

# WHAT ARE COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS?

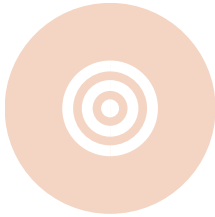
Cognitive distortions are negative patterns of thinking that are inaccurate, exaggerated, and not based on facts.

These thought patterns are reinforced over time and make you view things more negatively than they are.

Cognitive distortions can be challenging to identify and change, but recognising them and working to reframe them can improve your mental health. Techniques such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) effectively identify and challenge cognitive distortions and replace them with more accurate and positive thoughts.



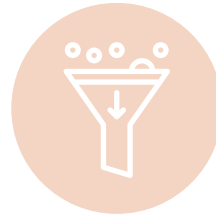
# TYPES OF COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS



**All-Or-Nothing**  
seeing things in only positive or negative extremes



**Overgeneralisation**  
general conclusions based on personal experience



**Mental Filter**  
focusing on negatives; dismissing positives



**Mindreading**  
false prediction of someone else's thoughts



**Should Statements**  
having beliefs about how people ought to behave



**Labelling**  
generalising something into a judgement



**Rationalisation**  
creating excuses for situations that don't go your way



**Personalisation**  
seeing yourself as the cause of a negative event



**Emotional Reasoning**  
believing negative feelings reflect the way things really are



**Always Being Right**  
believing it is unacceptable to be wrong



**Heaven's Reward Fallacy**  
believing rewards depend on how hard you work



**Fallacy of Fairness**  
believing that everything should be fair



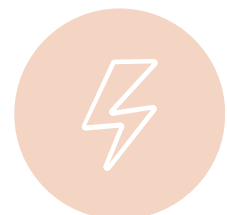
**Fallacy of Change**  
believing others should change



**Catastrophizing**  
magnifying the negative

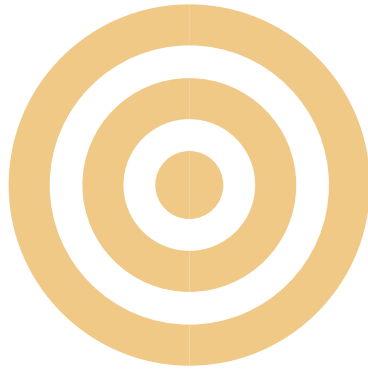


**Fortune Telling**  
predicting the worst



**Blaming**  
holding others responsible

# ALL OR NOTHING



All-or-nothing thinking is a cognitive distortion that involves seeing things as black or white with no grey areas. It is also known as "dichotomous thinking" and can lead to rigid, inflexible thinking that may prevent individuals from seeing multiple perspectives or finding compromise.

An example of all-or-nothing thinking is when a student may believe that unless they achieve perfect grades, they are a complete failure. This kind of thinking can lead to feelings of stress and pressure, and can prevent the student from enjoying the learning process or feeling proud of their accomplishments. They may also feel discouraged or give up on a particular subject or assignment if they do not excel in it immediately, rather than recognising that learning is a process and that improvement takes time.

Another example could be a person who may believe that their partner or friends must always treat them perfectly, without any flaws or mistakes. If their partner or friends make even a small mistake or show any imperfection, the person may view them as completely unreliable, untrustworthy, or unworthy of their time and attention. This kind of thinking can lead to relationship conflicts and prevent the person from recognising and appreciating the positive qualities of others.

# OVERGENERALISATION



Overgeneralisation is a thinking distortion where an individual forms sweeping assumptions or conclusions based on a single or few isolated incidents. This type of thinking can lead to inflexible and negative beliefs about oneself, others, or the world, and can hinder the ability to see the bigger picture or consider alternative viewpoints.

For instance, when a person faces rejection or failure in a particular area of their life, such as their career or relationships, and then concludes that they are a failure in all aspects of their life, they are exhibiting overgeneralisation. This type of thinking can result in a pervasive sense of hopelessness and prevent the person from recognising other areas of their life where they may be successful or content.

Another example of overgeneralisation is when a person has a negative experience with a particular group of people, such as a specific gender or age group, and then generalises that all members of that group are untrustworthy or bad. In this case, the individual is making a sweeping, negative judgment based on a limited and biased sample.

# MENTAL FILTERING



Mental filtering is a cognitive distortion that involves focusing solely on negative aspects of a situation while filtering out any positive elements. People who struggle with this type of distortion tend to magnify their problems and minimise their accomplishments, leading to feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and anxiety.

For example, a student who receives a B+ on a test may filter out the positive aspects of their performance, such as the fact that they performed better than most of their classmates, and instead focus only on the fact that they did not get an A. As a result, they may feel discouraged and unmotivated, and may struggle to continue putting effort into their studies.

Another example of mental filtering is a person who has a job interview and receives mostly positive feedback from the interviewer, but fixates only on one negative comment made about their experience in a particular area. The individual may feel as though their entire interview was a failure, despite the fact that there were many positive aspects to the conversation.

# MIND READING



Mind-reading is a cognitive distortion where a person assumes they know what others are thinking without having any evidence to support their belief. This kind of thinking can lead to feelings of anxiety, insecurity, and strained relationships, as well as the inability to accurately interpret others' actions and motivations.

An example of mind-reading is when a person assumes that their friend is upset with them because they didn't respond to a message immediately. They might think that their friend is angry or annoyed with them, even though they have no direct evidence to support this assumption. In reality, their friend may have simply been busy or distracted.

Another example of mind-reading is when a person assumes that their co-worker is trying to sabotage them because they didn't include them in a meeting. They might assume that their co-worker intentionally excluded them because they don't like them or want to harm their career, even though there could be a valid reason for their exclusion, such as limited space in the meeting room.

# "SHOULD" STATEMENTS



Should statements are a cognitive distortion in which a person imposes rigid and unrealistic expectations on themselves or others. It involves using words like "should," "must," and "ought to" to describe how things should be, rather than accepting reality as it is.

An example of should statements might be a person who believes that they should always be perfect and never make mistakes. This belief can lead to feelings of anxiety, guilt, and shame when the person inevitably falls short of their own expectations. Similarly, a person who believes that others should always be kind and considerate may become resentful and disappointed when others fail to meet these expectations.

Should statements can also lead to feelings of frustration and helplessness, as they create a sense of obligation and pressure that can be difficult to meet. To counter should statements, it is important to practise acceptance and compassion, and to recognise that life is imperfect and that everyone makes mistakes. Try reframing should statements as preferences or goals, rather than absolutes, and focus on progress rather than perfection.

# LABELLING



Labelling is a cognitive distortion in which a person assigns a global negative label to themselves or others based on a single behaviour or event, without considering the complexity and nuance of the situation. It involves using extreme and rigid categories to describe people or situations.

An example of labelling might be a person who makes a mistake at work and then labels themselves as "stupid" or "worthless." This negative self-talk can become a self-fulfilling prophecy, as the person may then start to believe that they are incompetent and perform poorly in their job.

Another example of labelling might be a person who labels someone as a "bully" based on one interaction, without considering the other person's perspective or the context of the situation. This type of labelling can lead to stereotyping and prejudice, and can also prevent meaningful communication and conflict resolution.

To counter labelling, it is important to recognise the complexity and nuance of people and situations, and to avoid making sweeping judgments based on limited information. Practise empathy and open-mindedness, and challenge negative self-talk and stereotypes by focusing on specific behaviours and experiences, rather than global labels.

# RATIONALIZATION



Rationalisation is a cognitive distortion where an individual creates a justification or explanation for a behaviour, event, or situation to make it seem more acceptable or reasonable. This distortion might be used to reduce guilt, shame, or anxiety or to avoid taking responsibility for one's actions.

An example of rationalisation is when a person who is trying to quit smoking justifies having "just one more cigarette" because they had a stressful day at work. By rationalising the behaviour, the person can avoid acknowledging their addiction and the fact that they are breaking their commitment to quit smoking.

Another example could be a student who cheats on a test and justifies it by saying that they were under too much pressure to perform well or that the teacher was being unfair. This rationalisation allows the student to avoid taking responsibility for their dishonest behaviour.

# PERSONALIZATION

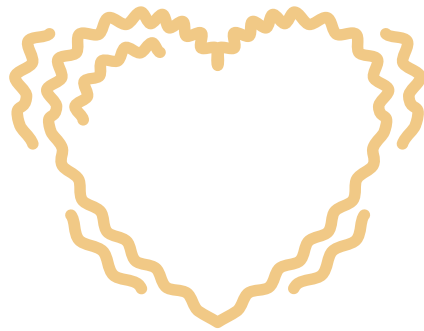


Personalisation is a cognitive distortion that involves individuals attributing events or situations to themselves, even when they are not necessarily responsible for them. In this type of thinking, people tend to take things too personally and assume that they are to blame for things that are beyond their control. This way of thinking can lead to feelings of guilt, self-blame, and low self-esteem.

An example of personalisation is a person who gets criticised by their boss for not meeting a deadline at work. The individual may internalise the criticism and attribute the missed deadline to their personal shortcomings, even if other factors, such as inadequate resources or conflicting priorities, may have contributed to the problem. This personalisation can lead to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, which may affect their job performance and overall well-being.

Another example of personalisation is when a friend cancels plans to hang out with a person. The individual may assume that the cancellation is a direct result of their behaviour or personality, even though there could be several other factors contributing to the cancellation, such as a conflicting schedule or unexpected event. This type of personalisation can lead to negative self-talk and feelings of insecurity, which can strain relationships.

# EMOTIONAL REASONING



Emotional reasoning is a cognitive distortion in which a person's emotions dictate their interpretation of reality, rather than relying on facts or evidence. It involves assuming that feelings are evidence of the truth, without critically evaluating the situation.

An example of emotional reasoning might be a person who feels anxious about flying on an airplane and assumes that it is unsafe, even though statistics show that flying is actually a safe mode of transportation. This person's emotions are leading them to an inaccurate conclusion based on their subjective experience, rather than objective evidence.

Another example of emotional reasoning might be a person who feels guilty and assumes that they must have done something wrong, even if there is no evidence to support this belief. In this case, the person's emotions are causing them to jump to conclusions and make assumptions based on their feelings, rather than considering the actual facts of the situation.

Emotional reasoning can lead to distorted thinking patterns and interfere with problem-solving and decision-making. To counter emotional reasoning, it is important to recognize and challenge the belief that feelings are always accurate indicators of reality, and to seek out objective evidence and rational thinking in order to make sound judgments and decisions.

# ALWAYS BEING RIGHT



The cognitive distortion of "always being right" is a belief that one's own opinions, beliefs, and judgments are always correct, and that other people are wrong or inferior. It involves a rigid and inflexible mindset that can interfere with communication, relationships, and problem-solving.

An example of always being right might be a person who refuses to listen to other people's opinions or consider alternative viewpoints, because they believe that their own opinions are the only valid ones. This type of thinking can lead to conflicts and misunderstandings, as other people may feel dismissed or ignored.

Another example of always being right might be a person who becomes defensive and argumentative when someone challenges their opinions or beliefs, because they cannot tolerate the idea of being wrong. This type of thinking can prevent learning and growth, as the person may be unwilling to consider new information or perspectives.

To counter the cognitive distortion of always being right, it is important to cultivate an open-minded and curious attitude, and to recognise that there may be multiple valid perspectives on any given issue. Practise active listening and empathy, and try to approach conversations with a willingness to learn and grow, rather than simply defend your own position.

# HEAVEN'S REWARD FALLACY



The "Heaven's Reward Fallacy" is a cognitive distortion or thinking error in which a person believes that all their hard work, sacrifices, and good deeds will eventually be rewarded, often in an afterlife, despite evidence to the contrary. This belief can lead to feelings of disappointment, frustration, and bitterness when rewards do not materialise as expected.

An example of the Heaven's Reward Fallacy might be a person who consistently works long hours and goes above and beyond their job responsibilities with the expectation that they will eventually receive a promotion or raise. However, despite their efforts, they are repeatedly overlooked for advancement. The person may continue to believe that their hard work will eventually be recognised and rewarded, even though there is no evidence to support this belief. This can lead to feelings of frustration and disillusionment when the expected promotion or raise does not materialise.

# FALLACY OF FAIRNESS



The fallacy of fairness is a cognitive distortion that involves the belief that the world should always be fair and just, and that people should always be treated equally. It can lead to unrealistic expectations and feelings of anger, frustration, or resentment when things do not go as planned or when one perceives a lack of fairness or equality.

An example of the fallacy of fairness might be a person who believes that they should always be treated fairly and equally in every situation, and becomes angry or resentful when they feel they are not. This thinking distortion sets up unrealistic expectations, and may cause conflict or tension in relationships or social interactions.

Another example of the fallacy of fairness might be a person who believes that bad things should not happen to good people, and becomes angry or disillusioned when they or someone they care about experiences hardship or adversity. Thinking in this way can lead to feelings of hopelessness or despair, as the person may feel that the world is unjust or unfair.

To counter the fallacy of fairness, it is important to recognise that life is not always fair or just, and that people do not always receive equal treatment or outcomes. Practise acceptance and recognise that while you may not be able to control external events or circumstances, you can control your response to them. Focus on building resilience and coping skills, and seek out support from others when needed.

# FALLACY OF CHANGE



The fallacy of change is a cognitive distortion that involves the belief that external circumstances must change before one can be happy or satisfied. It is a belief that change is necessary for happiness, rather than recognising that happiness can come from within.

An example of the fallacy of change might be a person who believes that they cannot be happy until they find the perfect partner or get their dream job. This type of thinking can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction or unhappiness, as the person may be constantly searching for external sources of fulfilment, rather than recognising the potential for happiness and contentment in their present circumstances.

Another example of the fallacy of change might be a person who believes that others must change in order for them to be happy. This type of thinking can lead to a sense of helplessness or victimisation, as the person may believe that their happiness is dependent on the actions or behaviours of others.

To counter the fallacy of change, it is important to recognise that happiness and fulfilment can come from within, rather than solely from external circumstances or relationships. Practise gratitude and focus on the positive aspects of your present circumstances, rather than dwelling on what you do not have. Identify your values and priorities, and set goals that align with them. Recognise that while change can be desirable, it is not always necessary for happiness or contentment, and that happiness can be found in the present moment.

# CATASTROPHIZING



Catastrophizing is a cognitive distortion that involves exaggerating the potential negative outcomes of a situation and assuming the worst-case scenario will occur. This type of thinking can lead to intense feelings of anxiety, fear, and helplessness, which can interfere with an individual's ability to make rational decisions and take appropriate actions.

An example of catastrophizing might be a person who is afraid of public speaking imagines that they will forget their lines, stumble over their words, and ultimately humiliate themselves in front of their audience. This individual may begin to feel anxious and may avoid opportunities to speak in public, even if it would benefit their career or personal growth.

An example of catastrophizing is when a student receives a poor grade on an exam and begins to think that they will fail the entire course. They may start to panic and believe that they will not graduate or that their future career prospects will be ruined, even though the poor grade may be a minor setback that can be addressed through studying and seeking help.

# FORTUNE TELLING



Fortune telling is a cognitive distortion where a person predicts negative outcomes without having any evidence to support their belief. This way of thinking can lead to increased anxiety and fear, and can hinder individuals from taking positive action to prevent negative outcomes.

An example of fortune-telling is when a student may think, "I'm going to fail the exam," before even taking it. They might focus only on their fears and ignore the evidence that they have studied hard and have done well in the past. The constant worry and negative anticipation may lead to poor performance on the exam.

Another example is when a person may feel anxious about going to a party, anticipating that they will not fit in and that no one will talk to them. This type of thinking is based on negative assumptions and fortune-telling, without any actual evidence to support it. They might convince themselves that they will have a bad time and ultimately miss out on a potentially fun and enjoyable experience.

# BLAMING



Blaming is a cognitive distortion in which a person attributes the cause of a problem or a negative event to someone else, without considering their own contribution to the situation. It involves denying personal responsibility and instead assigning fault to an external factor or person.

An example of blaming might be a student who fails an exam and immediately blames the teacher for not explaining the material clearly enough. This student may refuse to consider their own lack of effort or preparation for the exam, and instead places the blame solely on the teacher. This cognitive distortion can also manifest in interpersonal relationships, with one person blaming the other for their own emotional distress or problems within the relationship, without acknowledging their own role in the situation.

Blaming can be a defence mechanism that helps protect a person's self-esteem and avoid feelings of guilt or shame. However, it can also prevent personal growth and improvement by preventing the person from taking responsibility for their own actions and behaviours.

# POLARISED THINKING



Polarised thinking is a cognitive distortion where an individual thinks in extreme terms, seeing everything as either all good or all bad, with no middle ground or grey area. This type of thinking can lead to rigid, inflexible beliefs, and can prevent individuals from seeing alternative perspectives or finding common ground.

An example of polarised thinking is when a person views themselves as either a complete success or a total failure, with no in-between. This type of thinking can lead to unrealistic expectations and harsh self-criticism, and can prevent individuals from recognising their strengths and accomplishments.

Another example could be a person who sees their political or religious beliefs as the only valid option, and dismisses any alternative views as completely wrong or misguided. In this case, the individual is ignoring the complexity and diversity of human experience and assuming that their own perspective is the only one that matters.

# COMPARISONS

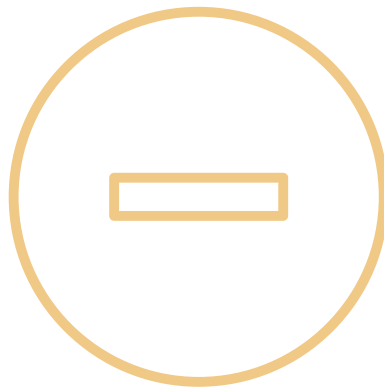


Comparison is a cognitive distortion in which an individual evaluates their own abilities, worth, or accomplishments by comparing themselves to others. This type of thinking often results in negative emotions such as jealousy, inadequacy, or superiority, and may cause individuals to harshly judge themselves.

For instance, a person who constantly compares themselves to their social media peers, believing that they are less attractive, successful, or content, is an example of comparison. This behaviour often leads to feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem.

Similarly, a student who compares their academic grades to those of their classmates and feels inadequate or discouraged, even if they are doing well academically, is another example of comparison. In both situations, the person's self-worth is determined by external comparisons rather than their own personal values and accomplishments.

# NEGATIVE THINKING



Negative thinking is a cognitive distortion where individuals interpret the events and circumstances around them in a pessimistic and cynical light, leading to feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and anxiety. It involves a tendency to focus solely on the negative aspects of situations while ignoring the positive aspects, leading to a distorted perception of reality.

One example of negative thinking is when a person becomes fixated on a perceived personal flaw, such as being overweight or having a perceived physical defect, and lets that flaw define their entire self-worth. The person might think that they are not good enough, and that nobody will ever accept them because of this flaw, causing them to feel hopeless and ashamed.

Another example of negative thinking is when a person engages in black-and-white thinking, where they see everything in terms of extremes. For instance, a person may believe that if they are not perfect in every way, they are a complete failure. This type of thinking can lead to unrealistic expectations, disappointment, and self-criticism, which may further reinforce negative thinking patterns..

# DISCOUNTING THE POSITIVE



Discounting the positive is a cognitive distortion characterised by a person disregarding or diminishing positive experiences or qualities, focusing instead on negative aspects. It can prevent individuals from recognising their achievements and feeling satisfied with their accomplishments. Consequently this leads to a negative self-image and feelings of self-doubt.

For example, a student who receives an excellent grade on an exam may discount the positive by attributing their success to luck or an easy test rather than acknowledging their hard work and intelligence. This mindset may lead the student to feel insecure about their abilities and dismiss future successes as mere luck.

Another example of discounting the positive is when individuals dismiss compliments or positive feedback from others. For instance, a person may receive praise from their boss for a job well done but discount the positive by thinking that their boss is just being nice or has low standards. This type of thinking can prevent individuals from acknowledging their achievements and can lead to a lack of confidence.

# MAGNIFICATION



Magnifying is a cognitive distortion characterised by the tendency to magnify or exaggerate the negative aspects of a situation while minimising the positive ones. It can also involve blowing things out of proportion, seeing a situation as worse than it actually is, or focusing on the worst possible outcome.

An example of magnifying is when a student who receives a lower grade than expected on an exam may magnify the situation by thinking they are a failure and will never succeed in school, even though they have previously received good grades and may have other strengths in other areas.

Another example is a person who is rejected by a romantic interest and magnifies the situation by believing they will never find love or happiness, despite having had successful relationships in the past and the potential for future ones.

# HALO EFFECT



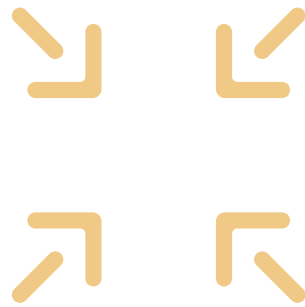
The halo effect is a cognitive distortion in which a person forms an overall positive impression of someone based on one or a few positive traits, without considering other aspects of their personality or behaviour. It involves attributing positive qualities to a person simply because of one or more positive experiences or characteristics.

An example of the halo effect might be a person who assumes that someone who is physically attractive must also be intelligent, kind, and trustworthy, even if they have no evidence to support these assumptions. This type of thinking can lead to overgeneralisation and oversimplification of complex individuals.

Another example of the halo effect might be a person who assumes that someone who is successful in one area of life, such as their career, must also be successful and competent in all other areas, such as their personal relationships or hobbies. This type of thinking can lead to unrealistic expectations and disappointment when the person inevitably falls short of these expectations.

To counter the halo effect, it is important to recognise that people are complex and multi-dimensional, and that positive traits in one area do not necessarily translate to positive qualities in other areas. Practise critical thinking and careful evaluation of individuals, and seek out evidence to support your judgments rather than relying solely on first impressions or surface-level characteristics.

# MINIMISING



Minimising is a cognitive distortion in which a person downplays or ignores the positive aspects of a situation or experience, while focusing exclusively on the negative aspects. It involves discounting or minimising positive information or experiences, while exaggerating or magnifying negative information or experiences.

An example of minimising might be a person who receives a lot of positive feedback on a project, but focuses only on the one negative comment or criticism, and ignores or discounts all of the positive feedback. This type of thinking can lead to feelings of inadequacy or self-doubt, as the person may believe that they are not good enough despite evidence to the contrary.

Another example of minimising might be a person who experiences a minor setback, such as getting a low grade on a test, and concludes that they are a complete failure and will never succeed. This type of thinking can lead to catastrophizing and irrational thinking, as the person may blow small problems out of proportion and overlook potential solutions or coping strategies.

To counter minimising, it is important to practice gratitude and focus on the positive aspects of situations and experiences, rather than exclusively on the negative. Challenge negative self-talk and examine evidence to support both positive and negative beliefs, rather than discounting or ignoring positive information. Practise mindfulness and self-compassion, and seek out support from others when needed.

# CONTROL FALLACIES



The cognitive distortion of control fallacies is a belief that one is either completely responsible for, or completely powerless over, a situation or event. It involves an unrealistic and rigid view of control, and can lead to feelings of helplessness, anxiety, or guilt.

An example of a control fallacy might be a person who believes that they are responsible for everything that goes wrong in their life, even if the circumstances are beyond their control. This type of thinking can lead to excessive self-blame and feelings of guilt or shame, as the person may believe that they are the cause of all their problems.

Another example of a control fallacy might be a person who believes that they have no control over their life or circumstances, and that everything is predetermined or due to external forces beyond their control. This type of thinking can lead to feelings of hopelessness and resignation, as the person may feel powerless to change their situation or take action to improve their life.

To counter control fallacies, it is important to recognise that there are often multiple factors that contribute to a situation or event, and that one's own level of control may be limited or partial. Practise realistic thinking and recognise that while you may not have complete control over every aspect of your life, you can still take actions to improve your situation or cope with difficult circumstances. Seek out support from others and engage in self-care practices to help manage feelings of anxiety or helplessness.

# MAGICAL THINKING



Magical thinking is a cognitive distortion in which a person believes that their thoughts, words, or actions have the power to influence events or situations outside the realm of probability or cause and effect. It involves the belief in supernatural connections, luck, fate, or other unscientific or mystical explanations for events.

An example of magical thinking might be a person who wears a lucky charm or carries out a superstitious ritual before taking an exam, believing that it will influence the outcome of the test. This person may believe that their actions can directly impact their test performance, even though there is no rational explanation for this belief. Another example might be a person who believes that they are cursed or that bad luck follows them wherever they go, despite there being no evidence to support this belief.

Magical thinking can be harmless in some cases, but it can also lead to unrealistic expectations and irrational behaviours. It can also interfere with problem-solving and decision-making, as it encourages reliance on superstition rather than evidence-based reasoning.

# CHANGE YOUR COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

## RECOGNISE THOUGHT

Stop and recognise that the thought you're having might be distorted.

Pay attention to how your body feels and what emotions you have.

Separate the thought from yourself and look at it from an external perspective.

## WRITE YOUR THOUGHTS

Use your journal to record how the thought appeared, how it made you feel and what you think it is about.

## EMOTION RATING

Give your emotions and feelings a rating score out of 10

## COGNITIVE DISTORTION

Identify the cognitive distortion affecting your thought

## REFRAME THOUGHT

Look at the evidence and try to focus on the positive. Replace the negative cognitive distortion with a positive thought. Record this reframed thought in your journal.

# HOW TO CHANGE YOUR COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

Changing cognitive distortions can be a challenging process, but it is possible with effort and practice. Here are some steps that can help:

- **Recognise the cognitive distortion:** The first step is to become aware of the cognitive distortion and how it is affecting your thoughts and behaviours. Pay attention to your thinking patterns and try to identify when you are engaging in a cognitive distortion.
- **Challenge the cognitive distortion:** Once you have recognised the cognitive distortion, challenge it by questioning its validity. Ask yourself if there is evidence to support the distorted thinking, or if there are other possible explanations for the situation.
- **Replace the cognitive distortion with realistic thinking:** Replace the distorted thinking with more realistic and rational thinking. Focus on the facts of the situation, rather than assumptions or interpretations. Use positive affirmations and self-talk to reinforce the new thinking patterns.
- **Practise mindfulness:** Mindfulness can help you become more aware of your thoughts and feelings and develop a non-judgmental attitude towards them. Practise meditation, deep breathing, or other relaxation techniques to help calm your mind and reduce anxiety.
- **Seek professional help:** If you are struggling to change your cognitive distortions, consider seeking professional help from a therapist or counsellor. They can help you identify and challenge your distorted thinking patterns and develop coping strategies to manage them.

# REDUCING COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS



The first step to reducing cognitive distortions is to recognise them.



When you react to a situation, try pausing, taking a deep breath, and noticing your thoughts.

Do you notice any cognitive distortions in your thinking?

As soon as you recognise cognitive distortion patterns in your thinking, you can start to reframe them. Over time, by challenging your negative thoughts, you'll notice that they have less of a negative impact on your mood and feelings.

# AUTOMATIC THOUGHT RECORD

This automatic thought record will help you to identify your thoughts and feelings in reaction to a situation and challenge them. You can then reframe your thoughts to make them more balanced.

<p><b>Situation</b> What happened?</p>	
<p><b>Thoughts</b> What thoughts did I have?</p>	
<p><b>Feelings</b> What emotions did I feel? Mark them on a scale of 1 - 10</p>	
<p><b>Challenge</b> How could I challenge these thoughts?</p>	
<p><b>New thoughts</b> What is a more balanced thought now?</p>	
<p><b>New feelings</b> How do I feel about the situation now?</p>	

# CHALLENGING THOUGHTS

Negative thought	Type of cognitive distortion	Reframed thought

# CHALLENGING THOUGHTS

What is my automatic thought?

What evidence do I have to support this thought?

Does this thought help me?

How else can I think about about this situation?

# CHALLENGING THOUGHTS

What is my thought?

What evidence do I have to support this thought?

Am I basing this thought on facts or emotions?

Am I making any assumptions?



## TRY JOURNAL WRITING

Cognitive distortions are thoughts that are not based on fact yet you believe them to be true.

Often, if you are caught up in this negative thinking pattern, writing down your thoughts in a journal can help to identify these cognitive distortions.

# 10 QUESTIONS TO HELP CHALLENGE MY THINKING

- How do I know that this thought is accurate?
- What contributed to this situation?
- What evidence do I have that this thought is true?
- Who can help me understand if this thought is true?
- Is this thought helpful to me?
- Am I making any assumptions?
- What would I say to a friend having the same thought?
- Am I blaming myself?
- Is this something that is in my control?
- How else could I think about this?

# JOURNAL PROMPT

What is the thought?

Cognitive distortion

Am I having this thought out of habit?

# JOURNAL PROMPT

What is the thought?

Cognitive distortion

Was this way of thinking passed to me by someone else?

# JOURNAL PROMPT

What is the thought?

Cognitive distortion

Am I considering the evidence and facts, or only looking at what supports my thoughts?

# JOURNAL PROMPT

What is the thought?

Cognitive distortion

Could my thoughts be an exaggeration of what is true?

# JOURNAL PROMPT

What is the thought?

Cognitive distortion

What interpretations might other people have in this situation?

# JOURNAL PROMPT

What is the thought?

Cognitive distortion

Who can help me understand if this thought is accurate?

# CHALLENGING THOUGHTS

What is the situation?

What is my thought?

What is the cognitive distortion?

What evidence is there for the thought?

What's another way to look at this?

What will happen if I keep telling myself the same thought?

What could happen if I changed my thinking?

What advice would I give my friend if this happened to them?

What will be my next steps?

# CHALLENGING THOUGHTS

What potential catastrophe am I worrying about?

Rate how catastrophic this would be on a scale of 1 - 10



What is the probability of this catastrophe happening?

Has this happened before? If so, how frequently?

What would it be like if the catastrophe happened?

What strategies could I use to cope?

How do I feel about the catastrophe now?

Will this be important tomorrow? In a week? In a month? In a year from now?

# CHALLENGING THOUGHTS

Situation

What is my thought about the situation?

What cognitive distortion is present in my thinking?

What is my thought about the situation?

What are my assumptions and expectations?

Evidence for my thought

Evidence against my thought

What is an alternative thought?

How can I reframe the situation positively?