

Cognitive Distortions Finder

Cognitive distortions are recurring thinking patterns that can make an interpretation less accurate or less useful. A distortion is a clue to examine the thought - not proof that the thought is false.

Start with one thought. Check any patterns that might be influencing it.

COMPLETED EXAMPLE

Thought to examine

Write the thought exactly as it showed up.

I stumbled over one answer in the interview. They definitely thought I was unqualified, and I have blown my chance.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ All-or-nothing thinking
Seeing only extremes: success/failure, good/bad, always/never. | ☐ Overgeneralization
Turning one event into a broad rule about the future or yourself. |
| ☒ Catastrophizing
Treating a feared possibility as if it is likely or unmanageable. | ☒ Mental filter
Focusing narrowly on negative information while missing relevant context. |
| ☒ Mind reading
Assuming you know what another person thinks without enough evidence. | ☐ Discounting positives
Explaining away evidence that does not fit the negative conclusion. |
| ☒ Fortune telling
Predicting a future outcome as though it is already known. | ☐ Labelling
Turning a mistake or behaviour into a fixed identity label. |
| ☐ Emotional reasoning
Treating a feeling as proof: "I feel it, therefore it must be true." | ☐ Should statements
Using rigid rules about how you, others, or life must be. |

Which pattern(s) fit - and which do not?

Do not force a label. Note only the patterns that genuinely help you understand the thought.

Mind reading fits because I am assuming what the panel thought. Catastrophizing and mental filtering also fit. I am focusing on one answer and treating it as decisive.

A more accurate version

Keep what is true. Remove exaggeration, certainty you do not have, or conclusions that go beyond the evidence.

I had one answer I wish I had handled better. I also answered the rest of the interview, and I do not know how the panel evaluated me. One awkward answer does not tell me the final outcome.