Common Cognitive Distortions

Type	Definition	Example
Black or White	Viewing situations, people, or self as entirely bad or entirely good-nothing in between	Paul made and error while playing on the school's basketball team. He began Thinking, "I'm a total failure. Nobody will like me. Everyone will hate me.
Exaggerating	Making self-critical or other critical statements that include terms like never, nothing, everything or always	Sharon was not asked on a date for the junior prom. She thought, "I'm never going to be asked on a date. Nobody cares about me. Boys will always ignore me.
Filtering	Ignoring the positive things that occur to and around self but focusing on and inflating the negative.	Kate had her hair cut short and styled differently. After receiving several compliments from friends and family, one person was mildly critical. Kate thought "I knew I shouldn't have gotten it cut short. I look like a freak. People are laughing at me. "
Discounting	Rejecting positive experiences as not important or meaningful	Jose was complimented by his teacher for his interesting artistic drawing. He thought, "anybody could have drawn that. She doesn't anything. I don't have any special ability. "
Catastrophizing	Blowing expected consequences out of proportion in a negative direction.	Sierra did not make the cheer leading team after working hard in tryouts. She thought, "My life is over. I'll never have any friends or any fun. People will look down on me."
Judging	Being critical or self or others with a heavy emphasis on the use of "should have, ought to, must, have to, and should not have"	Malcolm finally got up enough courage to call a girl from school that he liked. In spite of the fact that they had a lively conversation for 20 minutes, John told his friend, "I shouldn't have laughed so much. I have to be more relaxed or she'll think I'm a jerk."
Mindreading	Making negative assumptions regarding other people's thoughts and motives	Aaron had a problem with acne. When he did not get the clothing sales job he wanted, he thought, "I know it's because the manager thinks I look bad. He said the position had been filled but I know better."
Forecasting	Predicting events will turn out badly	Kelly finished taking an important test. She immediately predicted that she failed. "I'll never get into college, because I blew it here."
Feelings are Facts	Because you feel a certain way, reality is seen as fitting that feeling	Jim did not have plans with his friends this weekend. He felt lonely and inferior. He thought, "no one likes me. I have a terrible personality."
Labeling	Calling self or others a bad name when displeased with a behavior	Brent had an argument with his parents about not cleaning his room. He thought, "my parents are dictators. They are always telling me what to do."
Self-blaming	Holding self responsible for an outcome that was not completely under one's control.	Lisa's parents separated after many months of arguing. She thought, "my parents argue so much because of me. If I acted better they wouldn't have to separate.