

Thoughts That Cause Problems

Every individual experiences stress differently, and everyone has his own way of coping with stress. If our bodies are not given relief from the changes that occur when we are attempting to confront stress, **chronic stress** may occur, which can produce a lot of wear and tear on the body. Although our bodies have a natural tendency to repair themselves, we can learn how to confront stress more effectively by practicing **relaxation strategies**. The relaxation response helps restore a natural balance to the body and keeps us from using up all of our vital energy.

Identifying Unhealthy Thoughts:

As mentioned previously, the thought patterns that we engage in can negatively affect coping and stress levels. Review the following "Thoughts that Cause Problems" and circle those that you feel describe your style of thinking on a fairly consistent basis. Then after each of the thoughts that you have circled, try to describe how that particular thought is irrational and how that can cause stress in your life:

1. People must love me or I will be miserable. _____

2. Making mistakes is terrible. _____

3. People should be condemned for their wrong-doing. _____

4. It is terrible when things go wrong. _____

5. My emotions can't be controlled. _____

6. I should be terribly worried about threatening situations. _____

7. Self-discipline is too hard to achieve. _____

8. I MUST depend on others. _____

9. My childhood must always affect me. _____

10. I can't stand the way others act. _____

11. There is a perfect solution. _____

12. I should be better than others. _____

13. If others criticize me, I did something wrong. _____

14. I can't change what I think. _____

15. I should help everyone who needs it. _____

16. I must never show any weakness. _____

17. Healthy people don't get upset. _____

18. There is one true love. _____

19. I should never hurt anyone. _____

20. There is a magic cure. _____

21. The therapist must help me; it's his/her job. _____

22. Strong people don't ask for help. _____

23. I can do things when I'm in the mood. _____

24. Possible is the same as probable. _____

25. I am inferior. _____

26. I am always in the spotlight. _____

27. People ought to do what I wish. _____

28. Giving up is the best policy. _____

29. I need to be sure to decide. _____

30. One must have guarantees. _____

31. Change is unnatural. _____

32. Knowing "why" is essential. _____

33. People should trust me. _____

34. I should be happy all the time. _____

35. There is a sinister, dangerous part of me. _____

36. Working on my problems could hurt me. _____

37. The world ought to be fair. _____

38. I am not responsible for my behavior. _____

39. It is always better not to be genuine. _____

40. I have no problems. _____

41. Anxiety is dangerous. _____

42. You can't tell me anything about me that I don't know. _____

43. People shouldn't act the way they do. _____

44. I should be able to control my kids' or spouse's behavior. _____

45. Willpower alone can solve all my problems. _____

Unrealistic Expectations for Recovery

- "My family should trust me."
- "I should feel better everyday if I am staying sober."
- "If I'm working a recovery program, I shouldn't have substance thoughts."
- "If I am assertive, I should get what I want."
- "If I stay sober, my spouse/family should do this for me."

Unrealistic expectations cause stress because they can set you up for failure, disappointments, anger, etc. What are some expectations you have about recovery?
