

EMOTIONAL WELLNESS MATTERS

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Cognitive Distortions – When Your Thoughts Are Hurting You

One of the best tools we have for living a healthy life is our ability to think. Our world is composed of a large number of events that happen constantly. Some are positive and some are negative, and most are neutral. We interpret these events as they happen with a series of thoughts that flow continually through our minds. This process is called our *internal dialogue*. We constantly think about present and past events, and sometimes about things that will happen in the future. And here's the important point – these thoughts need to be accurate. We need good reality testing in order to live effectively.

Our moods or feelings are created by the thoughts we have, and not by the actual events themselves. We need to think about events and attach a *meaning* to them before we experience an emotional response. People have different ways of interpreting the same event. Let's say that our friend, Rhonda, has decided to move to a different part of the country. Some people will congratulate her for making a move that could bring her the happiness she has sought for a long time. Other people might condemn her for running away from the life she has here. Some will call her healthy. Some will call her greedy. Some will call her heartless. How we think about Rhonda will reflect our core beliefs about the world.

We define Rhonda's actions in terms of how we personally interpret the world – and these interpretations reflect the basic assumptions we have about how the world works. Her move in itself signifies nothing until we think about it and place an interpretation or meaning on it. If we see it as a healthy move on her part,



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Marsha Marcoe is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist specializing in the treatment of Anxiety and Panic Disorder. Marcoe offers a clinically proven 15-week individualized program utilizing specific tools for gaining control over stress and anxiety and the associated symptoms.

Marsha Marcoe is an affiliate of the Midwest Center for Stress and Anxiety, Inc., who have developed a proven method for regaining self control and self confidence through the control of the symptoms associated with stress and anxiety. She maintains a private practice in Santa Barbara where she is available for individual consultation and individual therapy.

Anxiety disorder is a condition that has been misdiagnosed and misunderstood for years. One out of five people suffer from anxiety disorder. Common Physical Symptoms of anxiety are nervousness, rapid heartbeat, dizziness, and numbness in various parts of the body. Common fears are fear of losing control, fear of losing your mind, fear of embarrassing yourself, and fear of dying.

