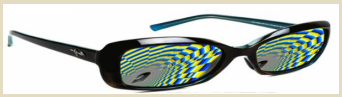
11 Common Cognitive Distortions

BLACK AND WHITE	"Black-and-White Thinking," this distortion manifests as an inability or unwillingness to see shades of gray. In other words, you see things in terms of extremes.	EXAMPLE: Something is either fantastic or awful, You are either perfect or a total failure
FILTERING	The mental filter distortion focuses on a single negative and excludes all the positive. The mental filter can foster a negative view by focusing only on the negative.	EXAMPLE: Dwelling on a single negative comment made and viewing a relationship as hopelessly lost, ignoring the years of positive comments and experiences.
OVERGENERALIZING 	Overgeneralizing takes one instance or example and generalizes it to an overall pattern, leading to overly negative thoughts based on only one or two experiences.	EXAMPLE: A student may receive a C on one test and conclude that she is stupid and a failure.
MIND-READING	The inaccurate belief that we know what another person is thinking. This distortion refers to the negative interpretations that we jump to.	EXAMPLE: Seeing a stranger with an unpleasant expression and jumping to the conclusion that she is thinking something negative about you.
FORTUNE TELLING	Fortune telling refers to the tendency to make conclusions and predictions based on little to no evidence, and holding them as gospel truth.	EXAMPLE: Someone predicting that they will never find love or have a committed and happy relationship based only on the fact that they have not found it yet.
EMOTIONAL REASONING	Belief that because you feel a certain way, this is how it really is. It concludes that their emotional reaction to something defines it's reality	EXAMPLE: "I feel it, therefore it must be true." "I know my spouse is being unfaithful because I feel jealous."
PERSONALIZING	You erroneously see yourself as the cause of some external negative event, even though you weren't responsible for it.	EXAMPLE:Assuming you are the reason a friend did not enjoy the girl's night out because of you.
SHOULD STATEMENTS	Thoughts that are imbued with expectation, judgment, and pressure. Imposing a set of expectations that will likely not be met. Musts and oughts are also offenders.	EXAMPLE:"I really should exercise. I shouldn't be so lazy." Musts and oughts are also offenders.
DISQUALIFYING POSITIVE	"Disqualifying the Positive" distortion acknowledges positive experiences, but rejects them instead of embracing them.	EXAMPLE: a person who receives a positive review at work might reject it and attribute the review to his boss simply not wanting to talk about his employee's performance problems.
CATASTROPHIZING	We expect disaster to strike, no matter what. This is also referred to as "magnifying. We take something that may be unpleasant, and blow it up to be bigger than it really is.	EXAMPLE:A person might exaggerate the importance of insignificant events (such as their mistake, or someone else's achievement).
LABELING	We tend to make global statements about ourselves or about others based on situation specific behavior.	EXAMPLE: A student who labels herself as "an utter fool" for failing an assignment, Mislabeling involves describing an event with language that is emotionally loaded.

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