

# Cognitive Distortions: 11 Thinking Traps

A one-page reference for spotting biased thoughts and reframing them. Grounded in cognitive behavioral therapy.

Cognitive distortions are common, automatic thinking traps. Everybody has them. They become a problem when they run often and go unchecked. Notice the pattern, then try the reframe.

Thinking trap	What it sounds like	A fairer reframe
<b>All-or-nothing</b>	If it isn't perfect, it's a failure.	Most things live in the grey. What part did go okay?
<b>Overgeneralizing</b>	This always happens to me.	One event isn't a forever rule. Is 'always' literally true?
<b>Mental filter</b>	I only notice what went wrong.	What am I filtering out? Name one thing that went fine.
<b>Discounting the good</b>	That good feedback doesn't count.	Why would the positives be the one exception?
<b>Mind reading</b>	They think I'm boring.	I'm guessing at their mind. What do I actually know?
<b>Fortune telling</b>	This is going to go badly.	I'm predicting, not knowing. What's a realistic outcome?
<b>Catastrophizing</b>	This is a total disaster.	How bad is it really, and could I cope if it happened?
<b>Emotional reasoning</b>	I feel like a failure, so I am one.	A feeling is information, not a verdict.
<b>Should statements</b>	I should be further along by now.	Says who? Try swapping 'should' for 'I'd like to.'
<b>Labeling</b>	I'm an idiot.	I made a mistake. A person is more than one label.
<b>Personalizing</b>	It's my fault they're upset.	What else, outside me, played a part in this?

Learn more: [Thinking Traps at shrinkdaily.com/concept/thinking-traps](https://shrinkdaily.com/concept/thinking-traps)