

# What Are Cognitive Distortions?

Cognitive distortions are patterns of negative thinking that can make you feel anxious, depressed, or overwhelmed. These thoughts feel true, but they are often inaccurate and unhelpful. By learning to spot them, you can start to shift your mindset and respond in healthier ways.

## 10 Common Cognitive Distortions

1. **All-or-Nothing Thinking** | You see things in black and white. “If I’m not perfect, I’ve failed.”
2. **Over-generalization** | One bad experience means it will always happen. “I never get things right.”
3. **Mental Filter** | You focus only on the negative, filtering out the positive. “Nothing went well today.”
4. **Discounting the Positive** | You reject positive experiences. “They were just being nice.”
5. **Jumping to Conclusions** | **Mind Reading:** “They must think I’m incompetent.”  
**Fortune Telling:** “I just know it’s going to go badly.”
6. **Magnification or Minimization** | You blow things out of proportion or shrink their importance. “This mistake will ruin everything.”
7. **Emotional Reasoning** | You assume your feelings reflect facts. “I feel hopeless, so things must be hopeless.”
8. **Should Statements** | You criticize yourself with “shoulds” and “musts.” “I shouldn’t feel this way.”
9. **Labeling** | You define yourself or others by one event. “I’m a failure.”
10. **Personalization** | You blame yourself for things outside your control. “It’s my fault they’re upset.”

## How to Respond

- » **Notice the distortion**
- » **Name the pattern** (e.g., “This is fortune telling”)
- » **Challenge the thought gently**
- » **Replace it with something more balanced**

**You are not your thoughts.** With practice, you can change how you think and how you feel.



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