

Magnification and Minimization: Similar to mental filtering and disqualifying the positive, this cognitive distortion involves placing a stronger emphasis on negative events and downplaying the positive ones. The customer service representative who only notices the complaints of customers and fails to notice positive interactions is a victim of magnification and minimization. Another form of this distortion is known as **catastrophizing**, where one imagines and then expects the worst possible scenario. It can lead to a lot of stress.

Emotional Reasoning: This one is a close relative of jumping to conclusions in that it involves ignoring certain facts when drawing conclusions. Emotional reasoners will consider their emotions about a situation as evidence rather than objectively looking at the facts. “I’m feeling completely overwhelmed, therefore my problems must be completely beyond my ability to solve them,” or, “I’m angry with you; therefore, you must be in the wrong here,” are both examples of faulty emotional reasoning. Acting on these beliefs as fact can, understandably, contribute to even more problems to solve.

Should Statements: Those who rely on ‘should statements’ tend to have rigid rules, set by themselves or others, that always need to be followed -- at least in their minds. They don’t see flexibility in different circumstances, and they put themselves under considerable stress trying to live up to these self-imposed expectations. If your internal dialogue involves a large number of ‘shoulds,’ you may be under the influence of this cognitive distortion.

Labeling and Mislabeled: Those who label or mislabel will habitually place labels that are often inaccurate or negative on themselves and others. “He’s a whiner.” “She’s a phony.” “I’m just a useless worrier.” These labels tend to define people and contribute to a one-dimensional view of them, paving the way for overgeneralizations to move in. Labeling cages people into roles that don’t always apply and prevents us from seeing people (ourselves included) as we really are. It’s also a big no-no in relationship conflicts.

Personalization: Those who personalize their stressors tend to blame themselves or others for things over which they have no control, creating stress where it need not be. Those prone to personalization tend to blame themselves for the actions of others, or blame others for their own feelings. If any of these feel a little too familiar, that’s a good thing: recognizing a cognitive distortion is the first step of moving past it.