

Reality Checking Skill Card 25

Self-Management Skills Module

Often, we experience unpleasant feelings not because of actual events, situations, environments, or relationships in the present but because of our thinking (interpretations and assumptions we make about ourselves, others, past events, or things we imagine may happen in the future, and/or that these events will have bad consequences). Although trying to process past events and thinking about and planning for potentially stressful situations in the future can be a healthy activity, if our thinking is incomplete, inaccurate, irrational, or based on assumptions, it is unhealthy. We can make inaccurate, unrealistic, incomplete, prejudicial and/or irrational assumptions about:

1. Interpretations and assumptions we make about things that may happen in the future (when they may not) and that future events will have bad consequences for us (when they may not).
2. Interpretations and assumptions we make about our current situation that are causing unpleasant feelings in the present.
3. Interpretations and assumptions we make about ourselves, and negative self-labels and self-talk.
4. Interpretations and assumptions we make about other people, their behavior, or their intentions.

To manage, cope with, and overcome unpleasant feelings caused by inaccurate, unrealistic, incomplete, prejudicial, or irrational thinking, we can use a process called Reality Checking. The steps in the process include:

1. Be aware of what we are feeling, why we are feeling that way, how our thinking may be causing those feelings, and how our thinking and feelings affect our behavior.
2. Understand the interpretations and assumptions we are making.
3. Determine whether the interpretations and assumptions are accurate, realistic or rational, and identify the evidence that proves that they are accurate, realistic, and/or rational.
4. Let go of interpretations and assumptions that are inaccurate, unrealistic, prejudicial, or irrational.
5. Replace inaccurate, unrealistic, prejudicial, and irrational interpretations and assumptions with accurate, realistic, and rational ones.