



WHAT ARE COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS?

Your brain sometimes thinks it sees something in one way but if you are using a clouded lens to see your world then things become distorted. The language that you use in everyday life represents and impacts how you experience your world. Attempt to capture thoughts, ideas, and describe what you see around you using distorted thoughts, beliefs, and words. Inevitably, things get *lost in translation*.

You lose information through generalisations, deletion of information, and cognitive distortion. Distortion is where some aspects of ideas and experiences are given more weight and focus than others. You do this both consciously and unconsciously, and how you do this provides pointers to your underlying beliefs about yourself, others, and your world. Below is a list of the top Cognitive Distortions that you may be using to distort your experiences.

All or Nothing Thinking: Seeing things as black-or-white or right-or-wrong with nothing in-between. Essentially, if I am not perfect then I am a failure.

- I did not finish writing that paper so it was a *complete* waste of time.
- There is no point in playing *if I am not 100%* in shape.
- They did not show, they are *completely* unreliable!

Overgeneralization: Using words like *always* or *never* in relation to a single event or experience.

- I will *never* get that promotion
- He/she/they *always*...

Minimising or Magnifying (Also Catastrophizing): Seeing things as dramatically more or less important than they actually are. Often creating a *catastrophe* that follows.

- *Because* my boss publicly thanked her, she will get that promotion, not me; even though I had a great performance review and just won an industry award.
- I forgot that email! *That means* my boss cannot trust me so, I will not get that raise and my partner will leave me.

Shoulds: Using *should*, *need to*, *must*, *ought to* motivate oneself, then feeling guilty when you do not follow through or feel anger and resentment when someone else does not follow through.

- *I should have* got *blank* done this weekend.
- *They ought to* have been more considerate, *they should know* that would upset me.

Labelling: Attaching a negative label to yourself or others following a single event.

- I did not stand up to *blank*, *I am such a wimp!*

- *What an idiot*, he did not even see that coming!

Jumping to Conclusions

Mind-Reading: Making negative assumptions about how people see you without evidence or factual support.

Your friend is preoccupied and you do not bother to find out why, instead you think:

- She *thinks I am exaggerating* again
- He still *has not forgiven me* for telling others about his illness

Fortune Telling: Making negative predictions about the future without evidence or factual support.

- I *will not be able* to sell my house and *I will be stuck* here (even though housing market is good).
- *No-one will understand. I will not be invited back* again (even though they are supportive friends).

Discounting the Positive: Not acknowledging the positive. Saying anyone could have done it or insisting that your positive actions, qualities, or achievements do not count.

- That *does not count*, anyone could have done it.
- I have *only* cut back from smoking 20 cigarettes a day to 10. *It does not count* because I have not fully quit yet.

Blame and Personalization: Blaming yourself when you were not entirely responsible or blaming other people and denying your role in the situation.

- *If only I was younger*, I would have got the job
- *If only I had not said that*, they would not have...
- *If only she had not yelled at me*, I would not have been angry and would not have had that car accident.

Emotional Reasoning: I feel, therefore I am. Assuming that a feeling is true - without digging deeper to see if this is accurate.

- I feel such an idiot so it must be true.
- I feel guilty so I must have done something wrong.
- I feel really bad for yelling at my partner, I must be really selfish and inconsiderate

Mental Filter: Allowing or dwelling on one negative detail or fact to spoil our enjoyment, happiness, hope, etc

- You have a great evening and dinner at a restaurant with friends, but your chicken was undercooked and that *spoiled the whole* evening.
- Traffic was backed up and you were late to work and that *ruined your whole day*.