Definitions and Examples of 15 Cognitive Distortions

	Cognitive Distortion	Definition	Example
1	Dichotomous thinking (also called "all-or-nothing" or "black and white")	I view a situation, a person, or an event only in all- or-nothing terms, fitting them into only 2 extreme categories instead of on a continuum.	"I made a mistake, therefore I'm a failure." "I ate more than I planned, so I blew my diet completely." **My example:**
2	Fortune telling (also called "catastrophizing")	I predict the future in negative terms and believe that what will happen will be so awful that I will not be able to stand it.	"I will fail, and this will be unbearable." "I'll be so upset that I won't be able to concentrate for the exam." **My example:**
3	Discounting or disqualifying the positive	I disqualify and discount positive experiences or events, insisting that they do not count.	"I passed the exam, but I was just lucky." "Going to college is not a big deal; anyone can do it." **My example:**
4	Emotional reasoning	I believe my emotions reflect reality and let them guide my attitudes and judgments.	"I feel she loves me, so it must be true." "I am terrified of airplanes, so flying must be dangerous." **My example:**
5	Labeling	I put a fixed, global label, usually negative, on myself or others.	"I'm a loser." "He's a rotten person." "She's a complete jerk." **My example:**
6	Magnification/ minimization	I evaluate myself, others, and situations, magnifying the negatives and/or minimizing the positives.	"I got a B. This proves how inferior I am." "I got an A. It doesn't mean I'm smart." **My example:**
7	Selective abstraction (also called "mental filter" and "tunnel vision")	I pay attention to one or a few details and fail to see the whole picture.	"My boss said he liked my presentation, but since he corrected a slide, I know he did not mean it." "Even though the group said my work was good, one person pointed out an error so I know I will be fired." **My example:**

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8	Mind reading	I believe that I know the thoughts or intentions of others (or that they know my thoughts or intentions) without having sufficient evidence.	"He's thinking that I failed." "She thought I didn't know the project." "He knows I do not like to be touched this way." **My example:**
9	Overgeneralization	I take isolated cases and generalize them widely by means of words such as "always," "never," "everyone," etc.	"Every time I have a day off from work, it rains." "You only pay attention to me when you want sex." **My example:**
10	Personalizing	I assume that the behaviors of others and external events concern (or are directed to) myself without considering other plausible explanations.	"I felt disrespected because the cashier did not say thank you to me" (not considering that the cashier did not say thank you to anyone). "My husband left me because I was a bad wife" (not considering that she was his fourth wife). **My example:**
11	Should statements (also "musts," "oughts," "have to's")	I tell myself that events, people's behaviors, and my own attitudes "should" be the way I expected them to be and not as they really are.	"I should have been a better mother." "He should have married Ann instead of Mary." "I shouldn't have made so many mistakes." **My example:**
12	Jumping to conclusions	I draw conclusions (negative or positive) from little or no confirmatory evidence.	"As soon as I saw him, I knew he had bad intentions." "He was looking at me, so I concluded immediately he thought I was responsible for the accident." **My example:**
13	Blaming (others or oneself)	I direct my attention to others as sources of my negative feelings and experiences, failing to consider my own responsibility; or conversely, I take responsibility for the behaviors and attitudes of others.	"My parents are the ones to blame for my unhappiness." "It is my fault that my son married a selfish and uncaring person." **My example:**
14	What if?	I keep asking myself questions such as "what if something happens?"	"What if my car crashes?" "What if I have a heart attack?" "What if my husband leaves me?" **My example:** **My example:**
15	Unfair comparisons	I compare myself with others who seem to do better than I do and place myself in a disadvantageous position.	"My father always preferred my elder brother because he is much smarter than I am." "I am a failure because she is more successful than I am." **My example:**