

Cognitive Distortions

1. **All-or-nothing (dichotomous) thinking:** Usually an evaluation. You see things in black and white categories. If your performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself as a total failure. Things are good/bad, right/wrong in areas of life which are in fact grey.
2. **Overgeneralisation:** You see a single negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat. Also see item 10.
3. **Mental filter:** You pick out a single negative detail and attach great weight to it exclusively so that your vision of all reality becomes darkened, like the drop of ink that discolours the entire beaker of water.
4. **Disqualifying the positive:** You reject positive experiences by insisting they "don't count" for some reason or other. "Just lucky" is a fine example. You maintain a negative belief that is contradicted by your everyday experiences.
5. **Jumping to conclusions:** You make a negative interpretation even though there are no definite facts that convincingly support your conclusion.
6. a. **Mind reading.** You arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you and don't bother to check it out.
b. **The Fortune Teller Error.** You anticipate that things will turn out badly and feel convinced that your prediction is an already-established fact.
7. **Magnification (catastrophising) or minimisation:** You focus on the importance of things (such as your goof-up or someone else's achievement), or you inappropriately shrink things until they appear tiny (your own desirable qualities or the other person's imperfections). This is also called the "binocular trick."
8. **Emotional reasoning:** You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are: "I feel it, therefore it must be true."
9. **Should statements:** You try to motivate yourself with shoulds and shouldn'ts, as if you had to be whipped and punished before you could be expected to do anything. "Musts" and "oughts" are also offenders. The emotional consequence is guilt. When you direct should statements toward others, you feel anger, frustration, and resentment. Must, should and ought are words which tend to indicate you are following someone else's idea of how things are supposed to be.
10. **Labelling and mislabeling:** This is an extreme form of overgeneralisation. Instead of describing your error, you attach a negative label to yourself: "I'm a loser." When someone else's behaviour rubs you the wrong way, you attach a negative label to him, "He's a damn louse." Mislabeling involves describing an event with language that is highly coloured and emotionally loaded.
11. **Personalisation:** You see yourself as the cause of some negative external event for which, in fact, you were not primarily responsible.