
Day 9: Identifying Thinking Traps

Today's Focus: Recognize cognitive distortions that fuel avoidance

Time Commitment: 20 minutes

Core Exercise: Cognitive Distortion Challenge

Morning Check-in (2 minutes)

Daily Questions:

- What am I avoiding today and what fear is driving it?
- What is one small step I can take toward a feared task?
- How can I show yourself compassion around this challenge?

Emotional tolerance check:

How did yesterday's practice with sitting with emotions go? _____

Common Cognitive Distortions in Avoidance (5 minutes)

These thinking patterns make tasks seem more dangerous than they actually are:

Catastrophizing: "If I mess this up, it will be a complete disaster"

Mind Reading: "Everyone will think I'm incompetent"

All-or-Nothing: "It has to be perfect or it's worthless"

Fortune Telling: "I know I'll fail, so why try?"

Personalization: "If this goes wrong, it's all my fault"

Mental Filter: "They only noticed the one mistake I made"

Should Statements: "I should be able to do this easily"

Which of these sound most familiar to your thinking?

Circle: Catastrophizing / Mind Reading / All-or-Nothing / Fortune Telling / Personalization / Mental Filter / Should Statements

Main Exercise: Distortion Detective Work (10 minutes)

Step 1: Capture Your Distorted Thinking (4 minutes)

Think about a task you're avoiding right now.

Task: _____

What thoughts come up? Write them exactly as they appear:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Step 2: Identify the Distortions (3 minutes)

For each thought above, identify which distortion it represents:

Thought 1: _____

Distortion type: _____

Thought 2: _____

Distortion type: _____

Thought 3: _____

Distortion type: _____

Step 3: Challenge and Reframe (3 minutes)

Take your strongest distorted thought: " _____ "

Challenge questions:

- Is this thought realistic or exaggerated?
- What would I tell a friend who had this thought?
- What's the evidence for and against this?
- What's a more balanced way to think about this?

Balanced alternative thought:

" _____ "

"What's the Worst That Could Happen?" Exercise (2 minutes)

Purpose: Realistically assess outcomes and reduce catastrophic thinking

For your avoided task, complete this:

Worst possible realistic outcome: _____

How likely is this? (1-10): _____

If this worst case happened, how would I cope?

What would I do to recover/fix it?

Quick Distortion Check (1 minute)

For the rest of today, when you catch yourself procrastinating, ask:

"What distorted thought might be driving this avoidance?"

Set a phone reminder to ask yourself this question:

Reminder time: ____:____

Tomorrow's Preparation

Tomorrow we'll break down an overwhelming task into tiny, manageable steps.

Clear Thinking Reminder:

"My thoughts are not facts. I can examine them, challenge them, and choose more helpful perspectives."
