

Common Cognitive Distortions

Cognitive distortions are errors in perceiving and reasoning that are common across people. While they are common, they are problematic if they interfere with functioning.

Arbitrary Inference

Definition: Drawing a conclusion without evidence or in the face of contradictory evidence.

Example: Thinking that a partner is not answering their calls because the partner is cheating.

Black-and-White Thinking

Definition: Perceiving people, things, or situations as entirely good or entirely bad. There are no shades of grey in the middle.

Examples: Thinking that a partner is a bad person when they disagree.

Discounting the Positive

Definition: Finding a reason to explain why positive things in life are not as they seem.

Example: Thinking that one's boss told them that they did a good job because their boss felt bad for them.

Emotional Reasoning

Definition: Believing that internal states and feelings are indicative of the way things really are in life.

Example: Feeling embarrassed after finishing a conversation, so therefore they believe that they must have done something embarrassing.

Magnification/Minimization

Definition: Patterns of thinking that make things seem larger or smaller than they actually are.

Examples: Thinking that the current event is the worst thing that could ever happen, and they'll never recover.

Overgeneralization

Definition: Seeing setbacks and negative events as never-ending patterns of defeat. This can also apply to positive events.

Example: Viewing getting rejected from a job as a never-ending pattern of defeat that will always happen.

Adapted from Beck, J. S. (2021). *Cognitive behavior therapy: Basics and beyond (3rd ed.)*. The Guilford Press.
AND

Burns, D. D. (1999). *The feeling good handbook* (revised edition). First Plume Printing.