













# Cognitive Distortions



Cognitive distortions are unhelpful thinking patterns that can negatively impact how we feel and behave. By learning to recognize them, we can challenge these thoughts and create healthier, more balanced perspectives.

COGNITIVE DISTORTION	DEFINITION	WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE	EXAMPLE
 1. ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING	Seeing things in black-and-white categories. Things are either "perfect" or "a total failure" with no middle ground.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extreme thinking</li> <li>• No room for mistakes</li> <li>• If it's not perfect, it's terrible</li> </ul>	"If I can't do it perfectly, there's no point in even trying."
 2. CATASTROPHIZING	Expecting the worst possible outcome and believing you won't be able to handle it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imagining worst-case scenarios</li> <li>• Feeling overwhelmed by "what ifs"</li> <li>• Believing disaster is imminent</li> </ul>	"I made a mistake on this email. I'll get fired. My life is over."
 3. MIND READING	Assuming you know what others are thinking without any real evidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guessing others' thoughts</li> <li>• Taking things personally</li> <li>• Assuming negative judgments</li> </ul>	"She didn't text me back. She must be mad at me or doesn't like me."
 4. FORTUNE TELLING	Predicting that something bad will happen in the future, without real evidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making negative predictions</li> <li>• Feeling like you "just know" bad things will happen</li> <li>• Assuming the future is fixed</li> </ul>	"I just know things won't work out for me."
 5. FILTERING (MENTAL FILTER)	Focusing only on the negative details and filtering out the positive ones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noticing only flaws or setbacks</li> <li>• Ignoring compliments or successes</li> <li>• Having tunnel vision</li> </ul>	"The meeting went well, but I only messed up one part, so it was awful."
 6. DISQUALIFYING THE POSITIVE	Rejecting or brushing off positive experiences by saying they "don't count" or don't matter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimizing achievements</li> <li>• Believing positive events are just luck</li> <li>• Feeling undeserving</li> </ul>	"I got the promotion, but it's just because I was in the right place at the right time."
 7. OVERGENERALIZING	Seeing a pattern based on one event or experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using words like "always," "never," "everyone"</li> <li>• One mistake = constant failure</li> <li>• Drawing broad conclusions</li> </ul>	"I failed this test. I always fail at everything."
 8. SHOULD STATEMENTS	Holding rigid rules or expectations about how you or others "should" behave.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Should," "must," "ought to" thinking</li> <li>• Feeling guilty or disappointed when expectations aren't met</li> </ul>	"I should be able to handle this by now. I shouldn't feel this way."
 9. LABELING	Giving yourself or others a negative label based on a behavior or mistake.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using labels instead of specifics</li> <li>• Seeing the whole person as bad</li> <li>• Judging identity, not actions</li> </ul>	"I'm such a loser." "I'm a failure."
 10. PERSONALIZATION	Taking responsibility for something that isn't actually your fault.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blaming yourself for others' actions</li> <li>• Feeling guilty without cause</li> <li>• Assuming it's about you</li> </ul>	"He was upset today, it must be something I did."



## REMEMBER:

These are just thoughts, not facts.



Awareness is the first step.  
Challenge the thought.  
Change the outcome.

## I CAN CHALLENGE THESE THOUGHTS BY:

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