

HANDOUT 7.5A

Sample Patterns of Problematic Thinking Worksheet

Date: _____ Client: _____

Listed below are several different patterns of problematic thinking that people use in different life situations. These patterns often become automatic, habitual thoughts that cause people to engage in self-defeating behavior. Considering your own Stuck Points, or samples from your everyday thinking, find examples for each of these patterns. Write in the Stuck Point or typical thought under the appropriate pattern, and describe how it fits that pattern. Think about how that pattern affects you.

1. **Jumping to conclusions** or predicting the future.

[Victim of childhood sexual abuse:] *If a man is alone with a child, then the man will hurt the child. But I know my husband will not hurt my kids so this belief is causing problems in my marriage*

2. **Exaggerating or minimizing** a situation (blowing things way out of proportion or shrinking their importance inappropriately).

[Traveler:] *I saw a dead body and riots, but I didn't get hurt and others saw worse, so my reaction to the situation was wrong. I was weak.*

3. **Ignoring important parts** of a situation.

[Robbery victim:] *I keep forgetting the fact that the perpetrator had a gun, which is important information about how much control I had.*

4. **Oversimplifying** things as “good–bad” or “right–wrong.”

[Police officer:] *Not everyone is all good or all bad. I may have done some things in my life that were not that good, but that does not make me a bad person.*

5. **Overygeneralizing** from a single incident (e.g., a negative event is seen as a never-ending pattern).

[Adult rape victim:] *I was raped by a man, so all men are dangerous. Maybe I am using this belief to stay away from men?*

6. **Mind reading** (in particular, assuming that people are thinking negatively of you when there is no definite evidence for this).

[Victim of childhood physical abuse:] *My dad yells now, so I assume he must be angry. But it's not true a lot of the times, because he yells sometimes because he is deaf in one ear and going deaf in another. He yells because he doesn't know he is yelling.*

7. **Emotional reasoning** (using your emotions as proof—e.g., “I feel fear, so I must be in danger”).

[Survivor of a traumatic bereavement:] *I feel guilt over my friend's death, so I must have done something wrong.*