

Cognitive Distortions: Common Dysfunctional Thinking

These thought patterns often keep us stuck in self-defeating or ineffective behavior patterns and make us unhappy.

1. **Perfectionism, Black and White, or All or Nothing thinking:** Failing to see gray areas or compromises.

Example: "If I'm not a total success, I'm a failure."

2. **Should Statements:** Unnecessarily criticizing yourself, others, or the world.

Example: "I am on a diet, I should not have eaten that donut."

3. **Overpersonalization:** taking too much responsibility for yours or other's situations.

Example: "The repairman was rude to me, I must have done something wrong."

4. **Denial or Blaming:** Failing to accurately recognize your own role or capabilities in a situation.

Example: "It was not my fault, it was their fault. There was no way I could have known that information."

5. **Selective Attention or Mental Filter:** Minimizing positives and focusing instead on perceived negatives.

Example: "Because I got one low rating on my evaluation [which also contained several high ratings] it means I'm doing a lousy job."

6. **False- permanence:** thinking things are more permanent than they really are.

Example: "This is going to take forever to get through."

7. **Overgeneralization:** you make a sweeping negative conclusion that goes far beyond the current situation.

Example: "I felt uncomfortable at the meeting, I don't have what it takes to do this job."

8. **Labeling:** a single event falsely becomes generalized to a larger pattern.

Example: "I am a loser."

9. **Catastrophizing:** making things out to be worse than they really are.

Example: "I'll be so upset, I won't be able to function at all."

10. **Magical Thinking:** Telling yourself everything would be better if I... etc.

Example: "I would be better off in life if I was skinner."

11. **Emotional Reasoning:** Acting as though emotions are reality.

Example: "I know I do a lot of things okay at work, but I still feel like I'm a failure."

12. **Mind-reading and jumping to conclusions:** assuming what other people are thinking without really knowing.

Example: "He thinks that I don't know the first thing about this project."

13. **Double Standard:** holding yourself to a different standard than you would apply to a good friend. Being hard on yourself.

Example: "I feel like a loser but I would never let Emily say that about herself".

14. **Self-centeredness:** overly concerned with one's self and ignoring how events relate to others or the world.

Example: "I can't go to the party. I look fat in this dress."

15. **Fallacy of Fairness:** falsely believing things should always work out fairly.

Example: "Life has been really unfair, things should not be this hard."