

Exercise

Professional Version | US English

Decatastrophizing



Description

The *Decatastrophizing* worksheet is taken from the self-help workbook *Psychology Tools For Overcoming Panic*. Decatastrophizing is a cognitive restructuring technique to reduce or challenge catastrophic thinking. The term 'decatastrophizing' was coined by Albert Ellis who developed REBT, but as a technique, it is equally at home within a CBT model.

Instructions

The cognitive distortion of catastrophizing involves a number of elements:

- Overestimation of the likelihood of an event.
- Overestimation of the 'awfulness' of an event.
- Underestimation of our ability to cope with the event should it happen.

Decatastrophizing means addressing these distortions. Questions to ask might include: "Realistically, what is the worst that could happen?" and "How would I cope if the worst did happen?". This worksheet can be used to guide a client through this decatastrophizing process. In time clients can be guided to lead themselves through this process in anxiety-provoking situations.

References

Ellis, A. (1962). *Reason and Emotion In Psychotherapy*. New York: Lyle Stuart.

Whalley, M. G. (2015). *Psychology tools for panic*. Psychology Tools.

Decatastrophizing

What is the catastrophe that you are worried about?

Clearly state: What are you worried will happen? What are you predicting will happen?
Change any "what if...?" statements into clear predictions about what you fear will happen.

Rate how awful you believe this catastrophe will be (0-100%)

How *likely* is this event to happen?

Has anything this bad ever happened to you before?
How often does this kind of thing happen to you?
Realistically, is this likely to happen now?

How *awful* would it be if this did happen?

What is the worst case scenario?
What is the best case scenario?
What would a friend say to you about your worry?

Just supposing the worst did happen, what would you do to *cope*?

Has anything similar happened before? How did you cope then?
Who or what could you call on to help you get through it?
What resources, skills, or abilities would be helpful to you if it did happen?

What positive and reassuring thing do you want to say to yourself about the 'catastrophe' now?

What would you like to hear to reassure you?
What tone of voice would you want to hear that reassurance in?

Rate how awful you believe this catastrophe will be now (0-100%)

Decatastrophizing

What is the catastrophe that you are worried about?

Clearly state: What are you worried will happen? What are you predicting will happen?
Change any "what if...?" statements into clear predictions about what you fear will happen.

what if something bad happens? ☹️ Too general

what if my health never gets better? 😐 "what if...?"

my health will never get better. 😊 Specific

Rate how awful you believe this catastrophe will be (0-100%)

90%

How likely is this event to happen?

Has anything this bad ever happened to you before?
How often does this kind of thing happen to you?
Realistically, is this likely to happen now?

unlikely - I've been ill before and got better.

unlikely - the doctor said most people recover fully from this condition.

How awful would it be if this did happen?

What is the worst case scenario?
What is the best case scenario?
What would a friend say to you about your worry?

It would be bad if it did happen - I would have to give up work, and would struggle to look after my family. My husband and I might be able to find a way to manage.

Just supposing the worst did happen, what would you do to cope?

Has anything similar happened before? How did you cope then?
Who or what could you call on to help you get through it?
What resources, skills, or abilities would be helpful to you if it did happen?

We coped when I was ill before. I could still do some things, and family helped us. We've got savings and have made changes to our lifestyle before.

What positive and reassuring thing do you want to say to yourself about the 'catastrophe' now?

What would you like to hear to reassure you?
What tone of voice would you want to hear that reassurance in?

It's scary being ill, but what I'm afraid of is unlikely to happen. It's never happened before and things never stay at their worst forever.

Rate how awful you believe this catastrophe will be now (0-100%)

30%

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