

# Thought Distortions



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*Helping People Help Themselves*

Compiled by 2023 Green Team

Thought distortions or cognitive distortions are overly exaggerated irrational way of thinking which is not based on facts or reality and can affect your emotion and behaviour. It often leads you to view things more negatively than they really are. These thoughts can especially affect people who already struggle with mental health, as these thoughts affect your mood, confidence, and overall wellness.

At some point, we have all experienced some type of cognitive distortions. You may have felt you did not represent yourself well at a job interview, meanwhile you aced it. This is an example of you distorting your thoughts. That was your mind leading you astray. You may also go to purchase something online and end up fixating on the one bad review the product got, instead of focusing on the 35 good reviews.

(Stanborough, 2022)

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## Common Thought Distortions

Experiencing cognitive distortions once in a while is natural, but when it becomes too much and starts affecting your life and daily activities, it could be a reason to see a mental health professional for help. The most common distorted thoughts include Filtering, polarization, overgeneralization, discounting the positive, jumping to conclusions, catastrophizing, personalization, control fallacies, fallacy of fairness, blaming, should statements, emotional reasoning, global labeling, and more.

(Casabianca, 2022)

- **Black-and-white (or all-or-nothing) thinking:** *I never have anything interesting to say.*
- **Jumping to conclusions (or mind-reading):** *The doctor is going to tell me I have cancer.*
- **Personalization:** *Our team lost because of me.*
- **Should-ing and must-ing (using language that is self-critical that puts a lot of pressure on you):** *I should be losing weight.*

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- **Mental filter (focusing on the negative, such as the one aspect of a health change which you didn't do well):** *I am terrible at getting enough sleep.*
- **Overgeneralization:** *I'll never find a partner.*
- **Magnification and minimization (magnifying the negative, minimizing the positive):** *It was just one healthy meal.*
- **Fortune-telling:** *My cholesterol is going to be sky-high.*
- **Comparison (comparing just one part of your performance or situation to another's, which you don't really know, so that it makes you appear in a negative light):** *All of my coworkers are happier than me.*
- **Catastrophizing (combination of fortune-telling and all-or-nothing thinking; blowing things out of proportion):** *This spot on my skin is probably skin cancer; I'll be dead soon.*
- **Labeling:** *I'm just not a healthy person.*
- **Disqualifying the positive:** *I answered that well, but it was a lucky guess.*

(Grinspoon, P., 2022)

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## Changing Distorted Thoughts

Being conscious of our cognitive distortions and focusing on how we are interpreting things to ourselves is a huge step toward overcoming them. Positive mental fitness is just as vital as positive physical fitness. We almost surely will feel less isolated and anxious if we interpret things in a manner that is positive and healthy. This doesn't imply that we ignore issues, difficulties or emotions; rather, it implies that we address them with a positive outlook rather than allowing negative emotions and thoughts to make us feel more anxious.

Thoughts are a running dialogue in our minds, and they can come and go so quickly that we can barely understand them, let alone have time to address them. Although it is overwhelming, it is important to challenge our negative thought distortions, instead of just ignoring them. Leaving them to sit can cause issues with understanding what is a rational thought, and what is not. (Grinspoon, 2022)

## References

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