

## Top 10 cognitive errors

Type of cognitive distortions	Meaning	Example
<b>All-or-nothing thinking</b>	Perceiving the world and everything around us as black or white – completely correct or totally wrong, without any balance. We place people or situations in categories such as "either...or..." and exclude any shades of gray, thus ignoring the complexity of most people and situations. We allow a single negative detail or a fact to influence our view about something completely.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <i>Today I had to call 25 clients in total, but I called only 20 of them, so I have not done anything.</i></li> <li>❖ <i>The supplier did not come, therefore everyone in this company is absolutely unreliable!</i></li> <li>❖ <i>This half-baked chicken in the restaurant just ruined my whole evening!</i></li> </ul>
<b>Over-generalization</b>	Use of words like "always" or "never" as a result of an event or experience that happened only once. If something unpleasant happens even once, we expect it to happen again and again.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <i>I will never get a promotion.</i></li> <li>❖ <i>She always does that...</i></li> </ul>
<b>Catastrophic thinking</b>	Perceiving things as much more or less important than they really are.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <i>I forgot about this email! This means that my supervisor will never trust me again, and I will not have the opportunity to get promoted.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Missing perpetrator</b>	Use of words such as "must," "necessary," "have to," "it would be good to," increases the chances of stress and frustration in case you do not follow your own advice afterwards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <i>Working overtime is good.</i></li> <li>❖ <i>They must take my feelings much more into account while we work on this project together. They should know what would upset me.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Labeling Stereotyping</b>	Labeling yourself or the others in a negative way as a result of a single event.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <i>My colleague is so foolish for not predicting the outcome of the situation!</i></li> <li>❖ <i>She is a pessimist. I will not trust her estimation of the situation.</i></li> </ul>

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<b>Mind reading</b>	The illusion that we are aware of the inner state of the other, without evidence of these beliefs with facts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <i>She does not like me. I know it from day one.</i></li> <li>❖ <i>I know what she is thinking - there is no point in explaining myself to him anymore.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Minimising the positive</b>	Statements that anyone could do what we do or the belief that our positive actions, qualities or achievements do not count.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <i>This does not count. Anyone could do it.</i></li> <li>❖ <i>It was pure luck. I had no impact on the result.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Personalising</b>	Feeling bad about ourselves when we are not completely guilty or blaming entirely the others and denying our own role in the situation. When one engages in such type of thinking, they take everything personally. It is possible to assume that anything that happens is a result of one's own actions and behaviors. This way of thinking leads to self-blame for things beyond our control.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <i>Only if I was younger, I would get the job.</i></li> <li>❖ <i>Only if I had not said that, they would not ...</i></li> <li>❖ <i>Only if he had not raised his tone at me, I would not be so angry to answer back.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Feelings - reality's mirror</b>	I feel (this way), so I am (this). The assumption that our feelings are a representation of the truth itself - with no deeper insight for verification in reality. If we feel stupid or boring, we assume that we actually are stupid or boring. We believe our unhealthy emotions reflect the way things really are.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <i>I feel like an idiot (so I must be one).</i></li> <li>❖ <i>I feel guilty (therefore I must have done something wrong).</i></li> <li>❖ <i>I feel it, so it must be true.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Cause-Effect</b>	We place the cause of a state for a reason beyond our control. We lose the opportunities to act on it in order to change the situation this way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <i>She yells at me, so she does not like me.</i></li> <li>❖ <i>This meeting is early in the morning, so there is no way for me to do well in it.</i></li> <li>❖ <i>He is in the meeting so there is no point for me to suggest ideas.</i></li> </ul>

## ... and how to handle them!

- ✓ **Identifying the error:** Analyze the negative thought so that you can find out exactly which one of the 10 cognitive errors are responding. This way, you can think of the problem in a much more positive and realistic way.
- ✓ **Examination of evidence - restoring the source of information:** Instead of assuming that your negative thoughts are true, examine the evidence. For example, if you feel that you are never doing anything right, you can list in your mind a few things that you have successfully coped with. Look for the source of a statement that makes you feel bad – Who says it's good/bad?
- ✓ **Doing researches:** Ask people questions to find out if your thoughts and attitudes are realistic. For example, if you think that feeling anxious before speaking to an audience is not normal or you find it to be shameful, ask your friends if they have ever felt that way before speaking in front of many people. More often than not they are the ones to give us feedback for our behavior or a new perspective.
- ✓ **The difference between thoughts and feelings:** It is extremely important to know the difference between "I think" and "I feel" if you want to know yourself better. Exercise the following self-control question: "Is the conclusion I'm making driven by thought or by feelings?"
- ✓ **Ask yourself how you feel all day long:** When you feel a lot of tension, ask yourself the question: "What is the feeling behind these reactions?" and name it – fear, anxiety, impatience, euphoria ... Whatever the emotion, it is better to face it right away instead of ignoring it. Choosing to act like the emotion is not there will only make it come back.
- ✓ **Defining concepts:** When you label and perceive yourself as "insignificant," "stupid," or "a loser," ask yourself "What is the definition of a loser?", "What meaning do I put in this word?"
- ✓ **The Double Standard Method:** Instead of feeling bad about yourself, try to talk to yourself in a sympathetic and kind way the exact same way you would do it with a friend who has the same problem.
- ✓ **Thinking in Shades of Gray:** Instead of thinking about the problems through the "all or nothing" categories, evaluate everything from 0 to 100. When they do not happen the way you want them to, identify and appreciate partial successes. Try to find out what you can learn from the situation.
- ✓ **Attribution Test:** Instead of automatically attributing the whole fault to a problem, consider all the factors that contributed to it. Focus on solving the problem instead of spending all your energy in accusing yourself.