

Thought Errors & Cognitive Distortions

Some thoughts or assumptions that come to our mind at certain moments, make sense at that moment and are generally associated with negative emotions, are called thinking errors. The reason why they are called errors is that these thoughts are accepted without questioning their suitability for real conditions and they sometimes contain judgments that distort reality. The thought errors that cross our minds at certain moments are generally examined under the following headings:

1. Overgeneralizing: We can all make mistakes. We may even make the mistake of generalizing these mistakes for everything we do at times. This mistake can prevent us from trying to fix the mistake by making us think that we are a bad person, a useless person. People who overgeneralize often and easily use words like “always, never, absolutely, nobody”.

Ex: I made only one word mistake in homework. I will get zero on the final exam.

2. All or Nothing Thinking/Polarizing: The mistake of evaluating situations, people or ourselves with their best or worst aspects and not taking into account intermediate options is also called black and white thinking. In this type of thinking, other degrees that can be found between right and wrong are ignored, causing us to misinterpret the situation.

Ex: If I'm not going to be a great drummer, it's better not to start drumming at all.

3. Enlarging Negativities: In this type of thinking, only the negativities are focused and the whole reality is negated. Focusing only on the negative, everything positive is ignored.

Ex: My exam went very badly. My last exam was also very bad. I make mistakes all the time, everything goes bad.

4. Overriding the Positive: We may see positive events, but from time to time we may ignore or override them.

Ex: I got a high grade in the exam because the teacher asked simple questions, if the teacher did not ask simple questions, I could not get a high grade, I was lucky.

5. Reading the Other's Mind: Although we do not have any concrete evidence, we can assume that we know what is going on in the other person's mind. Without knowing whether this is true or not, we can draw negative conclusions.

Ex: My girlfriend/boyfriend is being very cold to me these days. I think s/he got bored of me.

6. False Fortune Telling: Believing that future events will be bad and arguing that this belief is true can lead one to become even more hopeless and helpless.

Ex: Even though I have been studying for this exam for a week, I feel like I can't succeed.

7. Emotional Reasoning: It is the mistake of believing that the situation is negative based on the negative emotions we experience and evaluating the real situation with our own emotions without taking into account the concrete conditions.

Ex: Actually, my grades are very good, but I feel unsuccessful.

8. Thinking in the Way of "Must": Some moments set certain rules for ourselves and the people around us, and we forget that we set these rules for ourselves and start to evaluate them as real facts.

Ex: I must always be happy and pleasant.

9. Labeling: It is a thought error that includes believing that situations or people will not change and constantly making negative references to them. In this type of thinking, instead of focusing on the behavior and finding the source of the problem, the person names this situation and puts this situation on the shelf without questioning it.

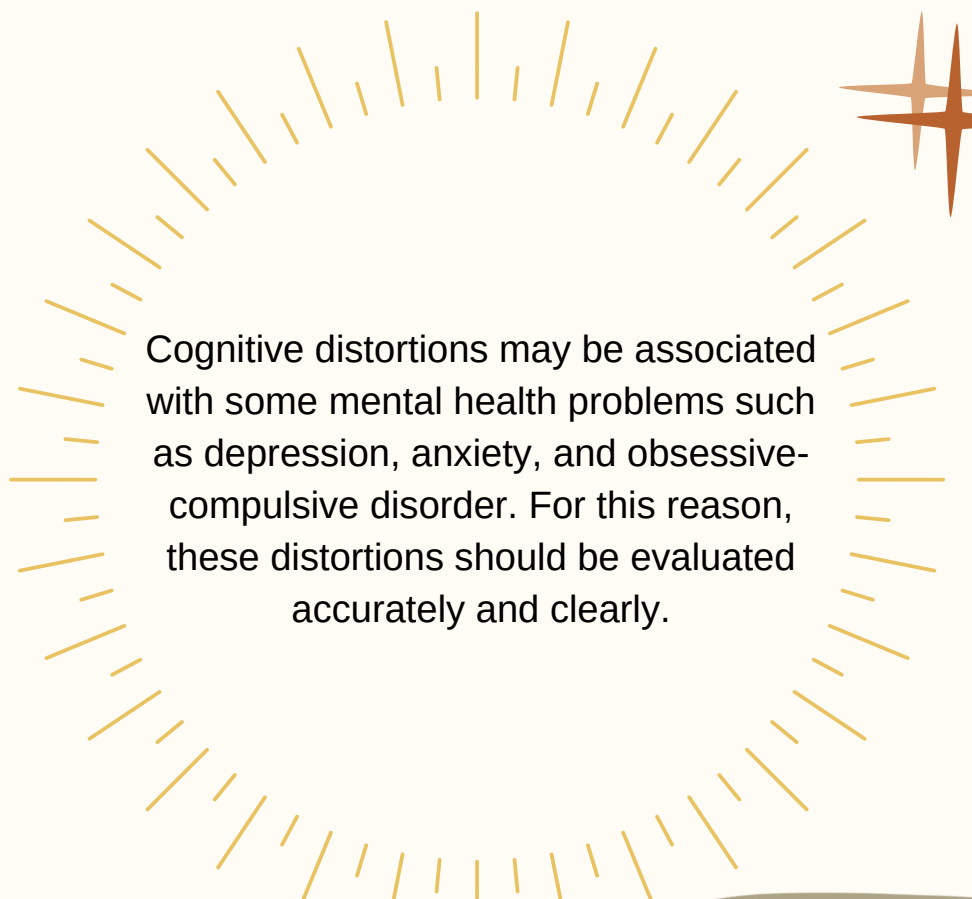
Ex: I made a lot of word mistakes while speaking. They won't hire me for sure.

10. Personalizing: In this type of thinking, the person takes the blame on himself even if he is not guilty in a certain situation. He thinks that he is the only one responsible for the incident.

Ex: Whenever I take an umbrella with me, it does not rain, whenever I do not take an umbrella with me, it rains. How lucky am I?

11. Catastrophizing: In this type of thinking, the person thinks that the world will end if he cannot solve his problems and problems.

Ex: Nothing will ever be the same again. I won't be able to fix anything.



Cognitive distortions may be associated with some mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. For this reason, these distortions should be evaluated accurately and clearly.

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