

Skill-Building Tip Sheet #SB6



Stress Management Workbook for Caregivers and Survivors

Stroke can be stressful for survivors and the family caregivers who provide care for them. **This workbook is designed for stroke survivors and caregivers dealing with stress after stroke.** Stroke survivors can complete this workbook on their own, or with the help of a caregiver. Caregivers can complete this workbook with their own emotions in mind. **If this workbook seems too long, then try reading down the list of strategies to revise thoughts in the table beginning on p. 68.** Some caregivers and survivors feel better after reading this list of strategies.

This workbook is one way of helping yourself deal with negative thoughts and emotions after stroke. **Do not be afraid to seek professional help from your doctor or others involved in your care.** Negative thoughts and emotions can be very difficult to control on your own. **Medications and psychological counseling are often prescribed and can be very effective.** It is far better to seek treatment than to allow the downward spiral of depression to interfere with stroke recovery or providing care.

Whether you are a stroke survivor or a caregiver, place an X beside all of those below from whom you think you can seek help from.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ 911 if an Emergency | ☐ Crises/Suicide line 1-800-273-8255 |
| ☐ Stroke survivor's doctor | ☐ https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org |
| ☐ Caregiver's doctor | ☐ ASA Warmline 1-888-4-STROKE |
| ☐ Psychiatrist | ☐ Mental health clinic |
| ☐ Neurologist | ☐ Local hospital |
| ☐ Neuropsychologist | ☐ Support group |
| ☐ Psychologist | ☐ Other stroke survivors |
| ☐ Counselor | ☐ Other caregivers |
| ☐ Priest or Pastor | ☐ Family and Friends |
| ☐ Nurse | ☐ Other _____ |

Write the telephone numbers for each of the above that you put an X by.

More places I can seek professional help

Emotions After Stroke

What emotions have you had in the past week? (Put an X beside all that you have)

- ☐ Mood fluctuations (up one minute, down the next)
- ☐ Anxiety or fear (being scared)
- ☐ Nervousness or feeling uneasy
- ☐ Anger or feeling mad about something
- ☐ Frustration or can't seem to get over something
- ☐ Depression or feeling sad
- ☐ Guilt or embarrassment (feeling ashamed)
- ☐ Poor outlook or feelings of hopelessness
- ☐ Feelings of loss (miss the way things were before the stroke)
- ☐ Feelings of dependency or being a burden on others
- ☐ Feeling worthless or unappreciated
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ Other _____

This workbook will give you some ideas on how to deal with the emotions that you are having. There are steps that you can use to figure out what to do.

- What is the problem or situation?
- What are the emotions that I have about that problem?
- What thoughts am I having about the problem?
- What thought distortions (negative thoughts that are not true) or negative self-talk do I have?
- What are my revised thoughts about the problem?
- What are my revised emotions about the problem?

What is the problem or situation, and what emotions are you having about the problem? Emotions themselves are not the problem. What is it that makes you feel the way that you do?

Problem or situation

List your emotions about this problem or situation (you can look through the list on the first page for ideas)

Rate how strong each of your emotions are on a 1-10 scale:

Weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Strong

Next problem or situation

Emotions:

Ratings (1-10) for each emotion

Weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Strong

Next problem or situation

Emotions:

Ratings (1-10) for each emotion

Weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Strong

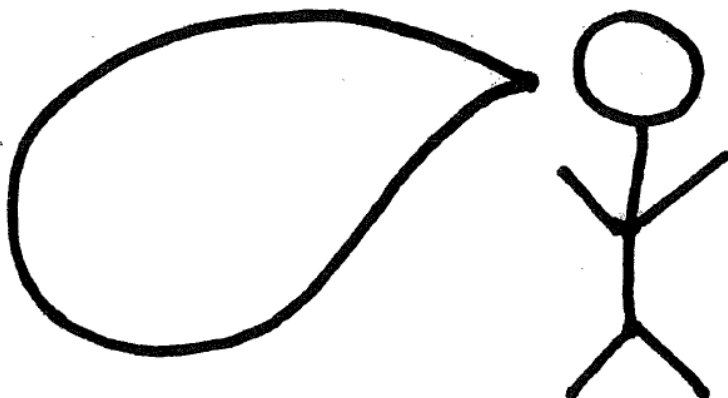
Of the 3 problems or situations above, which one has the strongest emotion ratings?

Let's work on the problem or situation about which you have the **strongest** emotions for. Fill out the blanks below:

Problem or Situation

Emotions with ratings (1-10)

What are your thoughts about the problem or situation? Thoughts are not the same as the problem. Thoughts are not the emotions that go along with the problem. **Thoughts are what you tell yourself when you think about the problem.** Draw a stick figure of yourself below. Put a thought bubble pointing to you. What are you telling yourself?



My thoughts (What I am telling myself about the problem?):

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

Thoughts that you tell yourself might not be true. Dr. David Burns has made a list of thoughts that many people have that are not true. He calls them **thought distortions** (negative thoughts that are not true).

10 Thought Distortions (negative thoughts that are not true):

1. **All-or-nothing thinking:** You look at things in absolute, black-and-white categories. It's good or bad. There is no grey area.
2. **Overgeneralization:** You view a negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat. You use words like "always" or "never."
3. **Mental filter:** You dwell on the negatives and ignore the positives. Everything is bad.
4. **Discounting the positives:** You insist that your accomplishments are positive qualities that "don't count." You don't give yourself credit for the things you do well.
5. **Jumping to conclusions:** A. **Mind-reading:** you assume that people are reacting negatively to you when there's no definite evidence for this... or B. **Fortune-telling:** you arbitrarily predict that things will turn out badly.
6. **Magnification or minimization:** You blow things way up out of proportion or you shrink their importance inappropriately. You make a big deal out of things, or you ignore them.
7. **Emotional reasoning:** You reason from how you feel: "I feel like an idiot, therefore I really must be one." Or... "I don't feel like doing this, so I'll put it off."
8. **Should statements:** You criticize yourself or other people with "shoulds," or "shouldn'ts." "Musts," "oughts," and "have tos" are similar offenders.
9. **Labeling:** You identify with your shortcomings. Instead of saying "I made a mistake," you tell yourself "I'm a jerk" or "a fool" or "a loser."
10. **Personalization and blame:** You blame yourself for something you weren't entirely responsible for, or you blame other people and overlook your own attitudes and behaviors that might contribute to a problem.

There are also types of negative self-talk that we tell ourselves.

1. **The worrier:** You are always asking yourself “What if?” A lot of worry is wasted on things that never happen.
2. **The critic:** You are always pointing out what is wrong with yourself. You never focus on the positive. “I am a failure.” “I always mess up.” “I am stupid.” If you met another person, would you tell them these things? Would you critique them the way you critique yourself?
3. **The victim:** Things are hopeless. You tell yourself, “I will never be able to” “I will always be worthless.” “This will always be horrible.”
4. **The perfectionist:** Things must be perfect all the time. “I should do...” “To be a good person I must...” “I have to...”

Look back to your list of thoughts (what you tell yourself).

What was your Thought A?

Put an X beside any of the thought distortions or negative thoughts that apply below:

Thought Distortions	Negative self-talk
☐ 1. All or none thinking (good or bad)	☐ 1. The worrier (what if?)
☐ 2. Overgeneralization (always, never)	☐ 2. The critic (labeling)
☐ 3. Mental filter (dwell on negatives)	☐ 3. The victim (hopeless)
☐ 4. Discounting positives (+don't count)	☐ 4. The perfectionist
☐ 5. Jumping to conclusions	(shoulds)
☐ ☐ Mind-reading (he or she thinks...)	
☐ ☐ Fortune telling (It's going to...)	
☐ 6. Magnification or minimization (too big of a deal, or ignore)	
☐ 7. Emotional reasoning (I feel, therefore I am)	
☐ 8. Should statements (I should, must, ought, have to...)	
☐ 9. Labeling (calling yourself names)	
☐ 10. Personalization and blame. (blame yourself, or someone else)	

Let's pull together what we have so far for your first problem:

Fill out the first 4 columns on the following thought record. Look back to the previous pages you have written on to fill in the table.

Thought Record #1

1. Problem or situation	2. Emotions with ratings 1-10	3. Thoughts about the problem (what are you telling yourself?)	4. Thought distortions and negative self-talk for each thought.	5. Revised thoughts about the problem (what are you telling yourself now?)	6. Revised emotions with ratings 1-10
What was your #1 problem or situation?	List each emotion for problem #1, followed by the 1-10 rating.	A. B. C.	Distortions or negative self-talk for thought A: Distortions or negative self-talk for thought B: Distortions or negative self-talk for thought C:	A. B. C.	Go back to your list of each emotion for problem #1. List them again, only with new ratings.

What can I do to fix my thought distortions and negative self-talk?

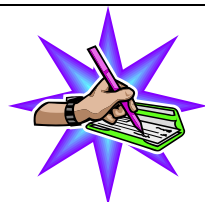
There are several things that you can do to revise the thoughts that you are having. You can also improve your self-talk. Here are some ideas. Use these ideas to fill in the 5th column of your thought record:

Strategies to revise thoughts. Read through these for some ideas that might work for you.	Thought distortions or negative self-talk that these strategies might help.	Some ideas on how to begin revised thoughts.
Look at how realistic your thoughts are. • Get rid of words such as “always” or “never.” • Allow yourself to fall in the middle somewhere. Allow yourself to consider things in the grey area. Nothing is truly good or bad. There are usually points in between. • Realize that just because you feel a certain way doesn’t mean you are that way. You may feel stupid about something, but that doesn’t mean that you are a stupid person overall.	All-or-none thinking Overgeneralization Mental filter Magnification or minimization Emotional reasoning The critic The victim	“OK, so I am not always...” “I can’t say I never...” “Sometimes...” “I guess there is good and bad about...” “Just because I feel ____ doesn’t mean I am ____.” “I made a mistake. It doesn’t mean that I am...”



Strategies to revise thoughts. Read through these for some ideas that might work for you.	Thought distortions or negative self-talk that these strategies might help.	Some ideas on how to begin revised thoughts.
Take a negative thought and make a list of evidence that suggests that it is not true. For example, "I'm worthless." List evidence that says that you are not worthless. 1. I can... 2. I do... 3. I helped... 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.	All-or-none thinking Overgeneralization Mental filter Discounting the positive Magnification or minimization Emotional reasoning The critic The victim	"OK, so I am not really ____." "I have done things that are good..." "What I am telling myself is not entirely true." "I made a mistake. It doesn't mean that I am..." "Just because I feel ____ doesn't mean I am ____." "There are some good things about..."
Make a victory list of successes. Give yourself credit for the things you have done. Pat yourself on the back for things you can do. 1. I can... 2. I accomplished... 3. I did... 4. I am proud that... 5. Today I... 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.	All-or-none thinking Overgeneralization Mental filter Discounting the positive Magnification or minimization The critic The victim The perfectionist	"Maybe I didn't handle that well, but at least I ..." "On the positive side..." "At least I did..." "It could have been worse..." "It's a good thing that I..." "I can look at what I have done and do better next time."

Strategies to revise thoughts. Read through these for some ideas that might work for you.	Thought distortions or negative self-talk that these strategies might help.	Some ideas on how to begin revised thoughts.
Make a list of shoulds. Ask yourself why you should do these. Are they really important in the grand scheme of things? 1. I should always... 2. I must always... 3. I have to... 4. I need to... 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. Ask yourself, "What is the worst thing that can happen if I don't...?" Do the same with "I shouldn't...", "I mustn't...", "I can't ever..." What will happen if you do these things?	All-or-none thinking Overgeneralization Mental filter Magnification or minimization The worrier The critic The victim The perfectionist	"I can try to..." "I am not perfect, so I can only try..." "I can't always..." "So what?" "What's the big deal if I don't?" "What is most important is..." "I can't be everything to all people." "I am only human." "It would take a superhero to..." "Life is too short to worry about..." "Setbacks are normal." "Don't sweat the small stuff." "I will take one day at a time."



Strategies to revise thoughts. Read through these for some ideas that might work for you.	Thought distortions or negative self-talk that these strategies might help.	Some ideas on how to begin revised thoughts.
Stop asking yourself, “What if?” Instead, ask yourself: “Is it likely that this will happen?” “Can I do anything to prevent it?” “If it does happen, is there something I can do about it?” If the answer is “no” to above, you’re your energy. There is no sense in worrying about things that may not happen or that you cannot do anything about.	The worrier	“Is this really likely to happen?” “If this happens, I will learn to handle it.” “I will take one day at a time.” “No sense in worrying unless it happens, or if I can do something about it.” “So what?”
Listen to your inner critic. Sometimes we are our own worse critics. We tell ourselves things that we would never tell someone else in that same situation. • What are you telling yourself? Make a stick figure of yourself with a thought bubble. • Are you saying mean things to yourself? Would you say the same thing to someone else in the same situation? • Defend yourself against your inner critic. “How dare you talk to me this way!” • Be kind to yourself. Talk to yourself like you are comforting a friend.	All-or-none thinking Overgeneralization Mental filter Discounting the positive Magnification or minimization Emotional reasoning The critic The perfectionist	“I am being mean to myself.” “I wouldn’t say that to someone else that who was going through the same thing.” “I can’t believe I said that to myself.” “I am OK the way I am.” “I am really doing a good job overall.” “I accept and believe in myself.” “I am worthy of respect.”

Strategies to revise thoughts. Read through these for some ideas that might work for you.	Thought distortions or negative self-talk that these strategies might help.	Some ideas on how to begin revised thoughts.
Build your self-esteem. Picture yourself as positive. Act and dress the part. Talk about your gains with others, and don't focus too much on your losses. Smile at others. Do an experiment, smile at others and see how many you can get to smile back. Remind yourself of your good qualities. Look in the mirror and tell yourself that you like yourself. Say the words, even if you don't believe it at first. Allow yourself to make mistakes. You are not perfect.	Mental filter Discounting the positives Mind reading Emotional reasoning	"Overall, I am a good person." "I will try to act more positive." "I need to take better care of myself." "I will try to smile more." "I am worthy of respect." "I accept and believe in myself." "So, I made a mistake. That doesn't mean that I am..."
Keep a daily journal of your thoughts and feelings. Studies show that writing in a journal can make people feel better. Write what you are feeling. Tell your story. Writing helps you to think about what happened and what you can do about it. Keep a section of your journal for funny or positive things that happen. This section will be a great place to visit and read when you are feeling down. It might also be fun to share this section with others. Laughter is a good thing.	Mental filter Discounting positives Magnification or minimization The victim	"Maybe I need to write this down to tell my story." "I need to keep a list of funny or positive things that I can look back at." "Now that I am writing this down, it doesn't seem so bad." "I need a good laugh."

Strategies to revise thoughts. Read through these for some ideas that might work for you.	Thought distortions or negative self-talk that these strategies might help.	Some ideas on how to begin revised thoughts.
Always keep hope. Try to stay optimistic. Try to view your problems as temporary and specific so that problem-solving strategies can be used to overcome them. Do not look at problems as though you are defeated and that nothing can be done. Explore the positive side.	All or none thinking Overgeneralization Mental filter Discounting the positive The victim	“The specific problem is...” “The positive side is...” “I can learn to...” “I can handle this.” “I could try...” “I will take one day at a time.”
Use thought stopping when you can’t stop thinking negative thoughts. Sometimes it is hard to stop negative feelings. They just keep coming one after another. Yell to yourself, “STOP”! Then try to substitute a positive thought. If the negative thoughts continue, find something positive to take your mind off the thought. Watch a funny movie. (Avoid sad or depressing movies or TV shows). Turn on the radio. Read a book. Call a friend.	Mental filter Magnification Fortune telling Mind reading Should statements Personalization and Blame The worrier The critic The perfectionist	“I need to stop thinking about this.” “I need a break from this.” “The positive side is...” “Why worry about something I can’t fix?”



Strategies to revise thoughts. Read through these for some ideas that might work for you.	Thought distortions or negative self-talk that these strategies might help.	Some ideas on how to begin revised thoughts.
Make a list of pleasant activities or pleasant events: There are times when it is best to take your mind off of negative thoughts. Make a list of pleasant activities or things that have happened in your life: Pleasant activities that I like are: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. Pleasant things that have happened in my life are: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. Think about how you can work some of these pleasant activities into your daily schedule. Talk to others about pleasant things of the past.	Mental filter Discounting positives Fortune telling The worrier	“Maybe I just need to get away.” “I am taking things too seriously. I need to lighten up.” “Why don’t I ____ to get my mind off things.” “I remember how funny it was when...” “____ was the best thing that ever happened to me.” “I remember when ____” “I wonder if there are any funny shows on TV.”



Strategies to revise thoughts. Read through these for some ideas that might work for you.	Thought distortions or negative self-talk that these strategies might help.	Some ideas on how to begin revised thoughts.
Keep a good sense of humor. “A smile is a curve that sets everything straight.” Phyllis Diller, American Comedienne. During a good laugh, your chest, abdomen, and facial muscles get a good workout. It’s like an “internal massage.” 1. Learn to smile at others. Try an experiment: Smile at as many people as you can. See how many you can get to smile back. 2. Learn to laugh at yourself. Not with ridicule, but with acceptance of who you are and that you make mistakes. 3. Ask yourself what is funny about things that happen. Will this be funny later? Wouldn’t it be funny if... 4. Keep a journal of funny things that happen in your life. Share it with others. 5. Make a list of things or activities that make you laugh. Run through it when you need a good laugh. ___ Funny books, joke books ___ Funny movies, videos, TV shows (avoid sad movies or TV shows, maybe stay away from the news). ___ Funny people to call (humor buddy) ___ Use paint, music, teddy bears, etc. to lighten up the environment ___ Look at old photo albums	Overgeneralization Mental filter Discounting the positives Fortune telling Magnification or minimization Labeling The critic The victim The perfectionist	“On the funny side...” “Wouldn’t it be funny if...” “This will be funny when I think back.” “I should add this to my list of funny things...” “I need to get out and do something fun to get my mind off of...” “I can lighten up by...” “In a way, it is sort of funny that...”

___ Remember funny memories of the past ___ Fun activities (blow bubbles, paint funny faces on balloons, stop for ice cream, etc.) ___ Other: _____ ___ Other: _____ ___ Other: _____ ___ Other: _____ ___ Other: _____		
Strategies to revise thoughts. Read through these for some ideas that might work for you.	Thought distortions or negative self-talk that these strategies might help.	Some ideas on how to begin revised thoughts.
Imagery Picture yourself as handling the problem. Remember past successes (check with the Victory List of Successes). Rehearse future successes. Pretend you are solving the problem. Visualize yourself as taking care of the problem.	Overgeneralization Discounting the positives Fortune telling Emotional reasoning The victim	"I could see myself doing better at..." "I can learn how to handle..."
Relaxation Take the time to completely relax your mind and every muscle in your body. This will give you the chance to release tension so you can think more clearly. Try this exercise for about 10-15 minutes whenever you feel the need. 1. Find a comfortable chair, recliner, or couch in a quiet room. 2. Think about what is bothering you. Then, put these thoughts out of your mind.	Mental filter Should statements The worrier The critic The victim The perfectionist	"I need to relax." "I need a break from..." "I need to clear my mind so I can think more clearly..."

3. Think about your toes. Relax them. 4. Relax your legs, knees, thighs, and hips. 5. Relax your back and all along your spine. 6. Relax your shoulders, arms, and elbows. 7. Relax your wrists and fingers completely. 8. Relax your neck and the back of your head. 9. Relax all the muscles in your face. Your eyebrows, forehead, and cheeks. Allow your jaw to relax. 10. Relax every muscle in your entire body. Make yourself feel heavy. 11. Take a deep breath in, then let it out slowly. 12. Take another deep breath in and slowly out. Think to yourself, "Breathe in with the good, out with the bad." 13. Think of a place you would like to be. Visualize yourself there. Continue relaxing, deep breathing, and visualizing yourself in a place you would like to be for about 10 –15 minutes.		
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Strategies to revise thoughts.	Thought distortions or negative self-talk	Some ideas on how to begin revised thoughts.
Take care of yourself Stress can take a toll on your health. The tension from stress over time can lead to ulcers, allergies, high blood pressure, heart attacks, and stroke. It is important that you take care of yourself. 1. Eat healthy. Cut down on sugar, salt, and fatty foods. Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grain foods. Drink plenty of water. 2. Consider exercise. Most people should exercise 3-5 times a week. Walking, swimming, exercising, or other activities are important. Exercise is a great way to work out feelings of anger or worry. 3. Get enough sleep. If you have trouble sleeping, try relaxation exercises before bedtime. Call your doctor if you think you need sleep medication. 4. Avoid alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, or drugs (unless prescribed by a doctor). These can mask feelings of stress for a short time, but they do not erase emotional and physical tension. They can cause more health problems in the long run. 5. Schedule checkups with your doctor. High blood pressure is very dangerous and can lead to heart attacks, stroke, or other health problems. Doctors can also prescribe medications that are very effective in helping to relieve depression or manage stress.	All or none thinking Overgeneralization Mental filter Magnification or minimization Discounting positives	"I need to take better care of myself." "Maybe I'm just tired and need to sleep on it." "I need a checkup." "I think I'll go for a walk." "I need to move around." "Let me focus on my exercises for now." "I wonder how my blood pressure is with all this stress."

Now that I've looked through all of the strategies and ideas to begin revised thoughts what do I do?

Look back on p. 67 at your Thought Record #1. For each negative thought, write in a revised thought that is more positive or realistic in the 5th column. If you are having trouble, look down through the list of ideas on how to begin revised thoughts.

For example:

What was your Thought A. on p. 66?

What thought distortions or negative self-talk did you list for that thought?

Look down through the list of ideas on how to begin revised thoughts on pp. 68-78. What is a revised thought that is more realistic or positive for your #1 thought?

Now, fill in the rest of the columns on your Thought Record #1 on p. 67.

Once you have completed the 5th column and you have revised thoughts for each of your negative thoughts, then consider your emotions again.

Look at the 2nd column where you listed each of your emotions and rated them from 1-10.

Write the same emotions again in the last column in your Thought Record #1. Give each emotion a new rating from 1 – 10.

Weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Strong

How do you feel after filling out Thought Record #1? Did your emotions improve?

The next pages are Thought Record #2, followed by Thought Record #3. Look back at p. 63 of this workbook. If you have 2 more problems or

situations, you can fill out Thought Record #2 and Thought Record #3. You can also make copies of the Thought Record for additional problems or situations you would like to look at in the future.

Keep in mind...

This workbook is one way of helping yourself deal with negative thoughts and emotions after stroke. **Do not be afraid to seek professional help from your doctor or others involved in your care.** Negative thoughts and emotions can be very difficult to control on your own. **Medications and psychological counseling are often prescribed and can be very effective.** It is far better to seek treatment than to allow the downward spiral of depression interfere with stroke recovery or providing care.

Also, don't forget to give yourself credit for all the good things that you are doing. It is also important to be optimistic and focus on the positive aspects of providing care.

\\
BE KIND
TO
YOURSELF
\\

Recommended Stress Management Books

(Some of the material in this tip sheet was adapted from these books)

Burns, D. D. (1999). The Feeling Good Handbook (Rev. ed.). New York: Plumb Printing. ISBN 0-452-28132-6

Greenberger, D. & Padesky, C.A. (2016). Mind over Mood: Change How You Feel by Changing the Way you Think. Second Edition. New York: The Guilford Press. ISBN 978-1-4625-2042-8.

Organizations and Websites

American Stroke Association's Toll-Free Warmline and Website
1-888-4-STROKE or 1-888-478-7653, www.StrokeAssociation.org

National Institute for Mental Health
1-866-615-6464 (toll-free), <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/>

Thought Record #3

1. Problem or situation	2. Emotions with ratings 1-10	3. Thoughts about the problem (what are you telling yourself?)	4. Thought distortions and negative self-talk for each thought.	5. Revised thoughts about the problem (what are you telling yourself now?)	6. Revised emotions with ratings 1-10
What was your #1 problem or situation?	List each emotion for problem #1, followed by the 1-10 rating.	A.	Distortions or negative self-talk for thought A:	A.	Go back to your list of each emotion for problem #1. List them again, only with new ratings.
		B.	Distortions or negative self-talk for thought B:	B.	
		C.	Distortions or negative self-talk for thought C:	C.	