

COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

1. **ALL OR NOTHING** : [self-evaluations] Things are either black or white. If your performance falls short, you see yourself as a total failure. If you can't remember something, it's because you're senile or stupid. EXAMPLE: If you find yourself in the slowest line at the supermarket, you say, "I always pick the wrong line."
2. **OVERGENERALIZATION** : [an isolated experience to the world] You see a negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat. EXAMPLE: A friend breaches a trust, and you think, "No one can be trusted." You're driving in a new city and after being cut-off you think, "All city drivers are rude, irresponsible and reckless."
3. **MENTAL FILTER** : [inability to see anything positive because you're too busy dwelling on the negative] You pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively so that your vision of all reality becomes darkened, just like a drop of ink in a beaker of water. EXAMPLE: You're at a party having a wonderful time until someone asks you if you've gained weight recently. Now your evening is destroyed.
4. **DISQUALIFYING THE POSITIVE** : [self-deprecation] You reject positive experiences by insisting they don't count. EXAMPLE: Someone compliments you for doing a nice job and you think or even say, "Anybody could have done it." or "You're just being nice."
5. **JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS** : [you predict what others are thinking and/or the future] You automatically draw a negative conclusion even though there are no facts to support it.
 - a. **MIND READING** : EXAMPLE: You see a friend in the supermarket, and he/she doesn't say hello, so you decide he/she doesn't like you.
 - b. **FORTUNE TELLER** : You predict negative outcomes as a fait accompli. EXAMPLE: You decide not to interview for a job because you don't believe you'll get it anyway.
6. **MAGNIFICATION** : [catastrophizing or belittling] You exaggerate the importance of a negative event or mistake, rolling it into a series of larger and more negative consequences. EXAMPLE: Your bus is late and you have an important meeting, you tell yourself, "They'll think I'm irresponsible and I'll get fired; I won't find more work with equal pay, and then I won't be able to pay my bills." Another example: you have a pain in your side and think, "I probably have cancer."
MINIMIZATION : Conversely, you may inappropriately shrink the importance of an event or situation until it appears trivial. EXAMPLES: "It doesn't matter that my boss asked me for the report yesterday, he doesn't need it right away." "My friend is abusive to me, but (s)he's under a lot of stress."

7. **EMOTIONAL REASONING:** [you take your own feelings as truth] You assume your negative emotions affect situations. EXAMPLE: "I feel inferior, therefore I must not be as good as others." "I can't take this anymore." This is common when emotional experience is out of proportion to the stressor.
8. **"SHOULD" STATEMENTS:** Unproductive self-statements, usually containing the words should, ought or must, that result in feeling pressured, inadequate, and/or resentful.
9. **LABELING AND MISLABELING:** I'm a... She's a... He's a... EXAMPLE: You're on a diet, eat a dish of ice cream, and say, "I'm such a fat slob." This way of thinking is illogical because it is overly simplistic. It's more realistic to see people as complex beings who have ever-changing thoughts, emotions, and actions. In reality, we are more like a river than a statue.
10. **PERSONALIZATION:** [the mother of guilt] Even if something really isn't your fault or responsibility, you owe it! EXAMPLE: Your child fails an exam, so you decide it's due to your bad parenting. Your lover cheats on you, so you decide it's because you weren't good enough.
11. **PERFECTIONISM:** You and others must be perfect all the time, and if you aren't or they're not, it's awful. When you or others "miss the mark" on something, you become upset, even if the matter is of little consequence, understandable given the circumstances, or commonplace. [the Nobel Prize syndrome]
12. **APPROVAL-SEEKING:** All the significant people in your life must love and approve of you all the time and if they don't, it's awful. You consistently compromise your needs and desires to gain the approval of others.
13. **SELF-RIGHTEOUS:** People should always do what you think is right and if they don't, then they're wrong and should be punished.
14. **WOE IS ME:** You regard yourself as a victim despite the ordinariness of the situation. EXAMPLE: Your car is in the shop and you interpret this as a personal human tragedy that challenges your ability to cope. You fail to take responsibility for having contributed to a problem, rather, you become a victim of it.
15. **REDUCTIONNESS:** Failure to see the complex causes and potential benefits of a stressful experience by reducing it to one simple cause or consequence. EXAMPLE: You catch a cold and think it's because of your exposure to a four-year-old child while disregarding your own degree of stress and lack of sleep. CONSEQUENCE EXAMPLE: Your son fails a math test and you think he'll never be good at math while overlooking the possibility that the experience can help him learn how to better prepare for future tests.

16. **FALLACY OF FAIRNESS:** You judge a negative event as unfair when it truly is not an issue of justice, or an issue of right and wrong. EXAMPLE: You live a healthy lifestyle, but still somehow become ill and think, "How unfair". In reality, people get sick regardless of living in a healthy way.
17. **COMPARISON:** You habitually compare yourself to others, leaving you to feel either inferior or superior. These comparisons are based on little information or an isolated event. However comparisons involving who you were, are now, and who you are becoming can help you measure your own growth and initiate positive change.
18. **SOPHISM:** The combination of two or more related notions which falsely appear to reduce a logical conclusions. EXAMPLE: "Medications is more an art than a science, that's why they call it a practice." "My mother married young and had children right away, so she never had a chance to grow-up herself."

Adapted in part from: Burnes, D. 1990. *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy* New York: New American Library.

Ellis, A. and Grieger, R. 1986. *Handbook of Rational - Emotive Therapy* , Volume 2. New York: Springer Publishing Co.