

Five Common Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are thought patterns that cause people to view reality in inaccurate and usually negative ways. Here are a few examples:

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking

Also known as “Black-and-White Thinking,” you see things in terms of extremes – something is either fantastic or awful, you are either perfect or a failure.

Example: I screwed up again, I can't do ANYTHING right.

2. Emotional Reasoning

It can be described as “I feel it, therefore it must be true.” This is very common when we are overcome with emotion.

Example: I feel overwhelmed and hopeless, therefore my problems must be impossible to solve.

3. Disqualifying the Positive

People often acknowledge positive experiences, but reject them instead of embracing them.

Example: Sure I got the project done on time, but I'm not competent. I just got lucky.

4. Jumping to Conclusions (Mind Reading)

This is an inaccurate belief that we know what another person is thinking.

Example: I'm not going to that party, nobody there likes me anyway.

5. Catastrophizing

It often involves thinking that one event will lead to a series of events that will negatively impact life.

Example: I'm running late. I'm going to get fired and won't have a job. I'm not going to be able to feed my family or pay my bills!

