



Recognize Self-Defeating Thoughts

Most of the time, you probably don't examine your thoughts closely. To identify self-defeating thoughts, you will need practice in taking a careful look at them. To help you practice, we will ask you to examine several self-defeating thoughts and think about which features of each thought make it self-defeating.

Thought 1: "My pain has ruined my life"

What is **ALARMING** about this thought? HINT: How does it make you feel?

What is **UNREALISTIC** about this thought? HINT: Look for extreme words and ideas.

What is **PASSIVE** about this thought? HINT: Does this thought place you in a position of control or of passive waiting? Is there any hope of a solution?

Now let's review Thought 1 Feedback.

1. What is **ALARMING** about this thought? You answered:

Feedback: There are no right or wrong answers. However here are our ideas about this thought. If your life is ruined that is pretty depressing. There is a real sadness to the thought. It might feel scary too.

2. What is **UNREALISTIC** about this thought? You answered:

Feedback: Here are our ideas about this thought: It is unrealistic to believe that life can't improve. There are many options for people with chronic pain that will help them to live full lives despite their pain.

3. What is **PASSIVE** about this thought? You answered:

Feedback: Here are our ideas about this thought: The clear message in this thought is that pain is in charge, not you.

Thought 2: " My friends and family can't begin to understand what I go through with my pain"

What is **ALARMING** about this thought? HINT: How does it make you feel?

What is **UNREALISTIC** about this thought? HINT: Look for extreme words and ideas.

What is **PASSIVE** about this thought? HINT: Does this thought place you in a position of control or of passive waiting? Is there any hope of a solution?

Now let's review Thought 2 Feedback.

1. What is **ALARMING** about this thought? You answered:

Feedback: There are no right or wrong answers. However here are our ideas about this thought. This thought suggests that you are isolated from **all** the people who you love. It conveys a sad sense of loneliness and hopelessness. It also suggests disappointment in your friends and family for not being able to understand and provide the support you feel you need.

2. What is **UNREALISTIC** about this thought? You answered:

Feedback: Here are our ideas about this thought: The idea that an *entire group* of people couldn't begin to understand something is very extreme, and therefore, unlikely. Everyone has experienced at least some pain in their lives and can relate to the basic experience of pain. *Some* people (or even 1 person) in your life may be able to imagine what your life must be like ... and you can try to explain it to them. You may also be able to find other people in pain who do understand through online support groups.

3. What is **PASSIVE** about this thought? You answered:

Feedback: Here are our ideas about this thought: The hopeless theme of this thought suggests that there is no possible solution and that you will always be isolated in your pain experiences. It does not suggest anything that you may do to remedy your sense of isolation.