



Examples of Cognitive Distortions

Watch out for these common thinking errors that lead to anxiety and depression!

1. **ALL OR NOTHING THINKING** - Things are seen in black or white categories. You think in absolutes, like “always” “never” and see a single negative event as a never-ending pattern.
2. **OVERGENERALIZATION** - You generalize from a specific. If you make a mistake, you might think that you “failed” and or are a “failure.”
3. **MENTAL FILTER** - You pick out a negative single event and dwell on it, like a drop of ink that discolors a whole beaker of water.
4. **MAGNIFICATION OR MINIMIZATION**- You either blow things out of proportion or deny something is a problem when it is. Examples: “*I am the worst mother ever*” to “*It’s nothing - Not a big deal (when it really is to you.)*”
5. **SHOULD STATEMENTS** - Having pre-conditions on how you and other people “should” be. Judgmental and unforgiving expectations create a lot of anxiety.
6. **PERSONALIZATION** - You are self-conscious and think things are about you when it is just an interpretation. You think if someone is angry it is in response to you, and blame yourself.
7. **PLAYING THE COMPARISON GAME** - Comparing yourself to others and needing to keep up with others to feel good about yourself. “*He is so much smarter than me - I’m stupid.*”
8. **FORTUNE TELLING** - You think that you can predict the future, and convince yourself that bad things will happen. “*I will always have these problems!*”
9. **LABELING** - You label yourself or others by terms such as “*lazy*” “*fat*” “*stupid*” “*loser*” “*jerk*”, stating them like they are facts. A label erroneously evaluates self-worth.
10. **EMOTIONAL REASONING or JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS**- Rather than being objective, emotions control your interpretations. “*She did not call me -she must HATE me!*”

Below, write three examples of your own irrational thoughts and on the right side of the column choose one or more cognitive distortions it demonstrates.

My Cognitive Distortions

Irrational Thoughts	Types of Cognitive Distortions
Example: I am a loser and always will be. People HATE me.	Example: Labeling, Fortune Telling, All or Nothing Thinking, Conclusions