COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

Cognitive distortions are irrational thoughts that can influence your emotions. Everyone experiences cognitive distortions to some degree. However, if unchecked, they can take on a life of their own and lead to feelings of shame, anxiety, depression, and ultimately burnout.

**Magnification and Catastrophizing**: Exaggerating the importance of events or assuming the worst possible outcome. One might believe their own achievements are unimportant, or that their mistakes are excessively important.

**Overgeneralization**: Making broad interpretations from a single, or few events. “I feel awkward shadowing on the wards. I am *always* so awkward!”

**Personalization**: The belief that one is responsible for events outside their control. “My study partner is usually upset. He would probably be fine if I were smarter and a better student.”

**Mind Reading**: Interpreting the thoughts and beliefs of others without adequate evidence. “That resident looks at me funny. She probably thinks I’m stupid.”

**Fortune Telling**: The expectation that a situation will turn out badly without adequate evidence. “I know I’m going to fail this test!”

**Emotional Reasoning**: The assumption that things are as bad as the subjective feelings one has. “I feel horrible about my exam. I must have done horribly.”

**Negativity Bias**: Recognizing only the negative aspects of a situation while ignoring the positive. Failure to recognize and celebrate all that is going well or that one is successfully doing.

**Pessimistic Explanatory Style**: Reinforcing negative, difficult, or painful aspects in narratives. “Yeah, the nurse couldn’t follow orders. They don’t like students, have you noticed?”

**All-or-Nothing Thinking**: Thinking in absolutes such as “always,” “never,” or “every.” “I never do as well as I should.” (This contains two distortions).

**Maladaptive Perfectionism**: Repeatedly setting impossible achievement standards for oneself, leading to constant disappointment in oneself. This leads to embarrassment, shame, and depression.

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