



## Cognitive Distortions & CBT

Cognitive distortions are thoughts that are exaggerated by negative thinking and feelings. They convince our minds what we're thinking is true. **Everyone** experiences some of these cognitive errors at times. They occur automatically which makes them difficult to recognize since they are automatic/habitual in nature.

Cognitive distortions can negatively impact our feelings, actions, and relationships, so it's worth challenging these thoughts and replacing them with more balanced ideas.

### Common Cognitive Distortions

- 🦊 Generalizing: Assuming that because you experienced something in the past this must mean it will happen again. "A dog bit me when I was 5, therefore all dogs are dangerous and will bite me."
- 🌊 Catastrophizing: Are you focused on the worst case scenario? Regardless of how likely it is.
- 🧠 Mind reading: Assuming what others think. "They probably think I'm an idiot."
- ✨ Should statements: Pressuring yourself with things you should have done differently. "I should have eaten healthier today."
- 🌕 All or nothing thinking: Thinking in extremes. You are either a success or a failure. "She doesn't want to date me. I'll never find love."
- 🧑 Out of your control: Are you worrying about something out of your control?
- 🎮 Fortune telling: Assuming future events. "I just know that something is going to go wrong and I'm going to be late for my interview."
- 🚫 Disqualifying the positive: Focusing only on the bad. "He said that I looked nice but he says that to everybody. He was just being polite."
- 💎 Labeling: Taking one characteristic of a person and applying it to the whole person. "I failed a test, so I'm a bad student."
- 🔍 Magnifying the negative: Judging a situation entirely on the negative parts and not considering the positive parts. "I ate healthy this week, but I skipped the run I had planned."
- 🥰 Emotional Reasoning: Assuming that just because it feels bad, it must be bad. Forgetting that our feelings are just a reaction to our thoughts. "I feel anxious so it must be scary!"
- 📏 Comparing and despairing: Focusing only on the positive aspects in others and comparing ourselves negatively against them. 'Their hair is so much better styled than mine, I look horrible in comparison'.




## Step 1: Notice & Label

The first step to changing these automatic thoughts is to **notice that you're having the thought**. You can also label the type of cognitive distortion, which can help you get some distance from these types of thoughts and gives you an idea of how to challenge them.

## Step 2: Challenge the Thought

Our thoughts can feel like facts, but they're not. Just because you think it, doesn't mean it's true. Once you've recognized a cognitive distortion and labeled it, the next step is to **challenge this thought**. You can put the thought "on trial" by gathering evidence *for* and *against* the thought.

<b>The Situation</b>	What happened or triggered the problem? What was my automatic thought? (Label the distortion- see above list )
<b>The Prosecution</b>	What facts support my thought?
<b>The Defense</b>	What facts support a more positive interpretation?
<b>The Neutral Witness</b>	What would an outside observer say about the situation?
 <b>The Balanced Judgement</b>	Considering the evidence, what is a balanced, realistic and fair interpretation?