

EXPLORE WELLNESS

10 Common Cognitive Distortions¹

1. **All-or-Nothing Thinking:** A work project fell short of perfect and now you think it is a total failure.
2. **Overgeneralization:** You did not get that promotion so now you believe your career will never amount to anything.
3. **Mental Filter:** You handed in an exceptional project at work yet one of your co-workers wonders if you could have used a different folder; you focus exclusively on the folder versus the exceptional project.
4. **Disqualifying the Positive:** You did a great job on that project yet you attribute this to “just being your job” and re-focus your attention elsewhere.
5. **Jumping to Conclusions:** You see the world negatively even though there are no facts to support this either through mind-reading (thinking you know what other believe without proof of this) or fortune telling (you automatically believe something negative will happen without any reason as to why this might be).
6. **Magnification and Minimization:** You highlight and focus on your problems or defects and minimize your good qualities as unimportant.
7. **Emotional Reasoning:** You assume that if you see something as negative it must be that way even though others are likely to see it differently; you are unwilling to see things through the “eyes of the world”.
8. **Should Statements:** You frequently use the words should, have to, must in your language that sets you in a position of never doing things right.
9. **Labelling and Mis-labelling:** You take one event and apply it to your whole life; you see a mistake as meaning you are stupid.
10. **Personalization:** A situation that you were not involved with goes poorly and because you have some association to the project, you blame yourself completely for the result even though it was not your work even.

Listed below are the common ways people change these thought processes; listed with them is the distortion it is best applied towards.

- **Examine the Proof:** show the evidence for your belief and also see if there is any possible other beliefs that might be relevant to the situation. (distortions 2-6)
- **Thinking in Neutral:** rather than seeing the world in absolutes, create a range for thoughts and experiences...what is the range from 0 (no belief at all or small occurrence) to 100 (full belief in this and happens lots) (distortions 1 & 2)
- **Double Standard:** ask yourself, "Would I talk to others or treat others the way I am talking or treating myself right now"? (distortions 6, 7, 9, 10)
- **Perform a Survey:** ask people you trust about their perceptions/ experiences with the thought and/or situation (distortions 4 & 7)
- **Explore Semantics:** create substitute language; use neutral words or words that are more accurate to the situation (distortion 8)
- **Define your Words:** if you are internally calling yourself negative things, define what those things are in their totality and see if you do in fact fit with that description or if you are identifying too much (distortion 9 & 10)
- **Pros & Cons List:** do a full listing of the pros and cons to holding the belief that you have (distortion 4)

Thinking Distortion - example	Potential Correction
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	