

## COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

We can all fall into certain thinking traps. These traps can lead us to believe in inaccurate thoughts, entertain unhelpful emotions and distort perceptions. Use this list of cognitive distortions to help you identify if you've fallen into a thinking trap.

JUST BECAUSE YOU THINK SOMETHING, DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN IT'S TRUE OR HELPFUL.

**All-or-nothing thinking.** This type of thinking involves viewing things in absolute terms: black or white, everything or nothing. Example: "If I'm not a total success, I'm a failure."

**Discounting the positive.** This involves ignoring or invalidating good things that have happened to you. Example: "I did that project well, but that doesn't mean I'm competent; I just got lucky."

**Emotional reasoning.** It's a way of judging yourself or your circumstances based on your emotions. Example: "Public speaking makes me scared, therefore it's not for me."

**Overgeneralization.** When a person comes to a general conclusion based on a single incident or a single piece of evidence. Example: "I got a B- on that paper. I should quit school because I'm not a good student."

**Labeling (or mislabeling).** When a person generalizes one or two qualities into a negative global judgment about themselves or another person. This is an extreme form of overgeneralizing. Examples: "I'm a loser." "He's no good."

**Catastrophizing.** Expecting disaster to strike, no matter what. Example: "I'll be so upset, I won't be able to function at all."

**Filtering (selective abstraction).** Magnifying negative details while filtering out all positive aspects of a situation. Example: "Because I got one low rating on my evaluation [which also contained several high ratings], it means I'm doing a lousy job."

**Magnification/minimization.** Exaggerating the importance of shortcoming and problems while minimizing the importance of desirable qualities. Example: "Getting a mediocre evaluation proves how inadequate I am. Getting high marks doesn't mean I'm smart."

**Mind reading.** When you think someone is going to react in a particular way, or you believe someone is thinking things that they aren't. Example: "He's thinking that I don't know the first thing about this project."

**Personalization.** When a person believes that everything others do or say is some kind of direct, personal reaction to them. Example: "The repairman was curt to me because I did something wrong."

**Blame.** Holding other people responsible for one's circumstances or emotional pain. Example: "Stop making me feel bad about myself!"

**“Should” and “must”**. Having a list of ironclad rules on how oneself and others should behave; usually involves unattainable standards. Example: “It’s terrible that I made a mistake. I should always do my best.”

References:

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