
Distortions

Our minds tend to make connections between what we think and observe. These patterns can be automatic and misleading. Cognitive distortions are styles of thinking that are unhelpful and untrue—driving negative thoughts and emotions. By developing a habit of recognizing and changing these thoughts, you can pivot more frequently to helpful thinking, feeling, and action. Here are some types of distorted thinking.

EMOTIONAL REASONING

In this distortion, your emotional reaction is an automatic indicator of reality. You believe that something is true because of your feelings about it.

Example: "If I feel that way, it must be true."

ATTENTIONAL BIAS

Filtering certain information over other information. This might mean magnifying the negative parts of a situation or dismissing the positive parts.

Example: Calling an entire day "horrible" by focusing on disagreements at home or delays at work, discounting moments of pause and kindness (i.e. morning birds chirping, clear and sunny skies on an afternoon break, the mail brought to you by your neighbor).

MEMORY BIAS

Recalling and fixating on memories associated with your current feelings.

Example: In an intense moment of anxiety, previous moments of heightened fear and anxiety also surface. You're unable to remember the times you nurtured a sense of calm and ongoing relief.

INTERPRETATION BIAS

Assigning inaccurate meaning to a neutral event or environment.

Example: Believing someone's blank facial expression is a sign that they must be angry with you or that you did something wrong. Instead, they might be thinking of what to say next.

David Burns' *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy*: <https://www.amazon.com/Feeling-Good-New-Mood-Therapy/dp/0380810336>
