Cognitive Distortions

HUL265
[Theories of Personality]
(Tutorial)

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All-or-Nothing Thinking (Black-and-White Thinking)

- This distortion involves seeing things in extreme terms without considering any middle ground.

- Example: A student who receives an A- on an exam believes they're a total failure and will never succeed.
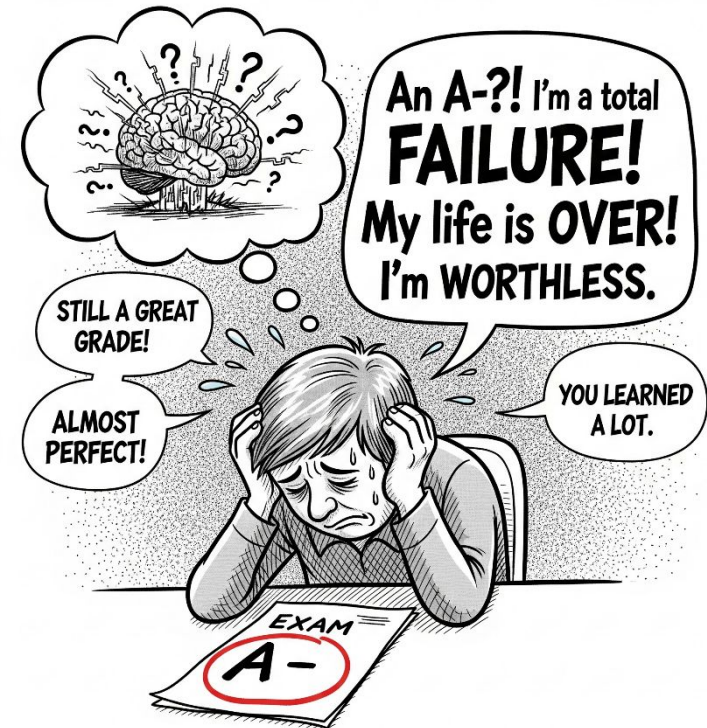
Catastrophizing

- Catastrophizing involves blowing things out of proportion and expecting the worst possible outcome.

- Example: A person thinks that if they make a mistake at work, they'll surely get fired and never find another job.

Overgeneralization

- This distortion involves drawing broad negative conclusions based on a single event.

- Example: After getting rejected by one person, someone believes they're unlovable and will never find a partner.

Mind Reading

- Mind reading is assuming you know what others are thinking or feeling without any evidence.

- Example: A friend cancels plans, and you assume they're avoiding you because they don't like you.

Emotional Reasoning

- Emotional reasoning is believing that if you feel a certain way, it must be true.

- Example: Feeling nervous about an upcoming event leads someone to believe that it will be a disaster, even though there's no evidence to support this.
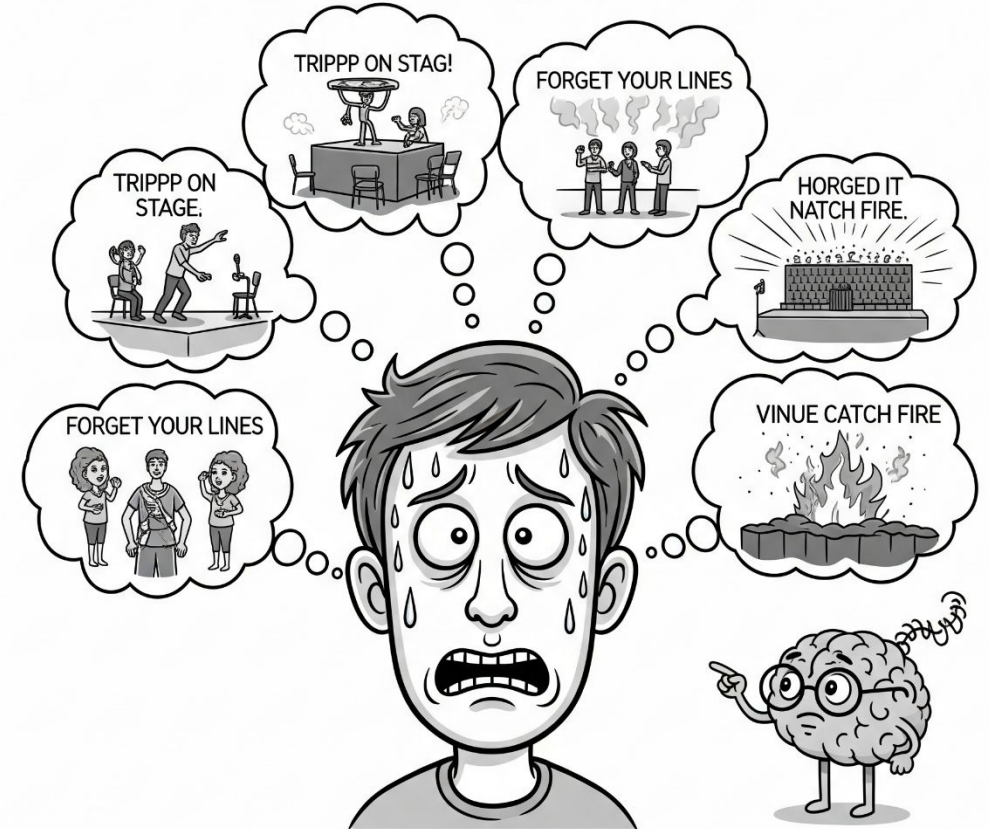
Labeling and Mislabeling

- This distortion involves applying negative labels to oneself or others based on mistakes or shortcomings.

- Example: After forgetting a friend's birthday, someone labels themselves as a terrible friend, overlooking all the times they've been supportive.

Personalization

- Personalization is assuming that external events are always directed at you, even when they have little to do with you.

- Example: A coworker's bad mood is assumed to be caused by something you did, when in reality it might have nothing to do with you.
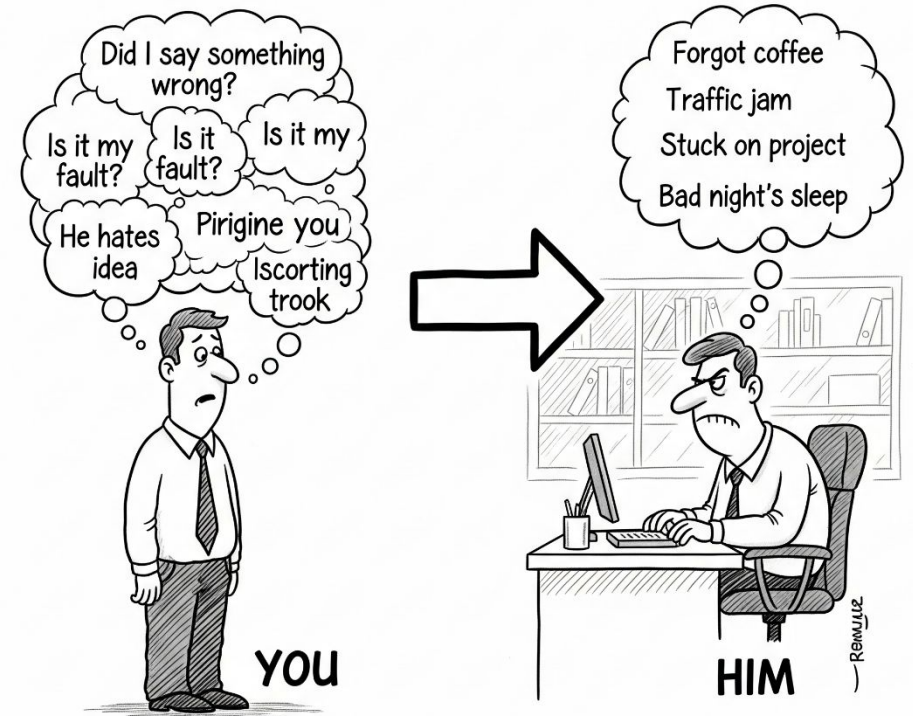
Should Statements

- Should statements involve having rigid rules about how things ought to be and becoming upset when reality doesn't match these rules.

- Example: Believing "I should always be perfect" leads to frustration and disappointment when inevitable mistakes occur.

Discounting the Positive

- This distortion involves downplaying or dismissing positive experiences as insignificant.

- Example: Achieving a personal goal is brushed off as luck or not a big deal, minimizing feelings of accomplishment.

Magnification and Minimization

- Magnification involves blowing negatives out of proportion, while minimization involves downplaying positives.

- Example: A person magnifies a minor criticism on their work performance while minimizing praise from colleagues.
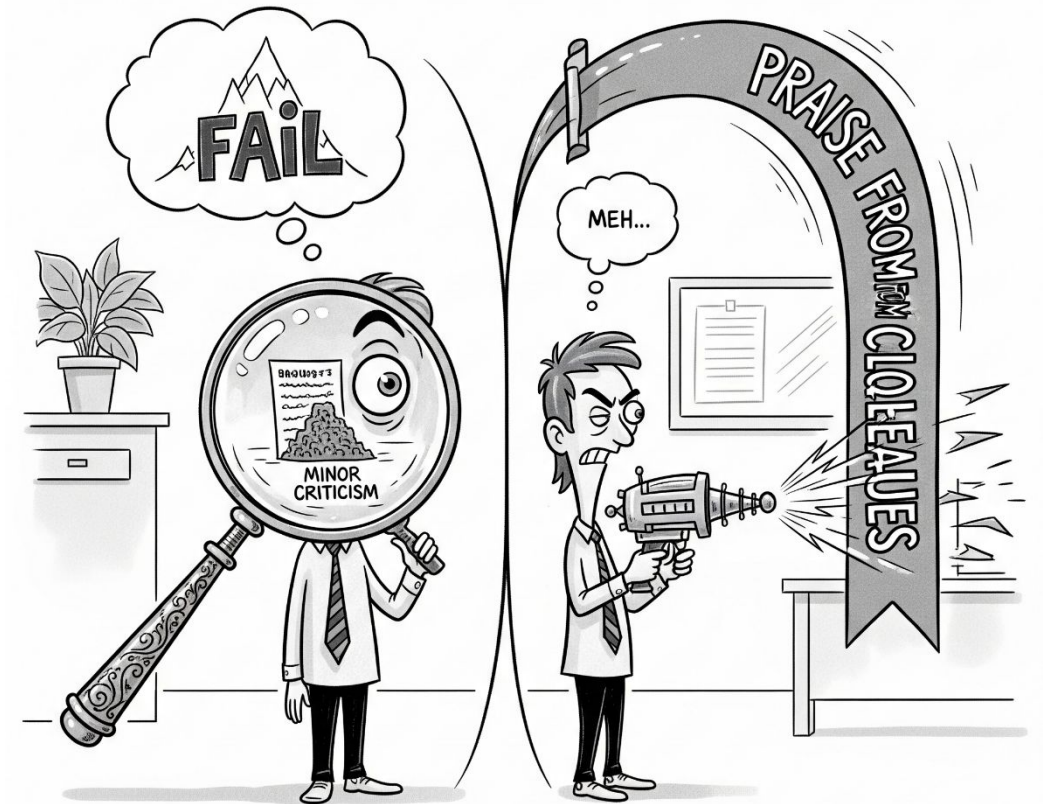
Fortune Telling (Predicting the Future):

- This distortion involves predicting negative outcomes with certainty, despite lacking evidence.

- Example: Someone believes they'll fail an interview and convinces themselves not to even try, assuming they already know the result.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1

Anna is an aspiring chef who loves experimenting in the kitchen. One evening, she decides to cook a gourmet meal for her family. As she's preparing the meal, she accidentally spills a few drops of sauce on the counter. Frustrated, she throws her hands up and exclaims, "This is a disaster! The entire meal is ruined now, and my culinary dreams are shattered!"

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Catastrophizing

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Lisa is a perfectionist who holds herself to incredibly high standards. She's assigned a project at work and starts thinking, "I should finish this project in record time. If I don't, I'm a complete failure." She ignores the fact that the project is complex and requires reasonable time and effort.

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Should Statements

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Jake and Sarah are best friends. One day, Sarah doesn't respond to Jake's text message for a few hours. Jake immediately starts worrying, thinking, "She's definitely mad at me. I must have said something wrong." He spends the whole day anxious, imagining all the possible things he could have done to upset her.

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Mind Reading

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Emma is a straight-A student, but this semester, she got a B on her math test. She starts thinking, "I'm terrible at math. I'm going to fail the entire course. I'm probably going to struggle in all my other subjects too." She concludes that her future academic success is now doomed.

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Overgeneralization

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Discounting the Positive

"Thank god for Tuesday morning therapy."