

Optimism Exercise: Your Turn to Identify, Dispute, and Refute

Think of a recent situation that did not turn out as you would have liked (e.g., an exam, a relationship or date, a job, and interaction at the grocery store).

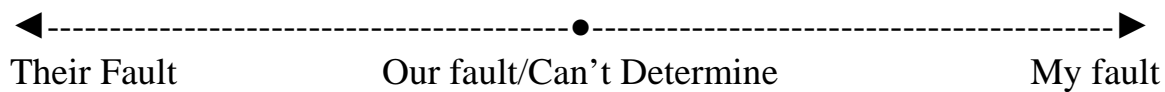
(a) Identify

What were your initial thoughts about the cause of this?

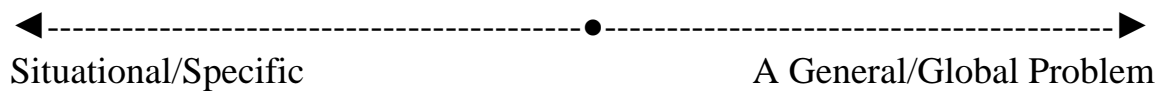
(b) Evaluate

Where does this thought fit on the following three scales?

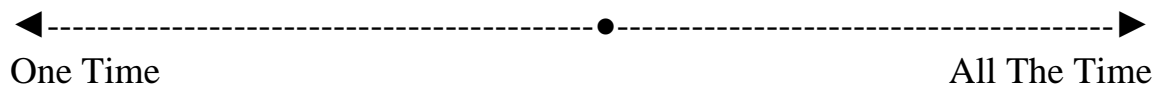
Personalization (my role):



Pervasiveness:



Permanence:



(c) Dispute

How important is this? Try to see how this relates to the big picture. How does this fit in with your life and other's lives?

Evidence: How did you know or determine your attribution (explanation)? How realistic is this? What are some possible alternative explanations?

Alternatives: Think of at-least one alternative explanation or partial cause of the outcome that occurred.

What is your conclusion regarding this outcome? How do you feel about this after having disputed your attributions/beliefs about the situation?

Suggestion for Practice

By knowing we have automatic negative thoughts (some people more than others) we have already made a step toward the positive. Instead of simply accepting your negative attributions, try to catch yourself when this happens, and practice the above process. Eventually your optimistic thoughts can become as automatic as your pessimistic thoughts (although this can take awhile!).