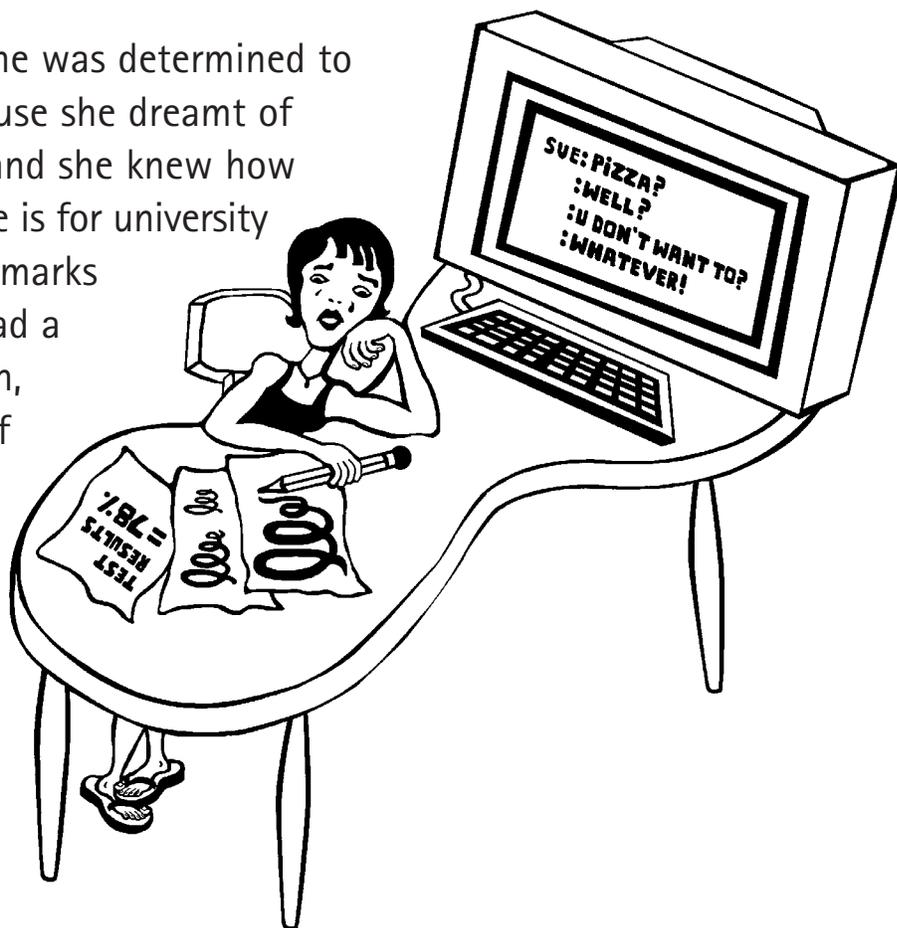


Here is a story to show how **Realistic Thinking** can be used to help depression

# The Perfect Girl

**Amy was 16.** She was determined to do well in school because she dreamt of becoming a scientist, and she knew how much competition there is for university science programs. Her marks were excellent. Amy had a perfectionistic approach, always expecting herself to do things to the highest standard. But her test result on the midterm math exam was very disappointing to her – **only 78.**



It was a hard test, and only one person got a better grade. But she told herself that she had *completely blown the test*. She was mad at herself: she called herself *stupid* and *loser*.

She imagined being turned away scornfully from University ["78 in math? And you want to enter Science?"]. This made her sad.

Because she was worrying so much she had trouble sleeping, so that when she did her next midterm, in English, she had trouble concentrating and again her mark was lower than usual. This *really* scared her and she

began to think she had been fooling people, that she really wasn't very smart. She became sadder and scared about her future. After a couple of weeks thinking this way, all she could do was sit in her room and cry. And she was having lots of trouble with sleep.

Her friends called her, but she made excuses. She didn't feel like seeing a movie or even talking to her friends. She felt like she had nothing to say, like she was boring, and like she wouldn't enjoy doing things. She just didn't care. She was depressed.

## The Perfect Girl

Amy wrote down what she was thinking when her mood dropped. **This was her list:**

I've totally blown this test.  
 I'm stupid and lazy.  
 I'll probably mess up all my other tests.

She decided this was **All or Nothing** thinking, very black and white. She worked on challenging these depressive thoughts. This is what she wrote:

Situation	Depressive Thoughts	Realistic Thoughts
I got 78 on the big exam when I expected to do much better	I've totally blown this test <b>[All or Nothing, Perfectionism]</b>	Even though it's less than I expected, I did pretty well compared to the average; this is nowhere near a failure.
	I'm stupid, I'm lazy <b>[Labeling]</b>	These labels aren't fair; I studied hard for this test. Just because I don't get a perfect score doesn't make me a loser.  There are just insults, they don't actually mean anything and they're useless.
	I'm going to mess up all my other tests <b>[Exaggerating]</b>	It doesn't mean I'm going to fail all my tests – why would I?  In fact, I've done pretty well in most other classes and not badly in these.  I'm still okay to apply for Science, so long as I keep up my average, and I intend to.

## The Perfect Girl

**A**my practiced the realistic thoughts every time she noticed herself having gloomy and depressive thoughts. When the depressive thoughts began and she noticed her mood starting to go down, she practiced thinking the realistic thoughts and her mood went up a bit. She kept on practicing realistic thinking and it helped her to feel less down and discouraged. At first, it seemed fake to deliberately practice realistic thinking. But as

she practiced, it began to feel normal to think realistically about herself.

Also, she made a point of calling up her friends to do things, even before she felt better. Being around her friends and becoming more active really helped raise her mood. Her mood steadily improved and so did her concentration and her sleep. She gradually became undepressed.

