



The Healing Collective

COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

(11 Ways to Make yourself Miserable)

Cognitive distortions are inaccuracies in our thinking. We can think of our thoughts as representations of reality, sort of like a photograph. If we have a smudge on the lens of the camera, then the photo will show a picture that does not accurately represent what was in front of the camera.

It is safe to assume that everyone engages in cognitive distortions at times, especially during times of distress. **It can be very helpful to be able to identify distortions in your thinking, because once you have discovered distortion, you will know how to correct it and feel better.** Identifying your cognitive distortions is like diagnosing a thought problem. A good diagnosis usually points to a helpful remedy. Below is a list of 11 common distortions with examples for how they might occur. See if you can identify one or more distorted thoughts of your own,

1. ALL OR NOTHING/BLACK OR WHITE: *Seeing things as though there were only two possible categories. If a situation turns out imperfectly, you see it as a total failure.*
Example: Your partner forgets to compliment you on an achievement, and you think, "Well, he thinks nothing of anything I do."

YOUR EXAMPLE:

2. OVER-GENERALIZING: *A negative event is seen as part of a never-ending pattern of defeat.*
Example: When your partner is late you think, "She never thinks of me and my feelings."
YOUR EXAMPLE:

3. MENTAL FILTER: *Seeing only negative aspects of a situation while screening out the positive aspects.*
Example: You focus on a critical comment your partner made while ignoring all the positive feedback you received.
YOUR EXAMPLE:

4. JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS: *Predicting things will go a certain way before you have that facts.*
EXAMPLE: Your partner looks at another man/woman in a restaurant and you assume he/she is looking for another partner and will leave you.
YOUR EXAMPLE:



The Healing Collective

5. MIND-READING: Assuming that you know exactly what someone is thinking.

Example: A friend or your partner seems irritated or not as pleasant as usual and you think "He must be angry at me."

YOUR EXAMPLE:

7. MAGNIFYING or MINIMIZING: Overvaluing or minimizing the importance of a situation of certain information.

Example: Even though you may be enjoying a nice time with your partner, you are upset by one or more things he/she said during the evening, and you write off the whole evening.

YOUR EXAMPLE:

9. SHOULDS/MUST: You tell yourself things "should," "must," or "shouldn't" be a certain way. We do this with ourselves, with other people, and with situations

Example: "She/He should know what I want without me having to ask"

YOUR EXAMPLE:

6. FORTUNE-TELLING: Predicting that things will turn out badly and that you won't be able to cope.

Example: After an argument with your partner you imagine you both divorcing and you being alone and miserable.

YOUR EXAMPLE:

8. EMOTIONAL REASONING: Assuming that how you feel is an accurate reflection of how things are.

Example: If you are feeling unloved at a particular time, you conclude that your partner does not love you or has stopped loving you.

YOUR EXAMPLE:

10. LABELING: This is an extreme form of all-or-nothing thinking which can be damaging to our self-esteem and our relationships.

Example: Instead of simple acknowledging a mistake, we say "I'm such a screw-up" (Substitute "loser," "idiot,"). Applying labels to ourselves or others ("that SOB") will tend to blind us to other qualities which we or others have.

YOUR EXAMPLE:



The Healing Collective

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Example: "It's all my fault/all my partner's fault that we are not getting along."

YOUR EXAMPLE

What are some ways you can reconstruct your thoughts to be more productive?



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Unhelpful thinking patterns matching Activity

Below, there are several statements that individuals who engage in unhelpful thinking patterns (cognitive distortions) might make. Based on the definitions provided above, try to match the thinking pattern with each statement.

Cognitive distortion/thinking pattern	A/B/C	Statements
Magnification and Minimization	<input type="checkbox"/>	A- I am a failure in math because I got a bad grade on this test.
Should'ing and Must'ing	<input type="checkbox"/>	B- Either I am going to fail the test or I'm going to pass- there's no in-between.
Catastrophizing	<input type="checkbox"/>	C- I know I'm not going to get this job. I'm probably not as qualified as the other applicants.
Labeling	<input type="checkbox"/>	D- Even though I did really well on my last report, I still got edits and comments from my boss. That must mean I'm doing a bad job and the nice comments are just to make me feel better.
Emotional Reasoning	<input type="checkbox"/>	E- They don't really mean it when they said they like my skirt- they were just being nice.
Fortune-Telling	<input type="checkbox"/>	F- My friends are being really quiet. That must mean they are mad at me.
Mind-Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	G- If I don't shake this depression, I will be mentally ill and incapacitated for the rest of my life.
Mental Filter	<input type="checkbox"/>	H- I feel so guilty. I must have done something wrong.
Black and White/All or Nothing Thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>	I- I must eat healthy all the time- this is a non-negotiable.



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Unhelpful thinking patterns matching Activity

Here is the answer key to the matching activity:

Cognitive distortion/thinking pattern	A/B/C	Statements
Magnification and Minimization	E	E- They don't really mean it when they said they like my skirt- they were just being nice.
Should'ing and Must'ing	I	I- I must eat healthy all the time- this is a non- negotiable.
Catastrophizing	G	G- If I don't shake this depression, I will be mentally ill and incapacitated for the rest of my life.
Labeling	A	A- I am a failure in math because I got a bad grade on this test.
Emotional Reasoning	H	H- I feel so guilty. I must have done something wrong.
Fortune-Telling	C	C- I know I'm not going to get this job. I'm probably not as qualified as the other applicants.
Mind-Reading	F	F- My friends are being really quiet. That must mean they are mad at me.
Mental Filter	D	D- Even though I did really well on my last report, I still got edits and comments from my boss. That must mean I'm doing a bad job and the nice comments are just to make me feel better.
Black and White/All or Nothing Thinking	B	B- Either I am going to fail the test or I'm going to pass- there's no in-between.