

Cognitive Distortions

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Chat GPT

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Cognitive distortions are irrational thoughts that shape how you see the world, how you feel, and how you act. It's normal to have these thoughts occasionally, but they can be harmful when frequent or extreme.

Some cognitive distortions include:

Catastrophizing

Emotional Reasoning

Overgeneralizing

Mental Filtering

Labeling

Fortune Telling

Rejection Sensitivity

Control Fallacies

Definitions and Possible Goals

Sources:

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Magnification and Minimization: Exaggerating or minimizing the importance of events. You might believe your own achievements are unimportant or that your mistakes are excessively important.

Catastrophizing is a thought pattern where someone assumes the worst possible outcome in a situation, often exaggerating the severity of potential negative consequences. It involves believing that one is in a worse situation than reality or that a minor issue will lead to a major disaster. Seeing only the worst possible outcomes of a situation.

Common signs of catastrophizing include:

1. **Predicting negative outcomes:** Expecting the worst-case scenario in various situations, even when there's little evidence to support it.
2. **Anxiety and worry:** Experiencing persistent anxiety and worry about potential negative outcomes.
3. **Racing thoughts:** Struggling to control intrusive and negative thoughts.
4. **Overthinking:** Repeatedly analyzing situations or past events, focusing on negative aspects.
5. **Feelings of helplessness or despair:** Feeling overwhelmed or defeated by the imagined negative outcomes.
6. **Negative self-talk:** Thinking negative thoughts about oneself and one's abilities.
7. **Avoidance:** Avoid situations to prevent the anticipated negative outcome.
8. **Excessive reassurance-seeking:** Seeking constant validation from others or online to combat fears.
9. **Focusing on the worst:** Ignoring or minimizing more likely, positive outcomes.
10. **Difficulty concentrating:** Racing thoughts and anxiety can make it hard to focus.
11. **Sleeping problems:** Anxiety and catastrophizing can disrupt sleep patterns.

POSSIBLE GOALS:

Label catastrophizing behaviors.

Name triggers to catastrophizing.

Describe positive outcomes in situations

Compare and contrast catastrophizing body sensations with non episodes.

Emotional Reasoning is a cognitive distortion of a person using feelings as evidence that something is true, rather than relying on objective evidence or logic. It's essentially mistaking feelings for facts. The assumption that emotions reflect the way things really are. "I feel like a bad friend, therefore I must be a bad friend."

Common signs of emotional reasoning are:

1. Using emotions as evidence
2. Relying on feelings for decisions
3. Dismissing facts or evidence
4. Self-Defeating behaviors
5. Correlation with mental health issues:

POSSIBLE GOALS:

Reframe a negative situation with a possible solution.

Categorize perceptions that line up with facts.

Pull out the emotion and **predict** a positive outcome.

Overgeneralization is a type of cognitive distortion where a person assumes an experience from one event will apply to other events. This happens regardless of whether the circumstances of these events are comparable.

Common signs of overgeneralization include:

1. Assuming the worst
2. Thinking one mistake indicates all future attempts will result in failure
3. Negative self-talk
4. Thinking you can never do anything right
5. Using language like "never," "always," "everybody," or "nobody" to describe events or behaviors
6. Viewing one-time events as consistent patterns
7. Making broad interpretations from a single or few events. "I felt awkward during my speech. I am always so awkward."

POSSIBLE GOALS:

Reframe an overgeneralized statement into a rational statement

Underline words that reference all or nothing (overgeneralizations) and **rewrite** the sentence into a rational statement (i.e. "always," "never")

Mental Filtering a cognitive distortion where individuals selectively focus on negative aspects of a situation while disregarding or minimizing positive elements.

Common signs of mental filtering are:

1. Focusing on a single wrong answer on a test and ignoring all the other correct answers.
2. Dwelling on a mistake that resulted in missing a deadline, while ignoring the numerous positive contributions made throughout the day.
3. Highlighting negative news stories while ignoring positive news about progress or achievements.
4. Focusing on a single negative interaction with a partner, while ignoring countless positive interactions.

POSSIBLE GOALS:

Generate at least two positive or neutral aspects of a situation that was originally all focused on the negative

Correct a negatively focused statement into a more balanced, realistic one

Labeling, a cognitive distortion, involves applying negative and global labels to oneself or others based on a single negative trait or event. Labeling is focusing on perceived flaws and ignoring positive qualities. Essentially, labeling is about defining an entire person by one negative behavior or characteristic, rather than acknowledging the complexity of their character.

Examples of Labeling:

1. Self-labeling:

"I'm a failure because I didn't get an A," instead of acknowledging what one learned in a short amount of time.

2. Labeling others:

"He's a mean person because he didn't pick me to be on his team," rather than considering the kind things that he did the previous recess.

POSSIBLE GOALS:

Name evidence that counterbalances a perceived negative label.

Generate an alternative statement

Verbalize an "I" statement that correctly correlates to the hypothetical situation judgemental labeling

Fortune telling, a cognitive distortion, involves predicting negative outcomes without sufficient evidence and treating them as certainties. It's essentially a form of jumping to conclusions: the expectation that a situation will turn out badly without adequate evidence.

Examples of fortune telling:

1. Predicting the future:
Fortune telling involves making predictions about future events, often with a negative outlook.
2. Lack of evidence:
These predictions are made without considering all the facts or possibilities, often based on assumptions or negative biases.
3. Certainty:
The predictions are presented as definite, as if they are unavoidable.
4. Negative focus:
Fortune telling often focuses on potential worst-case scenarios and failures.

POSSIBLE GOALS:

Verbalize two positive possible outcomes to a negative prediction

Evaluate the accuracy of a negative prediction

Rejection sensitivity, a tendency to perceive, anticipate, and overreact to rejection, can involve cognitive distortions that amplify negative emotions and hinder social interactions. Individuals with high rejection sensitivity may misinterpret neutral or positive actions as rejection, leading to emotional distress and behavioral changes.

Common signs of rejection sensitivity include:

1. low self-esteem
2. emotional outbursts
3. people-pleasing behavior
4. avoidance of social situations
5. difficulty managing reactions.

POSSIBLE GOALS:

Name a balanced perspective.

Label the feeling.

Pull out the emotion and predict a positive outcome.

Control fallacies are cognitive distortions where a person believes they have either too much or too little control over situations and people's feelings. They involve a skewed perception of personal influence and responsibility. There are two main types: the "external control fallacy" (believing one is a helpless victim of external forces) and the "internal control fallacy" (believing one is responsible for everything and everyone's feelings).

Two types of control fallacies are:

1. External Control Fallacy: This occurs when a person believes they have no control over their life and are simply a victim of fate or external forces. They might feel helpless, resigned to a predetermined outcome, and blame others for their misfortunes.
2. Internal Control Fallacy: This involves the belief that one is completely responsible for everything and everyone's feelings and well-being. Individuals with this fallacy often feel overwhelmed, anxious, and resentful, as they take on more responsibility than is realistically theirs

POSSIBLE GOALS:

Categorize situations as "in control" and "out of control"

Describe a situation when student felt overly responsible or powerless and rate the reality of the amount of control