



Cognitive Distortions

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

- **Magnification and Minimization:** Exaggerating or minimizing the importance of events. One might believe their own achievements are unimportant, or that their 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 acts will influence unrelated situations. “I am a good person-bad things shouldn’t happen to me.”
- **Personalization:** The belief that one is responsible for events outside of their own 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 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. “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. One 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 friendly.”
- **All-or-Nothing Thinking:** Thinking in absolutes such as “always”, “never”, or “every”. “I *never* do a good enough job on anything.”