

Common Cognitive Distortions: A Guided Reflection Worksheet

Cognitive distortions are unhelpful thought patterns that can make us feel worse about ourselves or our situations. They often happen automatically and can affect how we see the world, other people, and our own worth. Learning to recognize these patterns is the first step toward thinking more clearly and feeling better.

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking

Seeing things as completely good or bad, with no in-between. If something isn't perfect, you see it as a total failure.

Examples:

- If I don't do everything right, I've failed.
- I ate one unhealthy snack, so my whole day is ruined.

When I'm thinking in this way, what am I saying to myself?

2. Overgeneralization

Believing that because something happened once, it will keep happening again and again.

Examples:

- I didn't get the job - I'll never succeed at anything.
- People always let me down.

When I'm thinking in this way, what am I saying to myself?

3. Mental Filtering

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Focusing only on the negative parts of a situation and ignoring anything positive.

Examples:

- I made one mistake, so the whole project was a disaster.
- They complimented me, but I can't stop thinking about the one criticism.

When I'm thinking in this way, what am I saying to myself?

4. Discounting the Positive

Downplaying your achievements or positive experiences as if they don't count.

Examples:

- They said I did well, but they were just being nice.
- Anyone could have done what I did - it's not special.

When I'm thinking in this way, what am I saying to myself?

5. Jumping to Conclusions (Mind Reading & Fortune Telling)

Assuming you know what others are thinking or predicting something bad will happen without proof.

Examples:

- He didn't say hi - he must be mad at me.

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- I just know I'm going to mess this up.

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6. Catastrophizing

Imagining the worst-case scenario, even when it's unlikely.

Examples:

- If I make a mistake, everything will fall apart.
- This headache must mean something serious is wrong.

When I'm thinking in this way, what am I saying to myself?

7. Emotional Reasoning

Believing something must be true just because you feel it strongly.

Examples:

- I feel anxious, so something bad is going to happen.
- I feel like a failure, so I must be one.

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8. 'Should' Statements

Telling yourself how you or others 'should' act, which can lead to guilt or frustration.

Examples:

- I should always be in control of my emotions.
- They shouldn't act that way - it's wrong.

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9. Labeling

Using harsh labels to define yourself or others based on one event or behavior.

Examples:

- I forgot to call back - I'm so irresponsible.
- He made a mistake - he's useless.

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10. Personalization & Blame

Blaming yourself for things outside your control or blaming others unfairly.

Examples:

- It's my fault they're upset - I should have done more.

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- If they're unhappy, it must be because of me.

When I'm thinking in this way, what am I saying to myself?
