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COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

FILTERING: Placing a focus on one negative piece of information/event/interaction and ruminating on it so you lose sight of any positive elements in life.

Example: only focusing on the distressing memories of treatment while ignoring your strength and resilience for getting through the treatment itself and conquering cancer.

POLARIZED THINKING (A.K.A. ALL OR NONE, BLACK AND WHITE THINKING): The belief that things are either really great, or really awful, and there is no in-between.

Example: "I don't feel as enthusiastic being back at work like I thought I would. So many changes have occurred since I had to go on sick leave. I should just quit; I was out for too long and I'm not capable of doing this position anymore!"

OVERGENERALIZATION: Assuming that due to one negative experience, all future experiences will also be negative, and that's the way it will always be, everywhere.

Example: "I just feel so fatigued every time I try to exercise lately, I will never get my stamina back."

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS: An individual reaches a rigid conclusion despite having little or no evidence to support said conclusion.

Example: "Treatment left a noticeable impact on my body, no one will ever find me attractive again after cancer."

CATASTROPHIZING: Like filtering, an individual will discount all other possibilities, and conclude that the only possible outcome will be the worst possible one.

Example: "My doctor told me that she wanted me to go do some more lab tests, it must be because she thinks my cancer has returned and she doesn't want to tell me!"

PERSONALIZATION: Belief that a person is somewhat responsible for every bad thing that may happen around him/her.

Example: "I didn't donate any money for cancer research this year, and the news mentioned that childhood leukemia rates are increasing!"

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CONTROL FALLACIES: The belief that everything that happens to a person is completely their fault, or not at all their fault.

Example: A woman is passed over for a well-deserved promotion at work and tells herself management's decision is totally justified since she endured cancer, so management doesn't want to give extra work/responsibilities.

FALLACY OF FAIRNESS: The belief that everything in life always needs to be "fair" or else something is wrong.

Example: "A non-smoker gets cancer, while heavy smokers never receive a cancer diagnosis"

EMOTIONAL REASONING: The belief that feelings equate to reality.

Example: "I just don't feel as happy as I thought I would once I became cancer-free so clearly I am a horrible and ungrateful person!"

FALLACY OF CHANGE: Believing that others will change their behaviour/viewpoints to better serve your needs/desires.

Example: "My loved ones who were a big part of my life before my diagnosis, will continue to play a big role in my life throughout treatment and recovery and provide me with even more support and understanding than they did before my cancer."

THE "SHOULDs": An unhelpful way of viewing oneself and others around them by attaching moral or critical ideals on ourselves or others. Sometimes a person may use "shoulds" in an attempt to motivate themselves or others. If we say this to ourselves, we may feel guilty or anxious. If we use "shoulds" on others, then we are likely to be frustrated or disappointed.

Example: "I should be happier," "I should be grateful," or "I should just get over it"

SELF-BLAME: When a person blames themselves for something bad happening, regardless of whether the person had any control/influence on the outcome.

Example: "If I had eaten more vegetables and exercised more, then I would never have gotten cancer."