



# TOP-10- COGNITIVE-DISTORTIONS

## How we distort our experiences!

**BACKGROUND:** The language we use in everyday life impacts how we experience our world. We attempt to capture thoughts, ideas and describe what we see around us using words and, inevitably, things get 'lost in translation'.

We also lose information by generalising, deleting information and distortion. Cognitive Distortions are where some aspects of our experiences are given more weight and focus than others. We all do this consciously and, at other times, unconsciously. And what we distort—and how—provides pointers to our underlying beliefs about ourselves, others and our world.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Which of these do you do? Put Y or N against each area below ready to discuss with your coach.

TOP 10 COGNITIVE DISTORTION DESCRIPTIONS WITH EXAMPLES	Y/N
<p><b>1. All or Nothing Thinking</b> Seeing things as black-or-white, right-or-wrong with nothing in between. Essentially: if I'm not perfect then I'm a failure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because I didn't finish writing that paper, it was a complete waste of time There's no point in playing if I'm not 100% in shape</li> <li>• They didn't show: they're completely unreliable!</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2. Overgeneralization</b> Using words like always, never in relation to a single event or experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'll never get that promotion</li> <li>• She always does that...</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3. Minimising / Magnifying and Catastrophizing</b> Seeing things as dramatically more or less important than they actually are, and imagining catastrophic outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because my boss took ____ to lunch, she'll now get that promotion and not me</li> <li>• Iforgot ____! That means my boss won't trust me again, I won't get that raise and my wife will leave me</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4. Shoulds"</b> Using should, need to, ought to, must etc. to motivate oneself, then feeling guilty when you don't follow through—or anger/resentment when someone else doesn't follow through.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I should have got that painting done...</li> <li>• I need to exercise...</li> <li>• musn't eat ____</li> </ul>	



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<p><b>5. Labelling</b> Attaching a negative label to yourself or others following a single event.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'll never get that promotion</li> <li>• She always does that...</li> </ul>	
<p><b>6. Jumping to Conclusions (Mind-Reading &amp; Fortune Telling)</b></p> <p><b>1) Mind-Reading Making</b> negative assumptions about how people see you without evidence or factual support.</p> <p>Your friend is preoccupied and you haven't asked what's going on. Instead you're thinking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She thinks I'm exaggerating again</li> <li>• He still hasn't forgiven me for ____</li> </ul> <p><b>2) Fortune Telling</b> Making negative predictions about the future without evidence or factual support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I won't be able to sell my house and I'll be stuck here (even though the housing market is good)</li> <li>• No-one will understand. I won't be invited back again (even though they are supportive friends)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>7. Discounting the Positive Not</b> acknowledging the positive. Saying anyone could have done it or believing that your positive actions, qualities or achievements don't count...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ____ doesn't matter, anyone could have done it</li> <li>• I've only cut back from 40 cigarettes a day to 10. It doesn't count because I've not fully given up yet</li> </ul>	
<p><b>8. Blame &amp; Personalization</b> Blaming yourself when you weren't entirely responsible or blaming other people and denying your role in the situation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If only I was younger, I would have got that job</li> <li>• If only I hadn't said ____ they wouldn't have ____</li> <li>• If she hadn't yelled at me, I wouldn't have been angry and then I wouldn't have had that car accident...</li> </ul>	
<p><b>9. Emotional Reasoning</b> I feel, therefore I am _____. Assuming that a feeling or thought is true without digging deeper to see if this is accurate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel like such idiot (so it must be true)</li> <li>• I feel guilty (so I must be/have done something wro</li> <li>• I feel really bad for saying ____ to my partner (so I must be selfish and mean)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>10. Mental Filter</b> Dwelling on one negative detail and allowing that to spoil your enjoyment, mood, hope etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have a great time and dinner at a restaurant with friends. But because your chicken was undercooked and you had to send it back, it ruined the entire evening</li> </ul>	