

## Common Thinking Errors (Cognitive Distortions)

1. Imperatives- These are “shoulds”, “musts”, and “oughts”. We sometimes focus on how things should be or how they should have been, versus how they are. We can also demand too much of ourselves and others, or assume we have more control or authority over how things turn out than we realistically do.
2. Personalizing- Unfairly blaming yourself for anything that goes wrong or could go wrong, or the tendency to feel attacked or criticized by others without merit. This can be a source of either unhealthy guilt, shame, or also defensiveness in communication.
3. Labelling or attributions- we put a global label upon ourselves, a person, or a situation, rather than focusing on very specific elements of a complex situation, individual or group.
4. Mind reading, forecasting, or fortune telling- speculative thinking, especially about issues that have emotional implications for us can be especially bad. Example: “He thinks my work is bad.” or “She’s in a bad mood.”
5. Tunnel vision, negative mental filter- This appears when we focus too readily on one or a select few aspects of a complex situation or person. This is another type of attribution error.
6. “All or nothing thinking”- forcing reality into only two categories (positive or negative, good or bad, etc.) does not allow for a realistic and accepting assessment of situations.
7. Attentional Bias/Memory Fixation or Memory bias- A bias toward specific parts of reality or awareness or memory.
8. Rigidity versus flexibility- rigid viewpoints, attitudes or ideas are characterized by an inability of the individual to consider new ideas, perspectives, information, or understandings to slightly or completely change the original thought, attitude or belief. This rigidity is often related to anxious, hateful, or negativistic leanings about things that are different or unfamiliar.
9. Emotional reasoning- based on the presumption that feelings are facts. Often followed by actions stemming from those presumptions.
10. Overgeneralizing- Reaching conclusion or receiving information about one event or situation and then projecting that conclusion or an attitude about similar situations across multiple situations.
11. Catastrophizing- This is summarized as “worst case thinking”, often brought about through a version of the question “what if?”
12. Minimizing and Maximizing- under-rating positivity (accomplishments, or good circumstance) or your role in the world, while maximizing the negative aspects (mistakes, challenges).