

Identifying **common** cognitive errors



Faulty Thinking

Adapted from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy



What is faulty thinking?

Common cognitive errors, also known as faulty thinking, are where our thought patterns don't match up with reality, which can be very stressful and unnerving if not addressed.

When stress affects our mental health, it can make us feel unproductive, irritable and isolated. But by learning to identify the signs and with healthy coping methods, we can learn to recognise and control faulty thinking before it overwhelms us.



Identifying Common Cognitive Errors

- **All or nothing thinking:**
Seeing things as black or white. If your performance falls short of perfect you see yourself as a total failure.
- **Overgeneralising:**
Making sweeping inferences based on a single incident e.g. I can't control my temper. Often use words such as 'never' and 'always'.
- **Discounting the positives:**
Deciding that if a good thing happened, it couldn't be very important e.g. refusing to take pride in earning a degree because "everyone goes to Uni these days". Maintaining negative beliefs.
- **Jumping to conclusions:**
Focusing on one aspect of a situation when forming a judgement e.g. I haven't received a phone call from the team because they think I'm useless and they don't want me playing for them.
- **Mind reading:**
Believing one knows what another person is thinking with very little evidence e.g. I know he dislikes me because he's never spoken to me.



- **Fortune telling:**
Anticipating things will turn out badly and treating your prediction as though it is already an established fact e.g. I haven't heard back from the job interview. It means I really messed it up and will never get a job.
- **Magnifying/minimising (Catastrophising):**
Having a distorted perception of positive and negative events (e.g. you receive feedback during a performance review and focus exclusively on the negative, minimising any positive feedback).
- **Emotional reasoning:**
Believing that something must be true because it feels like it is true e.g. I can just feel that I'm going to be fired. It's not anything I've done specifically but I just feel it.
- **Making "should" statement:**
Telling oneself one should do (or have done) something when it is more accurate to say that one would like to do (or wishes one had done) the preferred thing e.g. I should have got up in time to catch the bus then I wouldn't have driven and been involved in an accident. Often leads to anger, frustration and resentment.
- **Labelling/mislabelling:**
Using a label e.g. bad mother, idiot, to describe behaviour and then imputing all the meanings the label carries. An extreme form of overgeneralisation.
- **Inappropriate blaming:**
Using hindsight to determine what one should have done even if one could not have known the best thing to do at the time. Also ignoring mitigating factors or ignoring the role played by others in a negative experience or event e.g. I shouldn't have gone off on holiday then I would have been there when my father had a heart attack and died.
- **Self-worth:**
You make a subjective decision that in order to accept yourself as worthy, and to feel good about yourself you have to look, perform, or behave a certain way.



Activation Event / Trigger



Beliefs / Faulty Thinking



Consequences / Behaviour / Feelings

Useful links

- [NHS - get help with stress](#)
- [Mind.org.uk - stress and mental health](#)
- [HSE stress at work resources](#)
- [Introducing mindfulness to your workday](#)
- [Mental Health Awareness Week resources](#)

Support and advice

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DoctorLine™

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