

# An Ocean of Emotion

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Everyone has experienced feeling down; Often times, these feelings are perpetuated by irrational thoughts, which is why it's important recognize and practice working on reframing such self-defeating thoughts to support our emotional wellbeing. Cognitive distortions are irrational thoughts that influence emotions and can be harmful to overall health. Learn about some of the different types of cognitive distortions to become more aware of when you are fueling negative emotions by using one of these thinking fallacies.

**Black and White Thinking** - Also known as “all or nothing thinking”. An example that many individuals have experienced is feeling like a failure if a task is not performed perfectly. This can result in believing that an action or situation reflects who you are.

**Over Generalization** - You can catch this distortion by noticing yourself or others using broad terms such as anything, everybody, always, never, nobody, ever, nothing, etc. For example, “you always put yourself first” or “we never do anything fun”. This leads to overly broad, inaccurate conclusions.

**Disqualifying the Positive** - This distortion is often paired with thinking down on yourself. It happens when you only pay attention to failures, not successes, or acknowledge the negative and not the positive. For example, if you receive feedback from a presentation and all was positive except for one comment, you ignore the positive and dwell on the negative.

**Jumping to Conclusions** - There are two main ways people jump to conclusions, “mind-reading” and “fortune-telling”. Mind-reading involves imagining that you know another person’s thoughts and “fortune-telling” involves predicting the future. For example, for example “she was nice, but I know that she secretly hates me” or “I am not going to get the job”. Recognize yourself jumping to conclusions any time you claim to know someone else’s thoughts, feelings, or the outcome in the future.

**Catastrophizing or Minimizing** - This distortion is recognized when things are blown out of proportion to make scenarios worse than they are or when the importance of events are minimized. It is usually easy to catch this distortion when others are guilty of it, but do you recognize when you are catastrophizing or minimizing?

**Emotional Reasoning** - This fallacy surfaces when you find yourself leading your reason with emotion and not with logical thinking. Assuming that because you feel a certain way, it must be true, such as “I feel angry, which means I’m being treated unfairly”. Impulse purchases also fall under emotional reasoning!

**Should Statements** - This distortion is found when you notice yourself thinking that you or others “should” do this or that. Should statements include telling ourselves or others what we should, must, or ought to do to inflict guilt or frustration. “You should be more charitable” or “I should have not made so many mistakes”.

**Personalization and Blame** - Have you ever found yourself putting blame onto someone’s shoulders when they had no control over the situation? Personalization and blame are found when blaming yourself for something outside of your control or blaming others for something that was your fault or outside of their control.

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### Challenge:

Recognize when you find yourself falling into one of these cognitive distortions three times throughout the day and reframe your thoughts to be realistic and reasonable.

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