Common Thought Distortions

1. All-or Nothing Thinking

Seeing people or events in absolute (black-or-white) terms, without recognizing the middle ground (e.g., success/failure; perfect/worthless).

2. Blaming

Blaming yourself or others too much. Focusing on who is to blame for problems rather than what you can do about them.

3. Catastrophizing

Blowing things out of proportion, telling yourself that you won't be able to handle something, or viewing tough situations as if they will never end.

4. Downplaying Positives

Minimizing or dismissing positive qualities, achievements, or behaviors by telling yourself that they are unimportant or do not count.

5. Emotional Reasoning

Believing something is true because it "feels" true. Relying too much on your feelings to guide decisions.

6. Fortune Telling

Making negative predictions about the future, such as how people will behave or how events will play out.

7. Intolerance of Uncertainty

Struggling to accept or tolerate things being uncertain or unknown (e.g., repeatedly wondering "what if?" something bad happens).

8. Labeling

Describing yourself or others using global, negative labels (e.g., making judgments about one's character or name calling).

9. Mind Reading

Jumping to conclusions about another person's thoughts, feelings, or intentions without checking them out.

10. Negative Filtering

Focusing only on the negatives and ignoring the positives in a situation, such that you fail to see the "big picture."

11. Not Accepting

Dwelling on an unpleasant situation or wishing things were different, instead of accepting what has happened and finding ways to move forward.

12. Overgeneralizing

Drawing sweeping conclusions on the basis of a single incident, such as when we say people or things are "always" or "never" a certain way.

13. Personalizing

Telling yourself that events relate to you when they may not.

14. "Should" and "Must" Statements

Focusing on how things or people "should" or "must" be. Treating your own standards or preferences as rules that everyone must live by.