

# The Ten Major Thinking Errors Known As "Cognitive Distortions"

1. All-or-nothing thinking	You see things in black-or-white categories. If a situations 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 "never" or "always." In response to finding some bird dung on his car, a depressed salesperson exclaimed, "Just my luck! Birds are always crapping on my car."
3. Mental filter	You pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively. For example, you give a speech and get many complements and one small critique. You obsess for days on the later remark and ignore all of the positive feedback.
4. Discounting the positive	You reject the positive experiences by insisting they don't count. If you do a good job, you tell yourself that anyone could have done as well.
5. Jumping to Conclusions	You interpret things negatively when there are no facts to support your conclusion. Mind reading: Without checking it out, you conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you. Fortune-telling: You predict that things will turn out badly -- e.g. "I lost my job; I'm going to lose my house." This is also called "catastrophizing.
6. Magnification	You exaggerate the importance of your problems and shortcomings, or you minimize the importance of your desirable qualities.
7. Emotional reasoning	You assume that your negative emotions reflect the way things really are. For example, a person will say, "It feels like this depression will never end; therefore it must be so," or "I'm scared of flying; therefore it must be unsafe."
8. "Should statements"	Instead of accepting things as they are, you tell yourself that they should be the way you hoped or expected them to be – similar to "musts," "ought tos," and "have tos." Many people try to motivate themselves with "shoulds" or "shouldn'ts" which usually leads to a rebellious urge to do the opposite.
9. Labeling	Labeling is an extreme form of all-or-nothing thinking. Instead of saying "I made a mistake," you conclude, "I'm a loser." These are useless abstractions that lead to low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety. You can also label others, calling someone an "S.O.B." when they did something to anger you. This leads to dehumanization.
10. Personalization and blame	Personalization occurs when you hold yourself personally responsible for an event that isn't under your control -- e.g., "it's my fault their canoe hit that submerged rock." Blame holds the other person responsible-"My marriage is bad because my spouse is a jerk." Blame often leads to counter-blame from the other party.

# Autobiography in Five Short Chapters

Nelson, P. (1994). There's a hole in my sidewalk: The romance of self-discovery. Beyond Words Publishing

I

I walk down the street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I fall in  
I am lost . . . I am helpless  
It isn't my fault.  
It takes forever to find a way out.

II

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I pretend I don't see it.  
I fall in again.  
I can't believe I am in the same place,  
But it isn't my fault.  
It still takes a long time to get out.

III

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I see it is there.  
I still fall in ... it's a habit.  
My eyes are open,  
I know where I am.  
It is my fault.  
I get out immediately.

IV

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I walk around it.

V

I walk down another street.