

Confronting Cognitive Distortions

Do any of these distortions sound familiar? If so, let someone who can help know. Confronting Cognitive Distortions can be challenging, but with great challenge often comes great reward.

All or Nothing Thinking:

Also known as black & white thinking, a person tends to fear any mistake or imperfection is proof of personal inadequacy or failure. This is the foundation for a perfectionist.

Overgeneralization:

When a person is convinced something that happened once is going to happen over and over.

Mental Filter:

Viewing every thought or event through a negative filter. An entire event could go positively, but any moment of questionable or negative interaction will be the “take away” detail for this person.

Disqualifying the Positive:

No matter how much positive feedback this person receives from friends, family or supervisors, the positive feedback is neutralized and disqualified. “I’m not that smart, she’s just being nice”

Jumping to Conclusions:

Also known as “mind reader” or “fortune teller;” this person thinks he/she knows what someone was thinking or feeling about a given situation. When in reality, this person is really only speculating and more than likely speculating with a negative and/or self-deprecating spin on the situation.

Magnification & Minimization:

Fears, mistakes or imperfections are magnified and fixated upon while strengths, good deeds, successes are minimized or disqualified.

Emotional Reasoning:

When a person considers their emotionally charged thoughts about a situation as “facts”. The person struggles to confront thoughts as potentially (very likely) baseless but instead allows negative feelings to feed further negative feelings and thoughts.

Should Statements:

Should statements “I should do...” “I should be....” “The school should...” “My friends should...” These are the foundation for grief, guilt and feelings of inadequacy. Just because someone thinks things “should” be a certain way, doesn’t mean they will be. Acceptance of what is as opposed to lamenting what “should be” is critical.

Labeling & Mislabeled:

This is when a person has become essentially a professional at overgeneralizing. “I cheated on my diet. I’m a pig”, “My NBME score is ‘too low’. I’m an idiot” “No one laughed at the joke I made. I’m not funny.”

Personalization:

This person thinks the entire world is their responsibility. “I’m sorry....” This person feels guilty for everything that happens, regardless of the lack of control or influence this person might have on the situation. “My group didn’t do their part of the project. I must not have explained it well enough or given them enough time.”

Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy by David Burns, MD

Students who identify with these habits can contact

Emily Holt, Dr. Aubrey Knight or Dr. Jennifer Slusher to talk through support options.