

Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are negative thoughts or feelings that can influence your emotions. In their more extreme forms they can be very harmful.

Magnification and Minimization: Exaggerating or minimizing the importance of events. You might believe the good things you do are unimportant, or mistakes mean more, or ignore a compliment while dwelling on criticism.

Overgeneralization: Making broad interpretations from a single or few events. “I felt awkward while talking to people I meet. I am *always* so awkward.”

Emotional Reasoning: The assumption that emotions reflect the way things really are. “I feel like a bad friend because I hurt their feelings. I must be a bad friend.”

Personalization: The belief that one is responsible for events outside of their own control. “My mom seems so unhappy. She would be fine if I was a better son/daughter.”

Jumping to Conclusions: Believing a negative meaning to a situation with little or no evidence. Example: “My friend didn’t text me back right away. They must be mad at me.”

Mind Reading: Interpreting the thoughts and beliefs of others without adequate evidence. “She wouldn’t want to be my friend. She probably thinks I’m weird.”

Fortune Telling: The expectation that a situation will turn out badly without adequate evidence. “If I go to that event, I’ll probably just be alone the whole time with nobody to talk to.”

“Should” Statements: The belief that you are supposed to be certain way. “I should always get a good evaluation at work.”

All-or-Nothing Thinking: Thinking in absolutes such as “always”, “never”, or “every”. “I *never* do a good enough job on anything.”

Perfectionist Thinking: Setting expectations for yourself that are too high. “It’s not good enough unless I’m pretty much perfect”.