

Cognitive Distortions Examples

These are the 10 thought patterns a.k.a Cognitive Distortions that lead us to feeling more anxious and depressed. If you can catch them, you can use cognitive tools to change them and improve how you feel.

- 1) **All or nothing thinking** – If I make a mistake, I am a “failure,” I am a “terrible mother,” there’s no in-between. It’s either doing everything right, or I’m nothing.
- 2) **Overgeneralization** – One negative event will define the rest of my future. I’m confused and scared about motherhood now, so this is how things will be like for the rest of my life.
- 3) **Mental Filter** – I only see my flaws or the negative moments. I may even continue to list in my mind all of my short-comings and mistakes as a wife and mother.
- 4) **Discounting the Positive** – I discount or brush off the positives in my character or behaviors. I may fail to see that I’m meeting my baby’s basic needs, that I really care about doing a good job as a mom and partner, etc.
- 5) **Jumping to Conclusions**
 - a. *Fortune-telling* – I predict a negative future for myself, “e.g., I’ll never get better; I won’t be able to function at work”
 - b. *Mind-reading* – I assume I know what others are thinking about me without actually directly talking to them about it, e.g. “people are judging how I’m parenting my child; my baby hates me.”
- 6) **Magnification or Minimization** – I may magnify how easy parenting is for everyone else and minimize my own capabilities. I may also magnify or “catastrophize” my situation and its outcome while minimizing how well I’m doing despite the depression and anxiety.
- 7) **Emotional Reasoning** – I feel it so I think it’s true (e.g., I *feel* guilty so I think I must have really hurt my baby or partner, I *feel* hopeless so I think I there really is no point in trying; I *feel* worthless, so I must really be a burden to my loved ones). Since most of our negative feelings/emotions come from cognitive distortions, it’s hard to conclude that they reflect reality.
- 8) **Should Statements** – I engage in “shoulding” on myself and others. Telling myself I should have or shouldn’t have done something leads me to feel guilty and less than. Telling myself others should have or shouldn’t have done something leads to anger, bitterness, and resentment.
- 9) **Labeling** – Instead of stating, I made an error or mistake, I label myself as “worthless,” “a loser,” “a failure as a mother.” Labels on others as “jerks” or “assholes” lead to anger and covers up any of their positives.
- 10) **Blame**
 - a. Self-blame – you blame yourself completely for something you’re not entirely responsible for, e.g., “it’s my fault that my baby won’t stop crying.”
 - b. Other-blame – you completely blame others and fail to see how you may have contributed to the problem, e.g., “it’s his fault I’m depressed.”