

WHAT ARE COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS?



Cognitive distortions are negative patterns of thinking that are inaccurate, exaggerated, and not based on facts.

These thought patterns are reinforced over time and make you view things more negatively than they are.

Cognitive distortions can be challenging to identify and change, but recognizing them and working to reframe them can improve your mental health. Techniques such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) effectively identify and challenge cognitive distortions and replace them with more accurate and positive thoughts.



TYPES OF COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS



All-Or-Nothing
seeing things in only positive or negative extremes



Overgeneralization
general conclusions based on personal experience



Mental Filter
focusing on negatives; dismissing positives



Mindreading
false prediction of someone else's thoughts



Should Statements
having beliefs about how people ought to behave



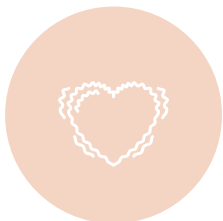
Labeling
generalising something into a judgement



Rationalization
creating excuses for situations that don't go your way



Personalization
seeing yourself as the cause of a negative event



Emotional Reasoning
believing negative feelings reflect the way things really are



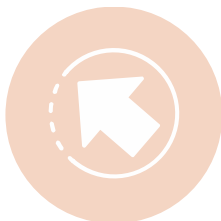
Always Being Right
believing it is unacceptable to be wrong



Heaven's Reward Fallacy
believing rewards depend on how hard you work



Fallacy of Fairness
believing that everything should be fair



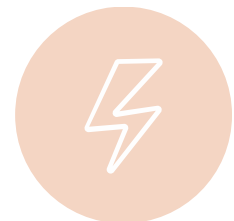
Fallacy of Change
believing others should change



Catastrophizing
magnifying the negative

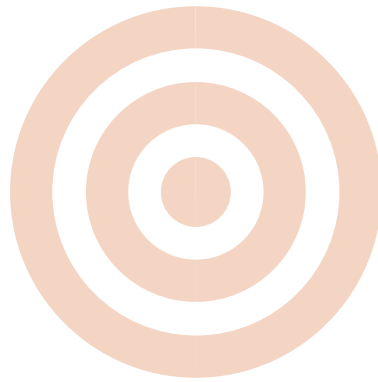


Fortune Telling
predicting the worst



Blaming
holding others responsible

ALL OR NOTHING



All-or-nothing thinking is a cognitive distortion that involves seeing things as black or white with no gray areas. It is also known as "dichotomous thinking" and can lead to rigid, inflexible thinking that may prevent individuals from seeing multiple perspectives or finding compromise.

An example of all-or-nothing thinking is when a student may believe that unless they achieve perfect grades, they are a complete failure. This kind of thinking can lead to feelings of stress and pressure, and can prevent the student from enjoying the learning process or feeling proud of their accomplishments. They may also feel discouraged or give up on a particular subject or assignment if they do not excel in it immediately, rather than recognizing that learning is a process and that improvement takes time.

Another example could be a person who may believe that their partner or friends must always treat them perfectly, without any flaws or mistakes. If their partner or friends make even a small mistake or show any imperfection, the person may view them as completely unreliable, untrustworthy, or unworthy of their time and attention. This kind of thinking can lead to relationship conflicts and prevent the person from recognizing and appreciating the positive qualities of others.

OVERGENERALIZATION

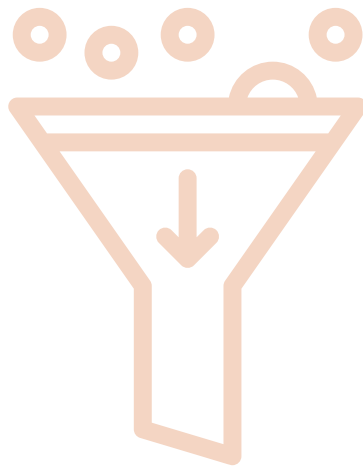


Overgeneralization is a thinking distortion where an individual forms sweeping assumptions or conclusions based on a single or few isolated incidents. This type of thinking can lead to inflexible and negative beliefs about oneself, others, or the world, and can hinder the ability to see the bigger picture or consider alternative viewpoints.

For instance, when a person faces rejection or failure in a particular area of their life, such as their academic performance, and then concludes that they are a failure in all aspects of their life, they are exhibiting overgeneralization. This type of thinking can result in a pervasive sense of hopelessness and prevent the person from recognizing other areas of their life where they may be successful or content.

Another example of overgeneralization is when a person has a negative experience with a particular group of people, such as a specific race or gender, and then generalizes that all members of that group are untrustworthy or bad. In this case, the individual is making a sweeping, negative judgment based on a limited and biased sample.

MENTAL FILTERING



Mental filtering is a cognitive distortion that involves focusing solely on negative aspects of a situation while filtering out any positive elements. People who struggle with this type of distortion tend to magnify their problems and minimize their accomplishments, leading to feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and anxiety.

For example, a student who receives a B+ on a test may filter out the positive aspects of their performance, such as the fact that they performed better than most of their classmates, and instead focus only on the fact that they did not get an A. As a result, they may feel discouraged and unmotivated, and may struggle to continue putting effort into their studies.

Another example of mental filtering is a person who has a job interview and receives mostly positive feedback from the interviewer, but fixates only on one negative comment made about their experience in a particular area. The individual may feel as though their entire interview was a failure, despite the fact that there were many positive aspects to the conversation.

HOW TO CHANGE YOUR COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

Changing cognitive distortions can be a challenging process, but it is possible with effort and practice. Here are some steps that can help:

- **Recognize the cognitive distortion:** The first step is to become aware of the cognitive distortion and how it is affecting your thoughts and behaviors. Pay attention to your thinking patterns and try to identify when you are engaging in a cognitive distortion.
- **Challenge the cognitive distortion:** Once you have recognized the cognitive distortion, challenge it by questioning its validity. Ask yourself if there is evidence to support the distorted thinking, or if there are other possible explanations for the situation.
- **Replace the cognitive distortion with realistic thinking:** Replace the distorted thinking with more realistic and rational thinking. Focus on the facts of the situation, rather than assumptions or interpretations. Use positive affirmations and self-talk to reinforce the new thinking patterns.
- **Practice mindfulness:** Mindfulness can help you become more aware of your thoughts and feelings and develop a non-judgmental attitude towards them. Practice meditation, deep breathing, or other relaxation techniques to help calm your mind and reduce anxiety.
- **Seek professional help:** If you are struggling to change your cognitive distortions, consider seeking professional help from a therapist or counselor. They can help you identify and challenge your distorted thinking patterns and develop coping strategies to manage them.

CHALLENGING THOUGHTS #1



Situation

What is my thought about the situation?

What cognitive distortion is present in my thinking?

What is my thought about the situation?

What are my assumptions and expectations?

Evidence for my thought

Evidence against my thought

What is an alternative thought?

How can I reframe the situation positively?

CHALLENGING THOUGHTS #2



What potential catastrophe am I worrying about?

Rate how catastrophic this would be on a scale of 1 - 10



What is the probability of this catastrophe happening?

Has this happened before? If so, how frequently?

What would it be like if the catastrophe happened?

What strategies could I use to cope?

How do I feel about the catastrophe now?

Will this be important tomorrow? In a week? In a month? In a year from now?