

Cognitive Distortions

A Psychologist called Aaron Beck is accredited with figuring out that our mind distorts objective truths to suit ourselves and make our world easier for us to handle.

We are sure that our minds fill in the blanks for us, focusing on supporting information whilst filtering out or ignoring contrary information.

When our mind is unhealthy, when our mood is poor (very sad, lonely, helpless, hopeless) these distortions reinforce those feelings and make us worse – not better!

So, it is very helpful to know they are happening, so you can start to counter them and make them less powerful.

Here is a list of “common” cognitive distortions that become more powerful when we aren’t working so well.

Tick the ones that you recognise in yourself that are not helping you recover your health.

Generalisation	Using a few examples to predict the next lot, thinking all are the same. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He was mean to me in our relationship, men are mean to me. • Yesterday was awful, today will be the same. • I got a C on that test, I’ll get C’s all year.
Catastrophising	Exaggerating outcomes to the worse scenarios. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She has not called me, she hates me. • If I go to the shops, I will panic and pee my pants. • If I drive to the city, I will lose control and crash the car. • If these anti-depressants don’t work, I can’t be helped.
All or Nothing	Thinking in black and white, will or won’t, can or can’t, happy or sad, good or bad. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can’t go out, if I do it will be bad. • If I go to the party, I won’t have any fun. • He is never nice to me.
Labelling	Instantly attaching a subjective meaning to something or someone. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I forgot to call her, I’m stupid. • It’s raining today, it is awful. • If I don’t have anything to talk about, I will look silly.
Rules	Using rules to decide what happens next. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I ate pizza, I must exercise today. • If I relax, I’m getting fat and lazy. • Buying shoes makes me happy.
Personalisation	Making it about you, your personality. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She did not call back, I must have been a bad date. • I got 49%, I’m a failure. • No one talked to me, I’m not interesting.
Fairness Fallacy	Everything should be fair / in balance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I rang him last time, they should ring me. • She has a job, I should be given one too. • I’ve helped them, why don’t they help me?