In the USA and Germany, one in five people suffers from depression at least once in their lifetime.
- Many of them process information differently from people without depression.
- These depressive thinking patterns are often very one-sided and are called “thought distortions.” They can contribute to the development or maintenance of depression.

## Thought Distortion 1: “Should-Statements”

### “Should-statements” or “excessively high standards that we place on ourselves”: What does this mean?

- Trying to push yourself by using “should”, “must,” or “have to” statements.
- Setting rigid rules and standards allows little room for deviation!

**Are you familiar with this? During next week, pay attention to situations in which you set overly high expectations for yourself. The example below serves as a suggestion:**

#### Example

*“I should always be on time for appointments.”*

Does this sound familiar? What overly high expectations do you set for yourself?

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Why do you believe it is important to maintain that expectation?

#### Example

*“It’s just not right to be late. It is impolite to keep people waiting. They might think they are not important to me or they could take me for someone who is unorganized and reckless.”*

Why do you think it's important to you to always maintain these expectations?

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What benefit and what cost comes with overly high expectations?

**Example**

**Benefit:**

*"I am perceived as very reliable and receive recognition for it. I enjoy the fact that others feel that they can rely on me."*

**Cost:**

*"I am tense, because before every appointment I have to keep a close eye on the clock. I have a bad conscience if I am late to an appointment even if my counterpart doesn't mind."*

Based on your own expectations:  
Benefit:

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Cost:

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What would be a more flexible thought?

**Example**

*"It's not equally important to be on time to everything. For example, it would be more important to be on time to a job interview versus a private barbecue. I try to be on time. If something comes up and I cannot do anything about it, then I can let the other person know that I will be late or can apologize once I get there."*

In your own situation: What would be a more flexible thought?

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## Thought Distortion 2: “Disqualifying the Positive”

### “Disqualifying the Positive”: What does this mean?

- “Disqualifying the positive” can be indicated by the following:
  - (1) Expecting negative feedback.
  - (2) Rejecting positive feedback. (Denying positive experiences or positive experiences are regarded as exceptions).

Did you know? During the next week, pay attention to positive feedback that you were unable to accept or negative feedback that you accepted prematurely.

### (1) Rejection of positive feedback

#### Example

You are praised for your work and think:

*“The person is just trying to flatter me, he is dishonest.”*

*“Only he thinks that.”*

How did the thoughts affect your mood and self-esteem?

*“I feel useless and demotivated. My self-esteem drops.”*

In what situation were you unable to accept positive feedback? What were your thoughts?

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How did those thoughts affect your mood and self-esteem?

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What would you have had to accomplish or pay attention to in this situation in order to have “earned” positive feedback?

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Does it make sense to orient oneself towards that standard? Do you want that?

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**Example**

If you don't want that, what could be a more constructive appraisal?

*“Great, someone is appreciating my effort.”*

How did the thoughts affect your mood and self-esteem?

*“I am proud and feel assured in my abilities. I am motivated to continue with my work.”*

In your own situation, what would have been a more helpful appraisal?

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How would that have affected your mood and your self-esteem?

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**(2) Hasty acceptance of negative feedback**

**Example**

You are criticized and think:

*“The other person has seen through me, I am worthless . . .”*

How do these thoughts affect your mood and self-esteem?

*“My self-esteem suffers, I feel worthless and rejected.”*

What could be a more constructive appraisal?

*“The other person might have had a bad day.”*

*“Can I learn something from this criticism?”*

In which situation did you hastily accept negative feedback?

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In your own situation: How did these thoughts affect your mood and self-esteem?

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What would have been a more helpful appraisal?

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How would this have affected your mood and self-esteem?

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What kind of thoughts could help you, to learn to accept the positive, i.e. a compliment, better in the future?

**Example**

*“With praise, someone wants to do something nice for me. I can be happy about that.”*

Do you have additional ideas for more helpful thoughts?

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What could help you to learn to deal with negative feedback better in the future?

**Example****Differentiate the criticism:**

*“It’s not me – it’s my behavior!”*

Do you have additional ideas for helpful appraisals?

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## Thought Distortion 3: “Black and White Thinking”

### “Black and White Thinking”: What does this mean?

- When something is not perfect (demands are not 100% fulfilled), we are convinced we have totally failed!
- This is like an inner critic who wants you to believe that everything in life is only black or white.

What are some examples in which doing something “half way” is already a step in the right direction?

**Example****Learning a language:**

*“A language is learned bit by bit, it’s better to start with 1%, e.g., with 10 words, rather than to 100% not do it!”*

Your own examples:

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**Overview****Summary of learning points**

- Pay attention to “should” statements, black-and-white thinking, and disqualifying the positive in your everyday life.
- Find the right measure for your goals – be fair to yourself so that you have the chance to meet your own demands.
- This also means forgiving yourself when you find yourself falling into one of these cognitive traps.
- Apply strategies to avoid disqualifying the positive and practice them. For example:
  - Differentiate criticism of a specific behavior from criticism of you as a person.
  - Find the constructive parts of the criticism.
  - View praise as a gift.
  - Enjoy praise and do not devalue it.

**Comments**

Open questions, problems that occurred, or experiences that you would like to report in the next meeting:

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Other comments:

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**Why are we concerned with self-worth in depression?**

- Many people with depression suffer from low self-worth.

**People with low self-worth ...**

- tend to pay attention only to the empty shelves, where they view themselves as a “failure”
- tend to make global appraisals of their self-worth (“I am worthless”)
- do not differentiate between a whole person and a behavior (something unsuccessful = failure)

**Self-Worth****What exactly is self-worth?**

- The **value** that a person attaches to **themselves**
- Self-worth is subjective
- It does not have anything to do with how others experience you

**What identifies people with high self-esteem?****Directly observable:**

- Voice: clear, well-articulated, appropriate volume
- Mimics/Gestures: Eye contact; use of gestures to emphasize main points
- Body language: upright, facing others, relaxed

**Not directly observable:**

- Confident in one’s own ability
- Accepting of one’s errors or failures (without devaluing oneself as a whole)
- Introspective, ready to learn (even from errors or failures)
- Positive attitude towards oneself, for example, praising oneself for a success

**Sources of self-worth**

- Self-worth is not constant; it can vary across different activities
- The crucial point for our self-worth is whether we pay attention to only our weaknesses or also our strengths and abilities

**Comparing yourself with others**

- Quickly and without even noticing it, we compare ourselves with others. This is normal. With whom and in what areas we compare ourselves may influence our self-worth:
  - If in comparing yourself, you always come up short because the “ideal” is unattainable or the comparison is unfair, then your self-worth suffers.

## Remembering your strengths - How do I find lost treasures?

### Tips to improve mood and increase self-worth:

- Joy diary: Jot down things every evening that went well. Go through them in your mind.
- Accept compliments and jot them down as briefly as possible so that during difficult times you can go back to them (keep them in reserve)!  
Because:
  - What we put down on paper we often perceive more accurately compared to memories, which during bad moods are not reliably available and may be inaccurate.
- Positive Activities: Do things that are good for you, if possible with other people (for example, see a movie, go to a café, or go for a walk).
- Engage in physical activity for at least 20 minutes – not too strenuous – possibly a combination of cardio exercises and strength training.
- Listen to your favorite “feel-good” music.
- Use the COGITO app.

### Personal follow-up

On the following pages you will find suggestions for concrete exercises that you can implement to strengthen your self-worth.

#### (1) Consider your strengths:

What do I do well? When have I received compliments from others? In what areas have I already succeeded?

#### Example

*“I am good at crafts and a good driver.”*

What are your strengths?

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Imagine a concrete situation: When and where? What did I specifically do or who gave me affirmation?

**Example**

*“Yesterday, I successfully helped a friend to renovate her flat and that was a big help for her. I parked my friend’s car into a very narrow parking space for him.”*

In your own situation: When and where did you succeed? What did you do, concretely, or who gave you affirmation?

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**(2) Write down when something went well or you received compliments for it! The following may help you with that:**

**The story of a Count, ...**

*... The count became very, very old because he was an enjoyer of life “par excellence”. He never left his house without a handful of beans in his pocket. He did not chew the beans. No, he took them with him so that he could more consciously notice the wonderful times during the day and count them.*

*For every positive moment that he experienced throughout the day – for example, a friendly chat on the street, a laughing woman, a delicious meal, a shaded place in the midday heat, a glass of good wine – for everything that pleased the senses, he moved a bean from his right jacket pocket to the left. Sometimes he moved two or three beans at one time.*

*In the evenings, he sat at home and counted the beans in his left jacket pocket. He celebrated these minutes. In this way, he reminded himself of how many pleasant moments he had experienced that day, and this made him happy. And, even the days when he counted only one bean were successful – they were worth living for.*

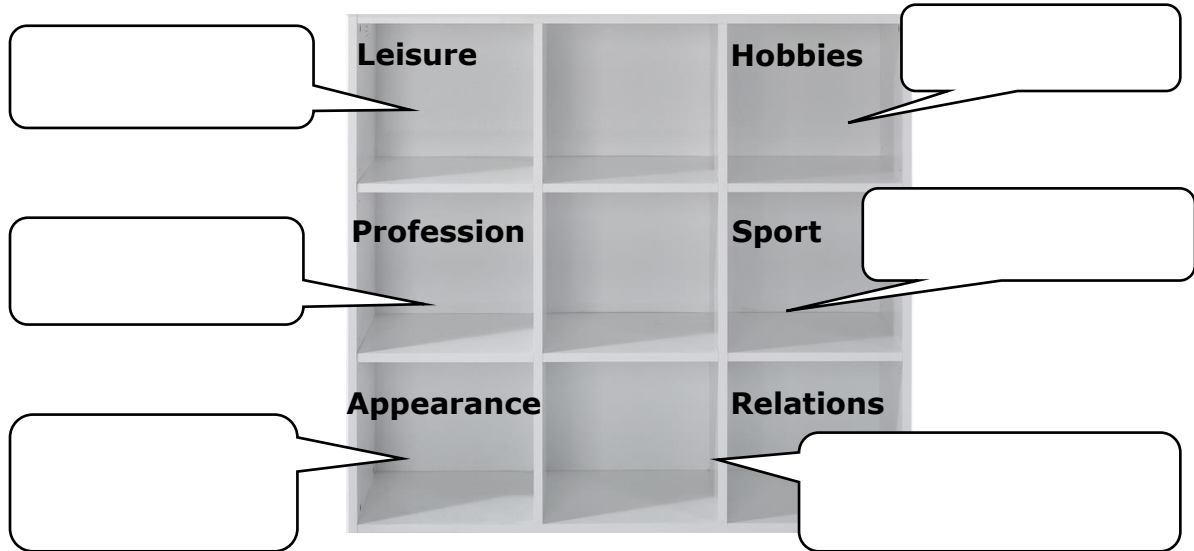
*(Unknown)*

Over the next week, try to move a bean from your right pocket into your left for every little positive experience. In the evening, try to remember what those beans represent and jot it down in your diary.



**(3) Imagine your self-worth as multiple shelves that are diversely filled ...**

- Are there shelves that you didn't think about for a while? Fill in the shelves in the picture below according to the various aspects of your life.



- Are there any shelves that seem empty to you? Try to think if there could be another perspective.

**Example**

*“My shelves are pretty empty. I only have a temporary job and I don't earn a lot of money.”*

What shelf seems to be especially empty for you?

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**Example**

What would be a more helpful/balanced perspective?

*“My job doesn't make me rich, but I receive a lot of appreciation from my co-workers and I enjoy my job.”*

What would be a more helpful/balanced perspective for you?

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If you feel like there is a shelf that used to be full but no longer is – do you have an idea about how to fill it up again, and what exactly you want to do to make that happen?

**Example**

*“In the past, I enjoyed going for a run. Now, I am unable to find the motivation on my own. Tomorrow I will ask whether our sports club has a running or walking group for those with experience that I can join.”*

What I want to start (again):

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**(4) Avoid unfair comparisons**

Pay attention to situations in which you make a comparison that could only make you look bad.

**Example**

*“Compared with my acquaintance XY, I am a complete wimp in sports. It would be embarrassing to do sports with him.”*

Your unfair comparison:

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What consequence do unfair comparison have for your mood and actions?

**Example**

*“I feel incapable and am embarrassed in front of others. I will definitely decline the offer to train with him.”*

In your own situation, what consequence do unfair comparison have for your mood and actions?

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Could you imagine a comparison in which you would fare better?

**Example**

*“My friend XY started this sport at the same time as me. There are exercises which I do better and those that better suit her.”*

In your own situation, can you imagine a comparison in which you would fare better?

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What consequences does this alternative comparison have for your mood and actions?

**Example**

*“I feel assured and see the improvements that my friend and I have made. I would gladly train with her more often.”*

In your own situation, what consequences does this alternative comparison have for your mood and actions?

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## Additional implementations

It's okay if you do not implement the following exercises immediately. You can save them for later, i.e. for after completion of D-MKT.

### (1) Is there something that you always wanted to try out?

Try to improve your self-worth by continuing to fill-up your shelves:

#### Example

*“Sunday afternoon I always have a lot of free time. Just recently I read in the newspaper that the local animal shelter is looking for people who want to spend time with dogs. Since I love dogs, I will spend my Sunday walking the dogs. It's fun for me, and I can fill the shelf 'leisure time' and do a good deed at the same time.”*

What would you like to try out?

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### (2) Perfection – an overly high expectation? Experience with small mistakes.

Deliberately make a small mistake and compare the feared consequences with the actual ones.

#### Example

*“I go to work with a poorly knotted tie.”*

What would you like to try out?

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**Example****Feared/predicted consequence:**

*“Everyone will notice my mistake. Everyone will laugh at time and my boss will tell me off (“You are not a child anymore!”).”*

What do you fear?

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**Example****Actual consequence:**

*“None of my colleagues noticed, an older colleague smiled and said I reminded her of her husband.”*

What is your experience?

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**Overview****Summary of learning points**

- Self-worth is the worth that a person places on themselves.
- Try to take into account your self-worth in different areas of life (work, free time, relationships, etc.), and do your best to strengthen it!
- Look for your forgotten strengths and work toward a balanced self-awareness, such as by keeping a daily joy diary.
- When you compare yourself with others, try to be fair to yourself! Do not compete against celebrities (or seemingly perfect acquaintances).

**Comments**

Open questions, problems that occurred, or experiences that you would like to report in the next meeting:

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Other comments:

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## Why are we concerned with “Thinking and Reasoning” in depression?

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- Many of them process information differently from people without depression.
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## Thought Distortion 1: “Magnification or Minimizing”

### “Magnifying and minimizing”: What does this mean?

- Magnifying the extent and severity of your mistakes and problems
- Minimizing your own abilities or seeing them as unimportant

During the next week, pay attention to situations in which you tend to magnify or minimize and describe an example of one of those situations on the following pages. The examples may be helpful.

### (1) Magnification

#### Example

You do not remember the name of the person you are about to introduce to the group. You are thinking:

*“Oh, no, that’s totally embarrassing. She must think I don’t like her and don’t want her there. How insensitive of me.”*

Do you recognize this thought? Have you ever magnified the extent of your problems or mistakes?

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What are the consequences of these thoughts, i.e., how do they affect your mood and behavior in the short and long term?

**Example**

*“I feel ashamed and insecure. I won’t say anything else and will keep a low profile. I will avoid that person in the future.”*

In your own situation:

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What are the clues that your appraisal is magnification?

**Example**

*“The person introduced herself by name and actively participated in the conversation. Her mood seemed cheerful, like she wasn’t worried about the incident.”*

Were there any hints in your own situation that suggested that your appraisal was magnification?

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Can you imagine a more helpful appraisal?

**Example**

*“Everyone occasionally forgets the name of a person. It’s not a big deal. That’s why there are often name tags.”*

In your own situation, can you imagine a more helpful appraisal?

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What would you tell a friend who is in the same situation (changing the perspective)?

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## (2) Minimizing

### Example

You helped a friend change the back tire of his bicycle. He admires your ability, but you think:

*“Everyone can do that. It’s meaningless.”*

Do you recognize such thoughts? Do you remember a situation in which you perceived your abilities as irrelevant?

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What are the consequences of those thoughts, i.e., how do they affect your mood and behavior?

### Example

*“My self-esteem remains low. I can’t be happy about the compliment or use it in the future as I don’t believe it’s true.”*

In your own situation, what are the consequences of these thoughts?

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What clues point towards minimization?

**Example**

*“I have been told quite often that I am skilled when it comes to repairing a bicycle, and I acquired a lot of technical know-how on my own. I have seen many people with less expertise.”*

Were there any clues in your own situation that indicate that your appraisal was a minimization?

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Could you imagine a more helpful/realistic appraisal?

**Example**

*“I am good at repairing bicycles. When I don’t need any help myself, I can offer to help others. Rear tires are often especially difficult.”*

In your own situation, what could be a helpful alternative thought?

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## Thought Distortion 2: Depressive Attributional Style

### Attributional style: What does this mean?

- Attribution = your own explanation of a situation (e.g., blaming yourself or others)
- We often overlook the fact that similar situations can have completely different causes. Moreover, often there are several concurrent factors involved. However, many people tend to focus solely on one-sided explanations.

**Example of attributions:**

- You make plans to meet a friend and they do not show up (and you can't reach them by phone).

**Possible attributions . . .**

Self	→	"I'm not important to him."
Others	→	"He's forgetful."
Situation	→	"His car has a flat tire."

→ **All are one-sided explanations!!!**

**How does this relate to depression?**

Many individuals with depression tend to make one-sided appraisals of complex events that are attributable to many causes.

- Failures are generally attributed to oneself.
- Successes are attributed to the situation/luck (others) or are viewed as insignificant ("Anyone can do that").

This attributional style is not particularly realistic and can reduce self-worth and promote unhelpful behaviors!

Can you relate to this attributional style?

**Pay attention to situations in your everyday life in which this happens. Avoid making global attributions:**

- Consider the different possible causes of a situation (i.e., myself, others, situation). With negative events, begin with the situation, and with positive events, begin with yourself.
- Try to take another perspective (what would you tell someone else in a similar situation?).
- Consider the consequences (on behavior, mood, self-esteem) of the causal attributions you make.

The examples may be helpful.

**(1) Negative event****Example**

You visit a friend and she is annoyed.

**One-sided attribution:**

*"My presence is disturbing and I am just a burden to her."*

In your own situation:

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One-sided attribution:

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What consequences does this attribution have for your mood and behavior in the short and long term?

**Example**

*“I feel rejected. I withdraw from my friend and other acquaintances. I have fewer social contacts and positive experiences.”*

In your own situation, what consequences does your attribution have?

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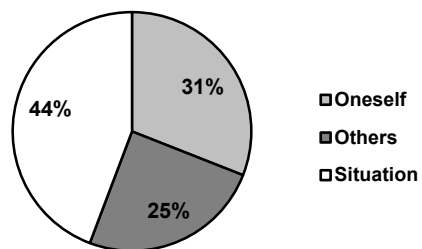


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In a balanced attribution, you see that you, others, and the situation contributed to the circumstances:

**Example**

*“I might have caught her off guard. Maybe she has a lot of things going on or it just wasn’t the right time.”*



In your own situation:

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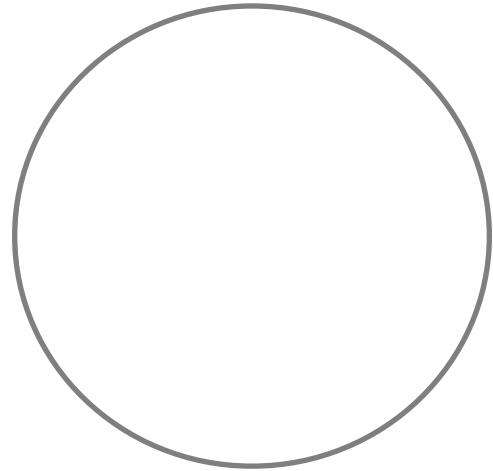
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What proportion of the situation do these aspects account for?

Was there maybe more than one circumstance or more than one person involved?

You can illustrate this by creating a pie chart in this empty circle.



What consequences does such a balanced attributional style have for behavior in the short and long term?

**Example**

*“I don’t feel rejected and keep seeing my friend. I ask her when a better time for a visit might be. My social contacts are maintained. I have positive experiences.”*

In your own situation, what consequences does this attribution have?

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## (2) Positive event

### Example

You cooked something for your friends, and everyone is delighted by your cooking skills.

### One-sided attribution:

*“It’s just a good recipe.”*

In your own situation:

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One-sided attribution:

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What consequences does this form of attribution have for your behavior in the short and long term?

### Example

*“My self-esteem is not strengthened. I can’t enjoy the appreciation of my cooking. I don’t feel encouraged to cook for my friends again or pursue this hobby any further.”*

In your own situation:

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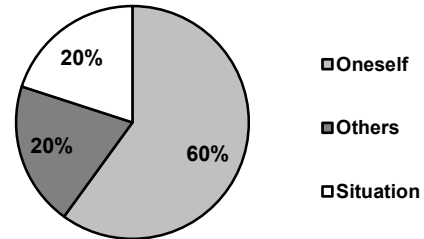
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In a balanced attribution, you see that you, others, and the situation contributed to the circumstances:

#### Example

*“I made an effort to try out the recipe beforehand. XY helped me with the preparations, and the recipes are easy to understand.”*



In your own situation:

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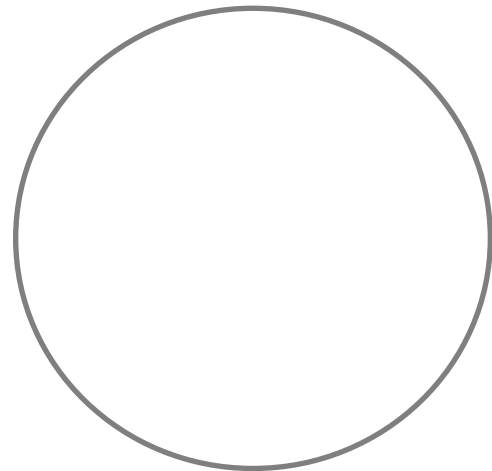


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What proportion of the situation do these aspects account for?

Was there maybe more than one circumstance or more than one person involved?

You can illustrate this by creating a pie chart in this empty circle.



What consequences does this attribution have for your behavior in the short and long term?

#### Example

*“My self-esteem is improved and I am in a good mood. I would really like to cook for my friends again.”*

In your own situation, what consequences does this attribution have?

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**Overview****Summary of learning points**

- Pay attention to the times you magnify your mistakes and minimize your strengths and successes.
- Try to avoid one-sided appraisals and overgeneralizations in everyday life.
- Try to assess everyday situations realistically. You are not always to blame when something goes wrong. Think about other factors that may have contributed to an event.
- Think about what you would tell someone else in a similar situation.
- One-sided appraisals of events may promote unhelpful behavior and lower self-esteem.
- Before making up your mind, consider the consequences (on behavior, mood, self-esteem) of the causal attributions you make.

**Comments**

Open questions, problems that occurred, or experiences that you would like to report in the next meeting:

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Other comments:

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## Why are we concerned with “Behaviors and Strategies” in depression?

- Certain behaviors (primarily rumination and withdrawal) strengthen rather than reduce depression!

## Ruminating

- Many people with depression complain of endless ruminating, brooding, and worrying.
  - Are you familiar with brooding and worrying? What topics are usually involved?
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- 
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- Does ruminating help to ...
    - ... solve problems?
    - ... overcome problems in the future?
    - ... organize things in your mind?
- 
- 
- 

Ruminating is often not helpful, especially with depressive ruminating.

Typical depressive ruminations:

### (1) Content

Ruminating about ...

- why? (for example, the reason for a sickness)
- past events that have already occurred
- your ruminations (“Why am I ruminating so much. Am I going crazy?”)

### (2) Type and manner

While ruminating ...

- it’s hard to find an end, and we often go around in circles (creating “endless loops”)
- We risk losing insight (as there is no input from outside ourselves)
- There is usually no “solution” (unlike problem solving)
- Actions rarely follow (unlike planning)

- your thinking is usually more abstract, generalized and not concrete

### What helps prevent rumination?

... Is it helpful to suppress negative thoughts? – **No!**

- It is not possible to suppress unpleasant thoughts.
- To try to consciously not think about something can strengthen these thoughts (Ex: “Over the next minute, do not think about an elephant!”).
- The effect is even stronger when we try to actively suppress negative thoughts about ourselves (“I’m a loser” etc.).

The following exercises are meant to help you deal with ruminating:

#### **(1) Search for an inner space, for example, imagine a place where you can observe your thoughts but not judge them (negatively):**

- View a thought for what it is:
- A thought - not reality!
- An “event” in your mind. Attempt to register the thought but not judge it.
- Observe the thought without interfering or devaluing yourself (“I’m an idiot. I am ruminating again”).
- Look for a fitting picture to perceive the thought and to describe it, but don’t “engage”.

#### **Example**

*“Imagine that you are at a train station. Like thoughts, the trains come and go - but you do not board every train!”*

What picture do you use as an aid?

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**(2) Connect the judgment-free recognition of thoughts with a three-minute breathing exercise:**

Try to regularly incorporate short breathing exercises (similar to the breathing exercise in the D-MCT-session):

- Sit in an upright position and focus your attention on your breathing.
- Notice how the breath flows in and out of your nose. You perceive thoughts and sensations, but you don't judge them.
- Increasingly expand your attention and feel the breath in your entire body.

Implementation in daily routine: When, concretely, do you plan on doing the breathing exercise?

**Example**

*"I will do the exercise every morning after breakfast."*

When do you plan to do the breathing exercise?

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**(3) Set a rumination date:**

- You notice that you are starting to ruminate.
- Tell yourself, "I will deal with that at another time."
- Set a specific time with a beginning and an end time for your ruminating. This should not exceed 15 minutes and should not be directly before going to bed.

When would you like to plan a daily rumination date (set start and end time)?

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## Withdrawal

In depressive phases ...

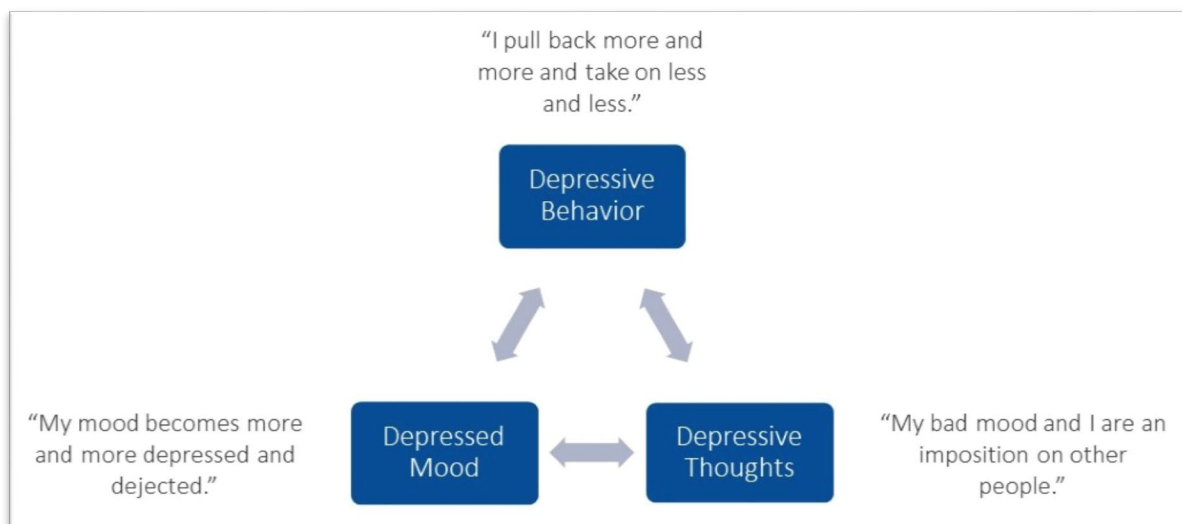
- interacting with others can be difficult.
- you may often feel misunderstood by other people (“They have it good; I would rather have their problems.”).
- your drive to do things is reduced
- your interest in others (and their problems) is often reduced.

It is understandable that you want to withdraw during such phases

... but is it helpful? – **No!**

Withdrawal leads to a vicious cycle.

## Vicious cycle



- Especially during depressive phases, it is important to maintain contact with important people in your life and to continue to participate in activities (small steps).
- Try to break this vicious cycle!

During depressive phases, what can help to break a vicious cycle of withdrawal, low motivation and bad mood?

### Every start is difficult!

- **But**, overcome yourself and take a small step forward.
- **Important:** Plan manageable activities!

#### Example

*You planned a walk when the weather is nice but couldn't bring yourself to go out? Take the first step by standing in front of the opened window and take in the fresh air and warmth of the sun.*

What long-term activities did you intend to do?

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What could be the first step forward and when, exactly, will you take it?

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### Take care of necessities ...

... but also do things that make you happy (such as listening to music, go for a walk). Keep it in balance!

#### Example

*"Today I will take care of the shopping. That is important, but afterwards I will drink a coffee at my favorite café in peace."*

Your own example:

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### Oppose the tendency to withdraw and give in to your low motivation and bad mood:

- Think of many concrete behaviors (small steps) and determine when exactly you will take them.

<b>Example</b>	<b>Description</b> <b>What exactly, when, how, with whom?</b>
<i>Get a breath of fresh air and catch some sun</i>	<i>“Enjoying the sun with a cup of tea on my balcony. If the weather stays nice, I will try this tomorrow for the first time.”</i>

**Overview****Summary of learning points**

- Certain behaviors (i.e., withdrawal) may do you good in the short term (by giving you “me time”) but may strengthen rather than reduce depression if done too long or exclusively! Try to avoid one-sided appraisals and overgeneralizations in everyday life!
- Ruminating does not help solve problems. Instead, it strengthens negative thoughts and feelings.
- Attempting to suppress rumination leads to further intrusive thoughts and is therefore not helpful.
- **Instead:** Practice perceiving without judging (breathing exercises, relaxation exercises, yoga, etc.).
- Especially during depressive phases, it is important to maintain contact with important people in your life and to continue to participate in activities (small steps).

**Comments**

Open questions, problems that occurred, or experiences that you would like to report in the next meeting:

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Other comments:

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## **Why are we concerned with “Thinking and Reasoning” in depression?**

- In the USA and Germany, one in five people suffers from depression at least once in their lifetime.
- Many of them process information differently from people without depression.
- These depressive thinking patterns are often very one-sided and are also called “thought distortions.” They can contribute to the development or maintenance of depression.

## **Thought Distortion: “Jumping to Conclusions”**

### **“Jumping to conclusions”: What does this mean?**

- Interpreting something negatively without clear facts that support this conclusion.
- Typical depressive thinking strategies include mind reading and fortune telling.

## **Mind reading**

... or: “projecting your thoughts onto others”

- “Reading into” others’ thoughts or assuming others are having negative thoughts about you
- Thinking that someone disapproves of you without checking with them

**Be Careful:** The way I see myself and the way others see me are different!

- When I feel worthless, ugly, etc., others may not see me the same way.

## **Is it helpful to try to guess what others are thinking?**

### **Benefits?**

- If we are correct, we can adjust our behavior if necessary (for example, by staying away from “enemies”).

### **Risks?**

- However, if we are wrong, this may cause unnecessary worry and stress.

## **Can I know what someone else is thinking?**

- What suggests you can and what suggests you can not?
  - When I know someone well, the probability is higher. However, I can never know for sure what someone else is thinking.

During the next week, pay attention to situations in which you assume others are having negative thoughts and describe one of those situations on the following pages. The already completed example serves as a suggestion:

**Example**

*“At the bakery when I placed my order, I misspoke three times and got bogged down.”*

**Assuming negative thoughts:**

*“The baker must think I stutter and can't express myself properly! Placing an order is the easiest thing in the world.”*

In your own situation:

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Assuming negative thoughts:

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What are the consequences of this perspective? How does it affect your mood and your actions?

**Example**

*“I feel incapable and fear negative feedback. My self-esteem is in the dumps. I'll avoid bakeries from now on and won't order anything from them in the future.”*

In your own situation, what are the consequences of this perspective?

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Can you be a hundred percent sure that your interpretation is correct?

**No!** Therefore, what alternative interpretations are there?

**Example**

*“I can’t know what the baker is thinking. Maybe she thinks I’m in a hurry and am not concentrating; maybe she didn’t even hear my mistakes; maybe she’s not interested in me at all and was thinking of something completely different!”*

In your own situation, what would be a helpful, alternative perspective?

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What consequences could this alternative interpretation have for your feelings and actions?

**Example**

*“I will wait for her reaction first. Since I want to order more bread at the bakery, next time I will think about exactly what I want to say beforehand or write myself a shopping list.”*

In your own situation, what are the consequences of this perspective?

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## Fortune telling

### What is meant by “fortune telling”?

- Anticipating that things won’t go well—making “gloomy” forecasts or predicting a catastrophe (“worst-case scenario”).

With such thoughts, you can increase your negative expectations so much that they do come true (a self-fulfilling prophecy).

Afterwards, you tell yourself that you knew before you started that you wouldn’t be able to finish it on time (confirmation bias).

During the next week, pay attention to situations in which you predict catastrophes prematurely and describe an example of one of those situations on the following pages. The already completed example serves as a suggestion:

**Example**

*“I want to congratulate my brother with a special gift for his wedding.”*

**Negative prediction:**

*“Nice gifts cost a lot of money, I don’t have a lot of money to give him something that he will really be happy about. I won’t have a nice gift and will disappoint him.”*

In your own situation:

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Your negative prediction:

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How does this thought affect your feelings and your behavior, and what kind of long-term consequences might come with it?

**Example**

**Behavior:**

*“I get nervous and can only think of gifts that I can’t afford. I am certain that I will disappoint him and lose my confidence. I decide to skip the wedding altogether if I do not have a proper gift.”*

**Long-term consequences:**

*“The wedding is approaching. I distance myself from my brother, I can’t really be happy for my brother and only halfheartedly participate in the wedding preparations. My brother is irritated and sad because I do not come to the wedding.”*

In your own situation, what is your behavior?

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In your own situation, what are the consequences?

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In this situation, what kind of prediction would be more helpful?

**Example**

*“I will find a nice gift. It’s not easy, but it doesn’t always have to be expensive. Maybe he would also be very happy if I created something myself (e.g., a photo album for him or a poem). He knows that I don’t have a lot of money.”*

What prediction would be more helpful in your situation?

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How does this alternative prediction affect your behavior, and what kind of long-term consequences could it have?

**Example****Behavior:**

*“I am a bit tense since I still want to find a nice gift for my brother. But, I’ve become more open-minded to ideas that don’t require a lot of money but that he would still enjoy.”*

**Long-term consequences:**

*“I find a gift. I am content with my choice, and I believe it is something he will appreciate. I go to the wedding, and we celebrate together.”*

In your own situation, what is your behavior?

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In your own situation, what would be the consequences?

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### Overview

#### Summary of learning points

- Pay attention to your tendency to jump to conclusions in everyday life (mind reading, fortune telling).
- Remember, quick decisions often lead to errors (as illustrated by the paintings and the story in pictures).
- Gather more information and potential explanations. For example, consider positive and neutral thoughts as well as negative thoughts.
- If you predict a catastrophe, try to develop alternative predictions as well.

#### Comments

Open questions, problems that occurred, or experiences that you would like to report at the next meeting:

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Other comments:

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## Why are we concerned with “perception of feelings” in depression?

Studies show that many people with depression

- have difficulty assessing the emotional expressions of others
- tend to judge neutral facial expressions as sad or disapproving

## Perception of nonverbal cues

### Example

*A person touches his temple.*

In your opinion, what could be reasons for that?

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### What helps answer the question?

- Prior knowledge about the person: Does the person suffer from migraines?
- Environment/situation: Is the person concentrating on a task? Or is the person perhaps tired because they have slept badly?
- Self-observation: When do I touch my temple? (Be careful—you can't always assume the reasons for your behaviors are the same as others'!)
- Facial expression: Does the person look tired, thoughtful, in pain, etc.?

### It's more difficult to interpret a person's expression when we do not know the person and do not have any other clues or information.

- Facial expressions and gestures are not always easy to interpret!
- Sometimes a disease (e.g., Parkinson's disease) or a substance (e.g., Botulinumtoxin/Botox<sup>®</sup>, antipsychotics) can lead to reduced facial expressions. This makes it even more difficult to draw clear conclusions about the person's emotional life.
- Additional knowledge about the person should be consulted before facial expressions and gestures can be interpreted with certainty.

Below, aspects of various facial expressions that we encounter in everyday life are listed. Write down your spontaneous interpretation as well as additional possible interpretations. You will find an example in the first line.



What could the following aspects of a facial expression indicate?

Facial expression aspect	Spontaneous interpretation	1. Additional possibility	2. Additional possibility
Frown	<i>Anger</i>	<i>Irritation</i>	<i>Concentration</i>
Lips pressed together			
Glassy eyes			
Furrowed brow			
Wrinkled nose			
Downturned mouth			
Looking downwards			

As you can see, many different interpretations are often possible! To come up with a more accurate interpretation, we need more information.

If you are in a situation in which you are confronted with a specific facial expression and are uncertain what it means, what can you do to become more certain?

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## What are feelings actually good for?

### (1) Feelings are used for communicating

- Feelings are shown in facial expressions. They often convey information faster than words, sometimes even before we are consciously aware of them (“something is strange,” “gut instinct”).

Can you remember situations in which feelings helped you to communicate?

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**(2) Emotions prepare us for action**

- They allow us to act quickly in important situations without having to think about it.
- They lead to important bodily changes. For example, fear increases our heart rate and prepares us to flee or fight. (i.e., the fight or flight response).

Can you remember a situation in which your feelings made a quick response possible?

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**(3) Emotions ensure that we feel alive. Without negative feelings, we would not have any positive ones!****Do our emotions always reflect reality?**

- **No**, our emotions are not always “correct”!
  - When I feel worthless, that does not mean I am worthless. Sometimes, our feelings are not reliable!
  - People with depression tend to use “emotional reasoning,” which means that they believe their negative feelings express exactly what is really happening (“I feel unloved, so no one loves me!”).
- Studies show that your own mood influences how you interpret the expressions and gestures of others.
- When we are depressed, we often assume that others are rejecting us (thinking negative thoughts about us).
- We often do not see emotional signals through “rose-colored glasses” but instead interpret them through “gray lenses.”

Try to remember situations in which your own mood possibly influenced your appraisal of another person. Also think about what your appraisal might have been if you had been in a different mood. The example below may be helpful.

Situation	Your own mood	Appraisal	Possible alternative mood	Your new appraisal
<i>The person sitting next to me on the train smiles at me.</i>	<i>Depressed</i>	<i>He is nosy.</i>	<i>Happy</i>	<i>He is friendly. It's nice to see someone who's in a good mood.</i>

### Overview

#### Summary of learning points

- Behavior that accompanies emotions is very efficient. It has many functions and is important for survival.
- But emotions are not always “facts.” Just because I feel rejected, that does not mean that I actually am rejected.
- Other people’s facial expressions and gestures are important clues to their emotions. However, we can be misled!
- To assess other people, consider other information in addition to their facial expressions (your previous knowledge of the person, the actual situation, etc.) or ask them what they’re feeling.
- Your own mood has a large impact on how you perceive the world around you.

**Comments**

Open questions, problems that occurred, or experiences that you would like to report in the next meeting:

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Other comments:

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