

Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are simply ways that our mind convinces us of something that isn't really true. These inaccurate thoughts are usually used to reinforce negative thinking or emotions — telling ourselves things that sound rational and accurate, but really only serve to keep us feeling bad about ourselves.

Take a look at some of these and note which you identify with.

Magnification and Minimization: Exaggerating or minimizing the importance of events. One might believe their own achievements are unimportant, or that their mistakes are excessively important.

Catastrophizing: Seeing only the worst possible outcomes of a situation.

Overgeneralization: Making broad interpretations from a single or few events. “I felt awkward during my job interview. I am *always* so awkward.”

Magical Thinking: The belief that acts will influence unrelated situations. “I am a good person — bad things shouldn't happen to me.”

Personalization: The belief that everything others do or say is some kind of direct, personal reaction to them- taking everything personally, even when something is not meant in that way. “We were late to the dinner party and *caused* everyone to have a terrible time. If I had only pushed my husband to leave on time, this wouldn't have happened.”

Jumping to Conclusions: Interpreting the meaning of a situation with little or no evidence.

Fortune Telling: The expectation that a situation will turn out badly without adequate evidence.

Mind Reading: Interpreting the thoughts and beliefs of others without adequate evidence. “She would not go on a date with me. She probably thinks I'm ugly.”

Emotional Reasoning: The assumption that emotions reflect the way things really are. Whatever a person is feeling is believed to be true automatically and unconditionally. “I feel like a bad friend, therefore I must be a bad friend.”

Disqualifying the Positive: Recognizing only the negative aspects of a situation while ignoring the positive. One might receive many compliments on an evaluation, but focus on the single piece of negative feedback.

“Should” Statements: The belief that things should be a certain way. A person may often believe they are trying to motivate themselves with shoulds and shouldn'ts, as if they have to be punished before they can do anything. “I really should exercise. I shouldn't be so lazy.”

All-or-Nothing Thinking/“Black and White” Thinking: Thinking in absolutes or extremes, we're either perfect or a failure- there's no middle ground. “I *never* do a good enough job on anything.”