

## Identifying Irrational Rules

[smartrecovery.org/smart-recovery-toolbox/id\\_irrational\\_rules](https://smartrecovery.org/smart-recovery-toolbox/id_irrational_rules)

When you are thinking irrational thoughts about particular events and circumstances, these thoughts are usually based on underlying beliefs or attitudes or “rules.” This exercise is designed to help you learn how to identify the underlying rules on which your irrational thoughts are based.

For each of the *Beliefs* below, decide which of the 12 *Underlying Rules* that belief seems to reflect. The first two are completed as examples.

|   | <b>BELIEFS</b>  |        |   | <b>UNDERLYING RULES</b>  |
|---|---|--------|---|--|
| a | Because I was put down as a child, I can never be really self-confident.                              | __#9__ | 1 | I need love and approval from those significant to me. I must avoid disapproval from any source.                           |
| b | He’s a real bastard for doing that. He should be put away for good.                                   | __#3__ | 2 | To be worthwhile as a person, I must succeed at whatever I do, and not make any mistakes.                                  |
| c | I’m not getting the encouragement and support I need to survive in my job, much less do a proper job. | _____  | 3 | People should always act correctly. They deserve to be blamed and punished for any obnoxious, unfair, or selfish behavior. |

|   |   |       |    |  |
|---|---|-------|----|--|
| d | How can I be happy with a wife like mine?   | _____ | 4  | Things must be the way I want them to be—and it's intolerable when they're not.                              |
| e | I've got a pain in the stomach from worrying about the way my son may turn out. But I can't just ignore his behavior. | _____ | 5  | My unhappiness is caused by factors outside my control. There's nothing I can do about it                    |
| f | This self-help stuff is just too hard. I must find an easier way. Why can't my doctor give me some pills?             | _____ | 6  | I must worry about things that might be dangerous, unpleasant or frightening.                                |
| g | I can't stand the way my girlfriend handles her money. Why can't she let me show her how to do it properly?           | _____ | 7  | It is easier to avoid than to face up to life's difficulties, unpleasantness and responsibilities.           |
| h | When he hurts, I have to hurt. That's what love's all about.  | _____ | 8  | Everyone needs someone stronger than him/herself on whom to depend.  |
| i | I can't see the point in doing all this self-analysis. All it does is make me feel worse—so why bother?               | _____ | 9  | Events in my past are the cause of my problems and must continue to influence my feelings and behaviors now. |
| j | I'd end up feeling terrible about myself if I started this course and then failed. So I just won't take it.           | _____ | 10 | I have to become upset when other people have problems or are disturbed                                      |

|   |  |       |    |   |
|---|--|-------|----|---|
| k | We missed the house that was our first choice. I can never be happy anywhere else. | _____ | 11 | I shouldn't have to experience discomfort and pain. I can't stand it—it must be avoided at all costs. |
| l | I'll never survive now that Mike's left me. I can't bear to be alone.              | _____ | 12 | Every problem <i>must</i> have an ideal solution. And it's intolerable when I can't find one.         |

**Related Links**

**Core Beliefs – 12 Irrational Ideas**