

Cognitive Distortion Checklist

1) Magnification. Hyper-focusing on the negative to the exclusion of the rest of the picture.

Distortion: You are not seeing the whole picture.

2) Negative Self-Labeling. "I'm stupid." "I'm a failure." "I'm worthless."

Distortion: You are habitually hard on yourself.

3) Catastrophizing. Expecting the worst-case scenario.

Distortion: Worst case scenarios rarely happen, and worrying about them doesn't prevent them.

4) Always/Never. "I always say the wrong thing." "This always happens to me." "People are always mean." "I can never rely on anyone."

Distortion: There is "always" an exception. ;)

5) Personalization/Overestimated Control and Responsibility. "If someone is unhappy, it must be my fault." "Because I didn't make him study more, he failed his test."

Distortion: We have very little control over other people's lives – including those we love.

6) Superstition. "If I expect something good to happen, it won't come true."

Distortion: If anything, it's the opposite. Our thoughts become self-fulfilling prophecies.

7) Mind-Reading. "My friend hasn't called; she must not like me."

Distortion: You can't know for sure. There have been times you have been wrong.

8) Fear of Judgement/Need for Approval. "I better not try because if I fail, I'll look foolish."

Distortion: Most people are too concerned with themselves to judge you, and worrying about it will always backfire.

9) No-Win Situation. "I'm damned if I do and damned if I don't."

Distortion: These are generally false choices based on overestimated importance and urgency.

10) Imposter Syndrome. "If I let them see the real me, they will know I'm a fraud."

Distortion: This is a syndrome that only affects the smart and successful. You are better than you think.

11) Generalized Unworthiness/Inferiority. "I will never feel happiness because I don't deserve it." "Everyone else is better than I am."

Distortion: This is an automatic feeling, unrelated to reality.

12) Comparing to Others. "Look how happy they are. Why don't I have that in my life?"

Distortion: "...we compare our behind the scenes with everyone else's highlight reel." - Steve Furtick

13) Should Have/Shouldn't have. "I should have studied more." "I shouldn't said that."

Distortion: We never know where past actions will lead us. For example, you shouldn't have been late, but maybe if you were on time, you would have been in an accident.

14) All or Nothing/Perfectionism. "If I'm not the best, I'm the worst." "Life is amazing, or it is terrible.

Distortion: Life is rarely black and white.

15) Hoops before Happiness. "I'll be happy when I lose the weight." "I'll be happy when I make more money." "I'll be happy when I get an 'A'."

Distortion: No one ever gets there. There will always be another hoop.