

# **BRIEF INTERVENTIONS: ANXIETY- CHALLENGING CATASTROPHIC THINKING**

**BI-PED PROJECT (BRIEF INTERVENTIONS: PEDIATRICS)**  
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## **Appendix 6**

### **De-catastrophizing:**

The cognitive behavioral therapy literature posits that anxiety is in part the product of automatic thoughts and *cognitive distortions* that result in thought processes such as “something bad will happen”, “I will fail”, “I need to be perfect”, “I need to be in control”.

Sometimes cognitive distortions can become magnified and take on catastrophic proportions for the anxious patient. The clinician can challenge catastrophic thinking by asking “*worst scenario*” questions such as:

(e.g. a teen who is very anxious about attending a party)

- What is the *worst* thing that could happen?
- How would you feel if this occurred?
- What is the likelihood that this will occur?
- What will you do if the “worst” scenario occurs?
- What can you do to handle an anxiety provoking situation? (e.g. what can you do differently to keep your anxiety under control when you attend the party?)

If the situation causing anxiety occurs, ask the patient afterwards:

- How did you handle it?
- Rate how much of a disaster it really was
- What can you *do* or *think* about in the future to reduce your anxiety?