

Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are *irrational thoughts* that shape how you see the world, how you feel, and how you act. It's normal to have these thoughts occasionally, but they can be harmful when frequent or extreme.

Magnification and minimization: Exaggerating or minimizing the importance of events. You might believe your own achievements are unimportant or that your mistakes are excessively important.

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

Overgeneralization: Making broad interpretations from a single or few events. "I felt awkward during my job interview. I am *always* so awkward."

Magical thinking: The belief that thoughts, actions, or emotions influence unrelated situations. "If I hadn't hoped something bad would happen to him, he wouldn't have gotten into an accident."

Personalization: The belief that you are responsible for events outside of your control. "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. "She wouldn't 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. "I feel like a bad friend, therefore I must be a bad friend."

Disqualifying the positive: Recognizing only the negative aspects of a situation while ignoring the positive. You might receive many compliments on an evaluation, but focus on the single piece of negative feedback.

"Should" statements: The belief that things should be a certain way. "I should always be perfect."

All-or-nothing thinking: Thinking in absolutes such as "always," "never," or "every." "I *never* do a good enough job on anything."