



Cognitive Reframing & Restructuring: Clinician Reference Card

A one-page, in-session reference: the three-step process, distortion-to-documentation language, and reframing prompts.

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The 3 C's of Cognitive Restructuring

Step 1

Catch

Notice the automatic negative thought as it happens, through self-monitoring or a thought diary.

Step 2

Check

Weigh it against the evidence: is it realistic, distorted, or simply unproven?

Step 3

Change

Replace it with a balanced, accurate thought that produces a healthier response.

Distortion → In-Session Reframe → Documentation Language

Cognitive distortion	In-session reframe move	Progress-note / documentation language
All-or-nothing thinking	Examine the middle ground; weigh the evidence for and against the absolute.	"Client identified all-or-nothing appraisal following work feedback; affect included shame and withdrawal urges."
Overgeneralization	One event is not "always"; surface concrete counter-examples.	"Client recognized pattern of overgeneralization; generated alternative explanation with reduced distress."
Jumping to conclusions (mind-reading)	Test the belief directly with a behavioral experiment.	"Identified mind-reading distortion; client tested belief through behavioral experiment."
Magnification (catastrophizing)	Decatastrophize: "How likely is this?" then build a recovery plan.	Documentation focus: threat overestimation; emotional escalation.
Personalization	Reattribution: name the external factors outside the client's control.	"Client challenged personalization belief; identified external contributing factors."
Emotional reasoning	Separate the feeling from the fact it seems to prove.	Objective: differentiate emotional experience from factual conclusions.
Should statements	Soften rigid rules into preferences and realistic standards.	Focus: rigid internal standards; self-critical schema activation.
Labeling	Replace the global label with a behavior-specific description.	Intervention: replace global labels with behavior-specific descriptions.

Reframing & Restructuring Techniques (with a prompt)

- **Socratic questioning** — "Is it realistic that one mistake defines your whole career?"
- **Evidence-based reframing** — "What supports this thought, and what contradicts it?"
- **The "what if" technique** — "If the worst happened, what would you actually do next?"
- **Reattribution** — "What factors here are outside your control?"
- **Positive reframing** — "What might this difficult moment open up?"
- **Decatastrophizing** — "How likely is this, and how manageable in small steps?"
- **Zooming out** — "Where does this sit in the bigger picture of your life?"
- **Thought records** — Write the thought, its trigger, and the evidence for and against.
- **Behavioral experiments** — Test the belief in real life and observe what happens.

Keep the cognitive work documented. Turn the reframing and restructuring in your sessions into insurance-ready treatment plans and progress notes, without extra paperwork, with Mentalyc's AI Treatment Planner.

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