

# Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: Cognitive Distortions

**1. All or nothing thinking:** Seeing things in extreme, black or white categories.

"Since I've never had a girlfriend, I must be a loser."  
"If I fail this exam, I'm worthless."  
"If I was actually good at soccer, I wouldn't have made that mistake."

**2. Overgeneralization:** Seeing bad things as being part of a pattern that will inevitably repeat.

"Just my luck! Bad things are always happening to me."  
"There I go again, screwing up another good lead."  
"Yet another woman turned me down. I'm never going to have a girlfriend."

**3. Focusing on the negative:** Paying attention to the bad parts of a thing while ignoring the good.

"I may have done well on my other exams, but I got a B in math."  
"This war proves that humanity is fundamentally evil."  
"The wedding would have been nice, but the waiters were rude."

**4. Disqualifying the positive:** Discrediting positive aspects or turning them into negatives.

"Sure, the special effects were good, but they weren't as good as I hoped."  
"He may have told me that he admired my intelligence, but he was only being nice."  
"It's true I got an A+ in that class, but it doesn't matter because the class was easy."

**5. Jumping to conclusions:** Making negative guesses about the future or what others think.

"Only ten people came to my lecture. My colleagues must not respect my work."  
"He must be pissed at me since he never returned my phone call."  
"I just know that they are going to reject my paper submission."

**6. Magnification:** Exaggerating the scale or significance of an event.

"She doesn't like me any more. I'm never going to be happy without her."  
"I can't believe I'm filing for bankruptcy. People will never respect me again."  
"If I don't get this job, I'm going to be completely screwed."

**7. Emotional Reasoning:** Using your feeling about things as proof they really are that way.

Feel ashamed -> Assume you've done wrong -> "I shouldn't have done that"  
Feel angry -> Assume the other person was in the wrong -> "You asshole"  
Feel rejected -> Assume no one wants to see you -> "No one likes me"

**8. Should and Must statements:** Telling yourself that you should be a certain way.

"I must not make mistakes like this again!"  
"She shouldn't treat me that way."  
"Waiters should always show respect to their customers."

**9. Labeling:** Oversimplifying the traits of yourself or others using emotional wording.

"I'm such a pig for eating all that ice cream!"  
"That bitch at the movie theatre was so rude."  
"Only a fool would make that mistake."

**10. Blaming:** Placing blame on yourself or others when the blamed person isn't really responsible.

"If I were a good mother, my daughter would not be so depressed."  
"If you had just looked where you were going, I never would have biked into you!"  
"After a month of searching I still don't have a job. What's wrong with me?"