



FIND YOUR COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

1.	All-or-nothing thinking	You see things absolute in in black-or-white categories. If a situation falls short of perfect, you see it as a total failure. When a young woman on a diet ate a spoonful of ice cream, she told herself, "I've blown my diet completely." This thought upset her so much that she gobbled down an entire quart of ice cream!
2.	Overgeneralization	You see a single negative event, such as a romantic rejection or a career reversal, as a never-ending pattern of defeat by using words such as "always" or "never" when you think about it. A depressed salesman became terribly upset when he noticed bird droppings on the windshield of his car. His thoughts: "Just my luck! Birds are <i>always</i> crapping on my car!"
3.	Mental filter	You pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively so that your vision of all of reality becomes darkened, like an ink drop that discolors a beaker of water. Example: You receive many positive comments about your presentation, but one of them says something mildly critical. You obsess about his reaction for days and ignore all the positive feedback.
4.	Discounting the positive	You reject positive experiences or accomplishments by insisting they "don't count." If you do a good job, you may tell yourself that it wasn't good enough or that anyone could have done as well. Discounting the positive takes the joy out of life and makes you feel inadequate and unrewarded.
5.	Jumping to conclusions	You interpret things negatively when there are no facts to support your conclusion. Mind reading: You arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you. Fortune-telling: You predict that things will turn out badly. Before a test: "I'm really going to blow it. What if I flunk?" If you're depressed you may tell yourself "I'll never get better".
6.	Magnification	You exaggerate the importance of your problems and shortcomings, or you minimize the importance of your desirable qualities. This is also called the "binocular trick."

7.	Emotional reasoning	You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are: "I feel terrified about going on airplanes. It must be very dangerous to fly." Or "I feel guilty. I must be a rotten person." Or "I feel angry. This proves I'm being treated unfairly." Or "I feel hopeless. I must really be hopeless."
8.	"Should statements"	You tell yourself that things <i>should</i> be the way you hope or expect them to be. After playing a difficult piano piece, a gifted pianist told herself, "I shouldn't have made so many mistakes." This made her quit practicing for several days. "Musts," "oughts" and "have tos" are similar. "Should statements" that are directed against yourself lead to guilt and frustration. Should statements that are directed against other people or the world, in general lead to anger and frustration: "He shouldn't be so stubborn and argumentative." People try to motivate themselves with shoulds and shouldn'ts: "I shouldn't eat that doughnut." This usually doesn't work because shoulds and musts make you feel rebellious and you get the urge to do just the opposite.
9.	Labeling	Labeling is an extreme form of all-or-nothing thinking. Instead of saying "I made a mistake," you attach a negative label to yourself: "I'm a loser" or "a failure". Labeling is irrational because you are not what you do. Human beings exist, but "fools," and "losers" do not. Labels are useless abstractions that lead to anger, anxiety, frustration, low self-esteem. You may also label others. Then you feel that the problem is with that person's "character" instead of their thinking or behavior. You see them as totally bad. This makes you feel hostile and hopeless about improving things.
10.	Personalization and blame	Personalization occurs when you hold yourself personally responsible for an event that isn't entirely under your control. When a Mom learned her child was having school difficulties: "This shows what a bad mother I am," instead of trying to pinpoint the real cause. When a husband beat a wife, her thoughts were: "If only I were better he wouldn't beat me." It leads to guilt, shame, and feelings of inadequacy. Some people do the opposite and blame others or their circumstances for problems. They overlook how they might be contributing to it: "The relationship is so bad because my girlfriend is totally unreasonable." Blame doesn't work well because people will resent being scapegoated and will toss the blame back in your lap. It's like the game of hot potato – no one wants to get stuck with it.



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CHALLENGE AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

3. The Double-Standard Method	
2. Examine the Evidence	4. The Experimental Technique
1. Identify the Distortion	5. Thinking in Shades of Gray
<p style="text-align: center;">AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“I’m inferior to all these other men who have such better physiques. If I took my shirt off, everyone would stare at me and think I was abnormal.”</p>	
10. The Survey Method	6. The Feared Fantasy Technique
9. Define Terms	7. The Vertical Arrow Technique
8. Cost-Benefit Analysis	



UNTWIST YOUR THINKING

1.	Identify the Distortion	Write down your negative thoughts so you can see which of the ten cognitive distortions you're involved in. This will make it easier to think about the problem in a more positive and realistic way.
2.	Examine the Evidence	Instead of assuming that your negative thought is true, examine the actual evidence for it. For example, if you feel that you never do anything right, you could list several things you have done successfully.
3.	The Double-Standard Method	Instead of putting yourself down in a harsh, condemning way, talk to yourself in the same compassionate way you would talk to a friend with a similar problem.
4.	The Experimental Technique	Do an experiment to test the validity of your negative thought. For example, if, during the episode of panic, you become terrified that you're about to die of a heart attack, you could jog or run up and down several flights of stairs. This will prove that your heart is healthy and strong.
5.	Thinking in Shades of Grey	Although this method might sound drab, the effects can be illuminating. Instead of thinking about your problems in all-or-nothing extremes, evaluate things on a range of 0 to 100. When things don't work out as well as you hoped, think about the experience as a partial success rather than a complete failure. See what you can learn from the situation.
6.	The Survey Method	Ask people questions to find out if your thoughts and attitudes are realistic. For example, if you believe that public speaking anxiety is abnormal and shameful, ask several friends if they ever felt nervous before they gave a talk.
7.	Define Terms	When you label yourself "inferior" or "a fool" or "a loser," ask, "What is the definition of a 'fool'?" You will feel better when you see that there is no such thing as a "fool" or a "loser."
8.	The Semantic Method	Simply substitute language that is less colorful and emotionally loaded. This method is helpful for "should statements." Instead of telling yourself "I shouldn't have made that mistake," you can say, "It would be better if I hadn't made that mistake."
9.	Re-attribution	Instead of automatically assuming that you are "bad" and blaming yourself entirely for a problem, think about the many factors that may have contributed to it. Focus on solving the problem instead of using up all your energy blaming yourself and feeling guilty.
10.	Cost-Benefit Analysis	List the advantages and disadvantages of a feeling (like getting angry when your plane is late), a negative thought (like "No matter how hard I try, I always screw up"), or a behavior pattern (like overeating and lying around in bed when you're depressed). You can also use the Cost-Benefit Analysis to modify a self-defeating belief such as, "I must always try to be perfect."



ACTUALLY KNOW YOUR FEELINGS

1.	Sadness or Depression	Loss, a romantic rejection, the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, or the failure to achieve an important personal goal.
2.	Guilt or Shame	You believe that you've hurt someone or that you've failed to live up to your own moral standards. Guilt results from self-condemnation, where as shame involves fear that you'll lose face when others find out about who you really are.
3.	Anger, Irritation, Annoyance, or Resentment	You feel that someone is treating you unfairly or trying to take advantage of you.
4.	Frustration	Life falls short of your expectations. You insist that things should be different. It might be your own performance ("I shouldn't have made that mistake"), what someone else does ("He should've been on time!"), or an event ("Why does the traffic always slow down when I'm in a hurry?").
5.	Anxiety, Worry, Fear, Nervousness or Panic	You believe you're in danger because you think something bad is about to happen. "What if the plane crashes? What if my mind goes blank when I give my talk in front of all those people? What if this chest pain is the start of a heart attack?"
6.	Inferiority or Inadequacy	You compare yourself to others and conclude that you're not as good as they are because you're not as talented, attractive, charming, successful, intelligent. "She's really got what it takes. She's so cute. All the men are chasing her. I'm just average. There's nothing very special about me."
7.	Loneliness	You tell yourself that you're bound to feel unhappy because you're alone and you aren't getting enough love and attention from others.
8.	Hopelessness or Discouragement	You feel convinced that your problems will go on forever and that things will never improve. "I'll never get over this depression," or "I just can't lose weight and keep it off," or "I'll never find a good job," or "I'll be alone forever."