

## **STINKING THINKING: HOW WE MAKE OURSELVES MISERABLE!**

*Men are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of them...Epictetus*

### **WHAT TO KNOW!**

- ❖ Stinking thinking refers to thinking/perceiving the world negatively and it is common
- ❖ Cognitive therapists believe how we think determines how we feel
- ❖ How we think also affects how we communicate, how we relate, how we make decisions, how we respond to challenges, and how we deal with stress
- ❖ We may develop patterns of stinking thinking from past experiences, influences while growing up, tiredness, hunger, depression, and hormonal fluctuations
- ❖ By changing our distorted thinking, we can change our moods and emotions, make healthier decisions, and behave more responsibly
- ❖ By changing our thinking, we actually become different not just act differently
- ❖ There are several recognized patterns of how we think incorrectly

### **PATTERNS OF DISTORTED THINKING!**

- ❖ **All or nothing:** situations are seen in the extreme; there are no gray areas
- ❖ **Overgeneralizing:** drawing conclusions from a single event
- ❖ **Mental Filter:** dwelling on only the negative aspects and ignoring the positives
- ❖ **Discounting the positive:** rejecting and devaluing positive experiences
- ❖ **Mind Reading:** thinking you know exactly what the other person is thinking
- ❖ **Fortune Telling:** predicting that things will turn out badly
- ❖ **Magnifying/Minimizing:** exaggerating or minimizing the importance of things
- ❖ **Catastrophizing:** believing events will have extreme and catastrophic endings
- ❖ **Jumping to conclusions:** interpreting facts negatively without any evidence
- ❖ **Shoulding:** having rules and expectations for how others should behave
- ❖ **Personalizing:** blaming oneself and taking things personally
- ❖ **Labeling:** attaching a negative description to the whole person because of one quality
- ❖ **Emotional reasoning:** assuming that things are a certain way because you just feel it
- ❖ **Perfectionism:** having high, unachievable expectations that are never met
- ❖ **Maladaptive thinking:** focusing on a thought over which you have no control

### **WHAT TO DO!**

- ❖ Accept that our thoughts don't always reflect what is real and may be a distortion
- ❖ When frustrated or in a negative mood, identify the style of the distorted thought
- ❖ Challenge and dispute your thoughts by determining if they are real or distortions
- ❖ Look for the evidence and whether there is any to back up your thoughts
- ❖ Observe your language for "should", "always", "must" and "never" statements
- ❖ Check with trusted others to validate or invalidate your thoughts
- ❖ Keep your perspective and identify whether the problem is truly a problem
- ❖ Replace distorted or negative thinking with rational and objective thinking
- ❖ Practice, practice, practice objective, evidence based, rational thinking
- ❖ If you have difficulty identifying your style of stinking thinking and continue to experience anxiety, depression, stress, or frustration, seek professional help

## **WE CAN HELP!**

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