



# Cognitive Distortion Checklist

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**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.*