

HOPEFUL THINKING VS. MENTAL MISERY:
EMPOWER YOURSELF

TRUE OR FALSE TEST -Answer the following statements by circling true or false.

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| 1. I believe others cause my feelings. | T | F |
| 2. I'm always telling myself I "should" do this or that. | T | F |
| 3. I constantly criticize myself. | T | F |
| 4. I think I must do everything perfectly or not at all. | T | T |
| 5. I'm always apologizing for one thing or another. | T | F |
| 6. I feel like I'm carrying the world on my shoulders. | T | F |
| 7. I'm really hard on myself when I make mistakes. | T | F |
| 8. I bend over backwards to please others. | T | F |
| 9. I "scare" myself into action by imagining horrible things that will happen if I don't do something. | T | F |
| 10. I tend to look on the negative side of things. My glass of water is always half empty instead of half full. | T | F |
| 11. It's hard for me to forgive and forget. If someone hurts me, I tend to cling to that feeling. | T | F |
| 12. I often feel helpless. There are so many things in life I can't do. | T | F |

MENTAL MISERIES: MAKING THE GRADE

Give yourself one point for each "true" answer on the test. # = _____

Points Results

1-3: You generally feel good about yourself. Keep up your positive way of thinking.

4-6: The mental miseries may be gaining on you. Take time to renew your positive traits.

7+: Challenge yourself to change your way of thinking.

Read the following information. Take a closer look at some of the attitudes behind each of 12 questions that lead a person to emotional dysfunction.. Turn around your sour thinking! Seek out the resources and information suggested to enhance positive thinking and achieve greater self-understanding and awareness.

Refuting The Harmful Misery Making Thoughts

Misery Maker #1: Do you believe others cause your feelings? Do others "make" you feel guilty about things?

Turnaround Mentality: You create your own feelings and make your own decisions. People and events do not cause feelings, but they can trigger your mental habits. You may wish to empower yourself with more information about relationships and communication skills.

Misery Maker #2: Are you so conscientious in your self-improvement efforts that you never miss a chance to remind yourself what you should or should not do? "I should have studied more." "I shouldn't have eaten so much."

Turnaround Mentality: "Shoulds" don't get the job done. They're just a way of punishing yourself after the fact. Guilt and shame don't produce much action; mostly, they drain your energy and discourage you. More information about realistically achieving peak performance may help you.

Misery Maker #3: Are you a relentless critic, always finding fault with the way you look and feel or the way others act toward you? Do you nag yourself and others, especially those you care about?

Turnaround Mentality: Replace criticism with encouragement. Encourage yourself and your friends rather than criticizing them. Give a compliment or a pat on the back. Visualize the positive and achieve what you want. Read more about improving self-esteem.

Misery Maker #4: Do you believe that you must do everything perfectly or not at all? Do you sacrifice fun in your life to achieve every goal?

Turnaround Mentality: Perfection is a high goal to aim for; don't insist on starting there or even arriving there. Do your best and then accept it. You can enhance your life performance and have fun, too. Seek out help to deal with your perfectionist tendencies.

Misery Maker #5: Do you assume you are to blame whenever someone is upset? Do you often ask yourself, "What did I do wrong?" If your roommate or significant other is in a bad mood, do you feel responsible for it?

Turnaround Mentality: The person who is upset "owns" the problem. Stop apologizing and accepting blame. Everyone has the right to have angry feelings, but you don't have to feel guilty. Recognize that interpersonal conflicts can be healthy, leading to constructive change and deeper understanding. Strive for emotional wellness with yourself and your relationships.

Misery Maker #6: Do you "steal" responsibility from others? Do you feel responsible for the happiness of another person? Do you take on other people's responsibilities, then get angry when they don't appreciate all you've done for them?

Turnaround Mentality: Stealing responsibility from others only cheats them out of a growing experience. Learning to deal with the consequences of one's behavior is part of being an adult. Seek greater self-responsibility and self-determination. Make some lists to clarify your own needs and wants. Remember, the world has many shoulders to carry it.

Misery Maker #7: Do you call yourself stupid if you make a mistake? Do you call yourself a failure if you slip off your diet or skip a test review session? If your mistakes are pointed out to you, do you feel as if you are under attack and become defensive?

Turnaround Mentality: You're only human, so treat yourself with kindness, not abuse. Allow yourself to make mistakes and then forgive yourself. Move ahead with a positive attitude; take time to laugh at yourself. Explore the healing power of laughter.

Misery Maker #8: Are you a compulsive people pleaser? Maybe you need the frequent approval of others and forget to give yourself approval. Do you make sacrifices and then get mad at yourself?

Turnaround Mentality: Give yourself permission to decide you're doing the best you can. Don't wait to hear it from someone else. Tell yourself you're doing a good job, and ask for encouragement when you need it. Do something extra nice for a very important person -- you!

Misery Maker #9: Do you motivate yourself with fear? Fear and scare tactics may get your attention, but they won't last long as far as motivation is concerned. You may end up feeling anxious and unhappy.

Turnaround Mentality: Motivate yourself with choice, not fear. Visualize success and make decisions that fit with that image of success. For instance, picture yourself succeeding at a task and think of the satisfaction and good feelings you'll have when you meet your goals. Learn more about effective self-assertion.

Misery Maker #10: Do you interpret events and comments in a negative light? If your friend says "Your hair is looking good today," do you ask yourself "What was what was wrong with it yesterday?"

Turnaround Mentality: You do have a choice, so choose a positive interpretation. Accept a compliment! Look at temporary setbacks as opportunities for growth. The positive appraisal will help you maintain your energy and give you an improved outlook. Encourage positive selftalk from those inner voices.

Misery Maker #11: Do you hang on to painful memories? Do you dwell on bad feelings to justify your bad mood? If someone doesn't say they are sorry, do you stay mad at that person?

Turnaround Mentality: The only part of the past that affects you is your present interpretation of it. Only you are in charge of that. Try to reinterpret these past events in a positive way. Forgiving is helpful and, at times, is necessary to move forward. Don't forget to forgive yourself, too.

Misery Maker #12: Do you coach yourself into believing you can't do certain things or deal with change?

Do you frequently hear yourself saying or thinking "I can't"? If you say this often enough, you will soon believe it. It will become a self-fulfilling prophecy and you will feel more powerless and out of control. **Turnaround Mentality:** Believe in yourself and realize that you are a capable person. Give yourself positive, encouraging statements. If your goal requires a response or

approval from others, you revert to feeling helpless and feel out of control. Work at feeling good about yourself and become more self-reliant. Seek help when you need it.

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE. . .

All of these messages reinforce the fact that you are responsible for yourself. Your happiness (or your misery) depends upon what you tell yourself, how you treat yourself, and how you interpret your world. It's an inside job. So, take the challenge! And, take advantage of the following resources for your benefit.