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Cognitive Restructuring Exercise

Change the “*shoulds*” to “*wants*,” the “*I must*” to “*I can*.”

Instead of “I should have known better,” or “I must do better than this,” here are some positive examples of positive self-talk:

- I can handle this
- I’m doing the best I can
- I have a choice
- It’s a passing thing
- I like myself
- I’ll feel better tomorrow
- It’s just a bump in the road

Cognitive restructuring is like riding a bike. When you first learn to ride, you fall off quite a bit. The more you practice, the more you learn to stay on the bike. No one is perfect, and we all make mistakes, so hopefully we can learn from our slips and falls.

Read this example of a stressful situation, and then identify one of your own following the format of this example.

Situation	Emotions	Thoughts	Cognitive Distortions	Rational Response
Stuck in traffic	Angry Tense Queasy stomach Palpitation	I’ll never make it to work. This always happens to me. I should have known better. Where do people get their licenses.	Jumping to conclusions Fortune telling Generalization Personalization Should statement Labeling	Stop, breathe, reflect, and choose. Do a ‘mini’- take a deep breath and stretch. Reframe - I will make it work; I may be a few minutes late but it is no big deal.

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