

Feelings are not Facts! Identifying Cognitive Distortions: Distorted Thoughts Inventory

Just because you feel it or think it, doesn't make it true.

Check the items below to identify patterns in your thinking that may be distorted, twisted and therefore, untrue. (Adapted from David Burns MD Distorted Thoughts Inventory)

- 1. Filtering—Focus only on the negative.** *One criticism overshadows 100 compliments.*
- 2. Polarized thinking--“Black and White” or “All or Nothing” thinking.** No middle, no balance. *Always/Never. Perfect or fail. Give 100% or give up. Change everything or change nothing.*
- 3. Overgeneralizing.** *If something bad happens only once, you expect it to happen over and over again. Experience one defeat then believe the whole day, week, month, year or even your whole life is ruined.*
- 4. Drama/ Catastrophizing.** *The sky is falling! I'll die of embarrassment! You are killing me!*
- 5. Taking things personally.** Thinking it is all about you. *“I must have done something to cause this” “If you loved me, you would not do that!” “This has to be my fault.”*
- 6. Blame fallacy: “You made me feel this way!”** *Other people are responsible for my feelings, they cause my feelings. It is their responsibility to make me feel better, not mine.*
- 7. “Shoulding” on yourself.** Using “should” for perfection, punishment or criticism, creating guilt and shame. *“I should have known better.” “They can make that mistake, but I shouldn't have done that!”*
- 8. Emotional Reasoning— Mistaking feelings for facts.** *“I feel it, therefore it must be true.” “If I feel stupid and boring, then I must be stupid and boring. If I feel guilty, I must be bad. If I feel stressed, I must be failing.”*
- 9. Change fallacy: attempting to change other people.** *“If I complain, nag, demand, pout, remind, beg, help, love or wait long enough...I can get other people change into who I want them to be.”*
- 10. Perfectionistic double standards.** Unrealistic standards for self., but not others. *“Others are allowed to make mistakes, have flaws etc.. but I have to be perfect. I am not like other people. I must be perfect, no mistakes”.*
- 11. Mind reading or jumping to conclusions.** Without asking others, assuming what others think or feel. *“They think I am boring” “They won't like me anymore if they know the truth..”*



Not sure if your thoughts are distorted? Ask yourself these questions:

1. What is actually true right now? (*Example: measurable or observable facts in current time*)
2. How would I view this situation if it were happening to someone else?
3. How would I advise someone else who was experiencing a situation such as this?
4. When I think about this, what is my intention, goal, or desired outcome?
5. How could I cope and problem-solve?
6. What do I want to role model?