Anti-Social Thinking Errors Assignment

Listed below are delusional thinking errors addicted people use in order to avoid self-honesty and stay in their addiction. For each thinking error, give two (2) specific, relevant ‘real life’ examples of how you have used the mentioned behavior to continue your use of mood-altering substances. Include who was involved, what happened, when it happened, why it happened and where it happened (see page 4). REMEMBER TO INCLUDE YOUR USE IN EVERY ONE OF YOUR EXAMPLES! Also, be sure to have (3) of your peers review your assignment before you present it in community group.

1. **EXCUSE MAKING**
   Addicted people make excuses for anything and everything. Whenever held accountable for drinking, drug using, or behaviors, they often give excuses. For example, “I work long hard hours so I feel I’m entitled to a few drinks or a joint”, “It’s my life and I can do what I want”, or “All my medications are prescribed”.

2. **BLAMING**
   Blaming is an excuse not to solve a problem, and addicts use blaming to excuse their behavior and build up resentment toward someone else for “causing” whatever happened. For example, “I would be fine if people would leave me alone and mind their own business”, “The trouble with you is you’re always looking at me in a critical way”, “You’d drink too if you had my wife and step-kids”. Continually pointing out other people’s flaws or inadequacies, or playing a victim is another example of blaming.

3. **REDEFINING**
   Redefining, as shown in the following examples, is shifting the focus of an issue to avoid solving a problem. Question: “Why did you violate your abstinence contract by drinking?” Answer: “I felt the language in the contract was too wordy and confusing”. Addicts use redefining to get the focus off the subject in question. Redefining also indicates ineffective thinking by not dealing with the problem at hand.

4. **SUPER-OPTIMISM**
   “I think, therefore, it is”. Super-optimistic people decide that because they want something to be a certain way, or think it will be a certain way, it will be. This permits them to function according to what they want, rather that according to the facts of the situation. For example: Believing you can stop drinking simply because you have made the decision to stop, therefore don’t need AA, NA or treatment. Super-optimistic people also believe that they can be famous, popular, strong, rich, and so forth simply by wishing it and never taking into account the practiced steps required to achieve these goals. Another example is claiming you have changed because you did it right once.

5. **LYING**
   Lying is the most commonly known characteristic of the addicted persons thinking. Most addicts lie in different ways at different times. They use lying to confuse, distort and take the focus off of their behavior. Lying takes three forms: **Commission** - making things up that are simply not true; **Omission** – saying partly what is true, but leaving out major sections; and **Assent** – making believe that one agrees with someone else, or presenting or approving others ideas in order to look good when, in fact, the person has no intention of going along with this or does not really agree (compliance). “You could say that” is an example of subtle lying by assent.
6. **MAKING FOOLS OF**
Addicted people make fools of others by agreeing to do things and not following through, by saying things they don’t mean, by setting others up to fight, by inviting frustrations and letting people down, and by numerous other behaviors. By putting others down, addicts take the focus off their own behavior.

7. **ASSUMING**
Addicts spend a great deal of time assuming what others think, what others feel, what others are doing. They use their assumption in service of whatever drinking activity or behavior they decide to engage in. For example: The addict assumes that other people don’t like him or her. This gives the addict an excuse to blow up, be angry, or get drunk. Assuming takes place every day, and addicts make assumptions about whatever they wish in order to support their addictive behavior.

8. **AN “I’M UNIQUE” MENTALITY**
Addicts delude themselves into believing they are unique and special and no one else is like them. So any information that is applied to other people simply doesn’t affect them. Examples of this kind of thinking includes: “I don’t need anyone, and no one understands me anyway”, “No one can tell me what to do”, “I never did that, so I’m not an addict”, etc.

9. **INGRATIATING** (to bring oneself into favor)
Addicted people often overdo being nice to others and going out of their way to act interested in other people. Often they are out to find out what they can get from other people, how they can manipulate them, use them, or control the situation for their own purpose.

10. **FRAGMENTED PERSONALITY**
It is very common for addicted people to have ‘fragmented’ personalities. An example of this behavior is talking to others about how great a parent you are, but later getting too intoxicated to make it to parent/teacher conferences. Another example is using alcohol or drugs right after an AA or NA meeting, and when confronted replying with, “at least I’m trying”. To the addict, there is no inconsistency in this behavior. They believe they are justified in whatever they do, or get, or own, or possess, or control. They never consider the inconsistency between these behaviors.

11. **MINIMIZING**
Addicted people often minimize their behavior and actions by talking about them in such a way that they seem insignificant. They discount the significance of their behavior. Minimizing is apparent when confronting an addict about their irresponsible behavior. For example, “I only drank three beers; I could have drank a lot more, but I didn’t”.

12. **VAGUENESS**
The chemically dependent individual is typically unclear and nonspecific in order to avoid being ‘pinned down’ on any particular issue. They use words and phrases that are lacking in detail. This way they can look good to others, but not commit themselves to anything specific. Examples of vague words include phrases such as: “I more or less think so”, “I guess”, “Probably”, “Maybe”, “I might”, “I’m not sure about this”, “It probably was”, “I drink socially”, “I smoke pot occasionally”.

13. **ANGER**
   Anger is a primary emotion for many addicted people. This is not “real” anger most of the time. Instead, addicted people use “anger” to control others or to power/control a situation. They have unrealistic expectations about the people in their world, and they control other by aggression, attacking, criticizing, making a big scene about a minor point, or any other way they can to immobilize others and give themselves control of the situation.

14. **POWER PLAYS**
   Addicted people use power plays whenever they aren’t getting their way in a situation. This includes such things as walking out of a room during a disagreement, not completing a job they agreed to do, refusing to listen or hear what someone else has to say, or organizing people to be angry at others in their support. Power plays generally consist of manipulation and deceit.

15. **VICTIM PLAYING**
   This is a major role that the chemically dependent person takes. The underlying issues are aggressive and power plays, but are masked in the role of ‘playing the victim’. They often whine, shuffle, look mournful and helpless, and act as if they don’t get whatever they want, then they are victims. Victim playing elicits criticism, rescuing, or enabling behavior from those around them, while it helps them avoid taking personal responsibility for their behaviors.

16. **DRAMA/EXCITEMENT**
   Because addicted people do not live a real life in the sense of getting their needs met directly, they often create drama and excitement. Excitement is a distraction that keeps the focus off their behavior.

17. **CLOSE-MINDEDNESS**
   Addicts are secretive and often close-minded. They need to protect their addictive lifestyle. Therefore, when confronted with data about their behavior or use, the are ‘close-minded’ and refuse to acknowledge the input, as it might jeopardize their continued use.

18. **IMAGE**
   The addicted person’s image of themselves is important to maintain. Even a late stage, skid row alcoholic will express concern at being seen at an AA meeting.

19. **GRANDIOSITY**
   Grandiosity is maximizing or minimizing oneself or an issue with intent to impress, thus justifying, not solving a problem. Grandiosity conveys an attitude of superiority and false pride (false or partially false accomplishments). People who brag are sometimes referred to as being grandiose. One example is a person who brags he’s self-employed in construction. One might get the “rest of the story” if you ask how big a crew he has, the jobs completed in the past year or his last year’s income.

20. **INTELLECTUALIZING**
   Intellectualizing is using academic, abstract, or theoretical discussions to avoid dealing with feelings or the real issue. People who intellectualize or “live in their head” have a difficult time accepting the simplicity of a 12-Step program.