

14 cost-benefit analysis

for you to know

This activity can help you consider how your beliefs affect your anxiety level and your life. Once you understand that, you can make choices about whether you want to hold on to those beliefs or change them.

Every Friday night after their football game, Andrea's school had casual dances in the field house. All of Andrea's friends went to these dances and Andrea wanted to go too, but she wouldn't. The first time she had gone to a dance she felt so anxious that she was afraid she would be sick to her stomach. She was horrified by how embarrassing that would be. Since then, Andrea was afraid to go back to another dance. Instead, she sat home on Friday nights, telling her friends that she had to babysit or she didn't feel well or she had too much homework or her parents wouldn't let her go.

Reading a book about managing anxiety, Andrea found an exercise about the costs and benefits of holding on to personal beliefs. She tried to apply it to her own situation and filled in the blanks as shown below.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

1. Write down a belief that you want to change.

I can't go to a dance because I get so anxious I think I'll get sick.

2. Make a list of every advantage (benefit) to believing it.

- **If I don't go, I don't have to try to dress to "look good."**
- **I don't have to risk rejection if no one wants to dance with me.**
- **I don't have to try to think of things to say to people I don't know well.**

3. Admit that there are good reasons to have this belief.

I really don't like having to deal with these things. If I don't go to the dance because I believe I might get sick, then I don't have to face things that are difficult for me.

4. Make a list of every disadvantage (cost) to believing it.

- **I feel lonely sitting at home when all my friends are at the dance.**
- **I feel left out when everyone talks about the dance at school on Monday.**
- **I feel bad about myself because I can't do what everyone else does.**
- **I enjoy dancing when I'm not so anxious, and I miss it.**
- **I miss out on the fun everyone else is having.**
- **I hate having to make up an excuse when someone asks me why I never come to the dances.**

5. Add up both sides.

Advantages: 3

Disadvantages: 6

6. If there is an advantage to holding this belief, think of ways you can have that advantage without the high level of anxiety.

I guess I could not worry so much about how I look. I could just dress nicely and then forget about it. I could also forget about someone asking me to dance. I know I can dance with my girlfriends if I want to. I could just think about enjoying my time with them and enjoying the music. I could also just plan to stay with my close friends. I don't have to talk to people I don't know well.

7. Identify the belief you would prefer to have.

Going to a dance raises my anxiety a little, but I know once I get there I'll have fun.

activity 14 * cost-benefit analysis

directions

Fill in the blanks below to do a cost-benefit analysis of a belief that raises your anxiety.

1. Write down a belief that you want to change. _____

2. Make a list of every advantage (benefit) to believing it. _____

3. Admit that there are good reasons to have this belief. _____

4. Make a list of every disadvantage (cost) to believing it. _____

5. Add up both sides. Advantages _____ Disadvantages _____

6. If there is an advantage to holding this belief, think of ways you can have the advantage without the high level of anxiety.

7. Identify the belief you would prefer to have. _____

more to do

How did you first come to have the belief that you wrote about?

Are you glad that you have kept this belief? Why or why not?

What do you think might change in your life if you stopped holding this belief?

How does it make you feel when you think about letting go of this belief?

What did you learn from filling in the cost-benefit analysis?

What are some steps you might have to take in order to let go of or change this belief?

What other beliefs do you have that you would like to change?
