



Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are irrational thoughts that can influence your emotions and behavior. Everyone experiences cognitive distortions to some degree, but they can be harmful in their more extreme forms.

Magnification and Minimization: Exaggerating or minimizing the importance of events.

- **Catastrophizing:** Seeing only the worst possible outcomes of a situation.

Global Thinking: Making broad interpretations from a single or few events.

Example: "[Because one person left a bad review of my article] I don't have what it takes to be a journalist."

- **Magical Thinking:** The belief that acts will influence unrelated situations.
Example: "I am a good person so bad things won't happen to me."
- **Personalization:** The belief that one is responsible for events outside of their own control.
Example: "My mom is always upset. She would be fine if I did more to help her."

Jumping to Conclusions: Interpreting the meaning of a situation with little or no evidence.

- **Mind Reading:** Interpreting the thoughts and beliefs of others without adequate evidence.
Example: "She would not go on a date with me. She probably thinks I'm ugly."
- **Fortune Telling:** The expectation that a situation will turn out badly without adequate evidence.

Emotional Reasoning: The assumption that emotions reflect the way things really are.

Example: "I feel like a bad friend, therefore I must be a bad friend."

Labeling: You put a fixed, global label on yourself and others without considering that the evidence might more reasonably lead to a less disastrous conclusion.

Example: "I'm a loser" or "He's no good."

Disqualifying the Positive: Unreasonably telling yourself that positive experiences, deeds, or qualities do not count.

Example: "I did the project well, but that doesn't mean I'm competent—I just got lucky."

Selective Abstraction: Paying undue attention to one small detail instead of the whole picture.

Example: Receiving many compliments on a performance evaluation but focusing on the single piece of negative feedback.

Musterbating: The belief that things should be a certain way.

Example: "I should always be friendly" or "I must clean the house before company arrives."

Dichotomous Thinking: Thinking in absolutes such as "always," "never," or "every."

Example: "I never do a good enough job on anything"