

COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

Adapted From: *Feeling Good, the New Mood Therapy* by David Burns

1. All-or-nothing thinking

- When we interpret in extremes, we think in black and white, all or nothing categories.
- Ex: If you fall short of perfection, you call yourself a failure; you're either great or awful.

2. Overgeneralization

- When we perceive a single negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat, we draw flawed conclusions based on one or few experiences.
- Ex: He insists that she is always or never right about handling a particular situation.

3. Mental filter

- When we select a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively, our view of all reality becomes darkened and shaded by this detail.
- Ex: One typo in an otherwise flawlessly written 10-page paper causes a Professor to consider a student sloppy and lazy.

4. Disqualifying the positive

- When we reject good experiences, we insist they "don't count."
- Ex: Someone who I don't respect made a suggestion you thought was reasonable, but I discounted because of the source.

5. Jumping to conclusions

- When we make negative interpretations of events without facts or logic that support our deductions, our faulty thinking is like "fortune-telling."
- Ex: You arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you, or you are convinced that something will turn out badly when you have not yet experienced it.

6. Personalization

- You believe that what other people say or do is a negative reaction to you, and must be all about you.
- Ex: When you overhear a group of students praising or complaining about a Professor, you assume they're talking about you.

7. Emotional reasoning

- You assume that your negative feelings logically and factually reflect reality.
- Ex: A PhD student is feeling anxious about a presentation to Ladder faculty, assuming that means the group is expecting incompetence, inexperience and unworthiness.

8. "Should" statements

- Using this language reinforces our negative judgment of ourselves and others, which can trigger emotions such as guilt, frustration or resentment.
- Ex: "You should have known better," "I should have been better prepared."

9. Labeling and mislabeling

- When we take one characteristic of a person and globally apply it to the whole person, we unfairly misclassify and mis-read that person.
- Ex: Thinking of someone as "flaky," a terrible person, "just a...", etc.

10. Magnification or minimization

- When we exaggerate/catastrophize or downplay the importance of something, we believe it is much worse or better than it is in reality.
- Ex: He was so devastated when he heard himself using verbal crutches in his video that he felt was too humiliated to continue and canceled future recordings.