

Cognitive Distortions

*Cognitive distortions are logical, but they are not rational. They can instigate thought processes that lead to socially and psychologically destructive behavior. How often do you find yourself using these ten common distortions. Rate yourself from one to ten with **one** being low and **ten** being high. Choose one of them to work on—monitor your thoughts and correct yourself when you get caught up in distorted thinking.*

Score	Cognitive Distortions
	1. ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING: You see things in black-and-white categories. If performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself or others as total failures.
	2. OVERGENERALIZATION: You see a single negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat. Phrases like "You always ..." or "You never ..." exemplify overgeneralization.
	3. MENTAL FILTER: You pick out a single negative detail and obsess on it so that your vision of all reality becomes darkened, like the drop of ink that discolors an entire glass of water.
	4. DISQUALIFYING THE POSITIVE: You reject positive experiences by insisting they "don't count" for some reason or other. In this way you can maintain a negative belief that is contradicted by your everyday experiences. Often this manifests as making excuses when somebody pays you a compliment.
	5. JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS: You make a negative interpretation even though there are no definite facts that convincingly support your conclusion—often a "wait and see" attitude is called for in these situations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MIND READING: You arbitrarily conclude (usually by personalizing their behavior) that someone is reacting negatively to you, and you don't bother to check this out • THE FORTUNETELLER ERROR: You often anticipate that things will turn out badly, and you feel convinced that your prediction is an already-established fact.
	6. MAGNIFICATION (CATASTROPHIZING) OR MINIMIZATION: You exaggerate the importance of things (such as your achievements or someone else's goof up), or you inappropriately shrink things until they appear tiny (your own character defects or other people's acceptable behavior). This is also called the " <i>binocular trick</i> ."
	7. EMOTIONAL REASONING: You allow your negative emotions to color how you see the world with an "I feel it, therefore it must be true."
	8. SHOULD STATEMENTS: You try to motivate yourself or others with should and shouldn't, as if needing be whipped and punished before you could be expected anything. "Musts" and "oughts" are also offenders. The emotional consequences are guilt. When you direct should statements toward others, you feel anger, frustration, and resentment—as do they!
	9. LABELING AND MISLABELING: This is an extreme form of overgeneralization. Instead of describing your error, you attach a negative label to yourself. "I'm a loser." When someone else's behavior rubs you the wrong way, you attach a negative label to him "He's an dumb jerk!" Mislabeled involves describing an event with language that is highly colored and emotionally loaded, and generally not factually descriptive.
	10. PERSONALIZATION: You see yourself as the cause of some negative external event, which in fact you were not primarily responsible for.
	Total Score

Copyright 2003, John Elder, MA

www.jelder.com

May only be reproduced for personal use.