

Checklist of Cognitive Distortions

1. **All-or-nothing thinking:** You look at things in absolute, black-and-white categories.
2. **Overgeneralization:** You view a negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat.
3. **Mental filter:** You dwell on the negatives and ignore the positives.
4. **Discounting the positives:** You insist that your accomplishments or positive qualities "don't count."
5. **Jumping to conclusions:** (a) Mind reading — you assume that people are reacting negatively to you when there's no evidence for this. (b) Fortune-telling — you arbitrarily predict that things will turn out badly.
6. **Magnification or minimization:** You blow things way up out of proportion or you shrink their importance inappropriately.
7. **Emotional reasoning:** You reason from how you feel: "I feel like an idiot, so I must really be one." Or "I don't feel like doing this, so I'll put it off."
8. **"Should" statements:** You criticize yourself or other people with "shoulds" or "shouldn'ts." "Musts," "oughts," and "have-tos" are similar offenders.
9. **Labeling:** You identify with your shortcomings. Instead of saying "I made a mistake," you tell yourself "I'm a jerk," or "a fool" or "a loser."
10. **Personalization and blame:** You blame yourself for something you weren't entirely responsible for, or you blame other people and overlook ways that your own attitudes and behavior might contribute to a problem.

So, I've got distorted thinking patterns... Now what??

■ Ask yourself:

- "Is this absolutely true?"
 - "Are there any other explanations for this?"
 - "Where is the evidence?"
 - Have I committed one of the Cognitive Distortions... or perhaps a few of them?"
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