

Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are thoughts that are based on emotion, rather than logic. They often influence the way we react and can be harmful. Everyone engages in cognitive distortions to some level. This is why it's important to become aware of our distorted ways of thinking and learn reasoning skills that will help us to avoid negative cycles of thought, emotion, and behaviour.

Here are some examples of cognitive distortions that can be harmful:

Catastrophizing: Fixating on the worst possible outcome. We often begin to think that the worst possible outcome is more likely to occur than it actually is.

Overgeneralizing: Making general assumptions about someone or something based on a single or small number of experiences.

Personalization: Believing that we are responsible for things outside of our control. For example, "my partner is having a bad week. I must not be doing enough to support them".

Jumping to Conclusions: Determining the facts or meaning of an event with minimal evidence. This can include *mind reading* (deciding what others are thinking based on minimal evidence) or *fortune telling* (concluding the outcome of a situation based on minimal evidence).

Emotional Reasoning: Assuming that our emotions equate to how things are in reality. For example, "I feel guilty, so I must have done something wrong."

Should Statements: Believing that things ought to be a certain way. "I should always smile when meeting someone new."

Dichotomous Thinking: Thinking in all-or-nothing/black-and-white terms. For example, using the words "always" or "never" when describing an occurrence: "I *never* get recognized for my work" or "people *always* ignore me".

Minimizing the Positive & Amplifying the Negative: Giving more weight to the negative aspects than to the positive aspects of an event. We often do this with feedback that we receive from others and with our successes and failures.