

## Depression's Tricks

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Depression has certain ways of tricking you into believing negative ideas. These tricks are called cognitive distortions.

Not only do cognitive errors generate biased interpretations of reality, but they also lead to dysfunctional behaviors and poor decisions.

But what is the root of our flawed thinking? Below you can find the most typical cognitive distortions, which are closely related to depression.



The banner features the Explorable logo at the top center, with the text "EXPLORABLE" in a large, bold, white font and "Quiz Time!" in a smaller, white, cursive font below it. Below the logo are three square images, each with a white border and a white caption underneath. The first image shows a pair of red roller skates on a wooden deck, with the caption "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2". The second image shows a fan of colorful pens, with the caption "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2". The third image shows a Ferris wheel at sunset, with the caption "Quiz: Flags in Europe". To the right of these images is a white button with the text "See all quizzes =>" in a white font.

## Mental Filtering

The main problem with mental filtering is that it allows you to see only a fraction of what's truly happening around you. In other words, you become blind to everything positive in your life, and are only able to see the negatives.

Mental filtering keeps you from enjoying all the positive aspects of your life and performance. Your focus solely on the negative and therefore feel poorly.

## Catastrophizing

Popularly known as "making mountains out of molehills", this cognitive error is responsible for

our tendency to exaggerate minor inconveniences.

Some of the most frequent negative thoughts generated by catastrophizing are: "It was the worst thing that ever happened to me", "Why do bad things always happen to me", "It's absolutely horrifying", "I can't stand it anymore", "I will never recover from this".

## **Blaming**

People who experience depression can sometimes live under the impression that there's always someone or something to blame for all the bad things that happen in the world. To be more specific, they blame others for their own shortcomings.

Blaming can take away the guilt and responsibility one may feel, but it also keeps you from taking charge of your own life, because you believe that others are responsible. Even though assuming responsibility may be difficult, it empowers you to live life however you choose.

## **Emotional Reasoning**

This cognitive distortion tricks us into believing that our negative emotions reflect the true nature of reality. Emotions dictate reasoning, without there being any realistic proof. Some examples would be, "If I'm afraid to fly in an airplane, this means it's dangerous", "I feel awkward talking to new people, so they must also think I am awkward".

## **Black and White Thinking**

Since depression clouds our judgement, most of us tend to interpret things as black or white, good or bad, smart or dumb, etc. Also known as dichotomous thinking, this cognitive distortion leaves out "the grey tones", which often make up most of life and what happens to us.

## **Fortune-Telling**

This cognitive distortion is characterized by one's tendency to see the future in negative nuances. You may be sure that future events will develop in a certain, unfavorable way, and completely disregard the possibility of anything about it, or that your interpretation may not be correct.

## **Mind Reading**

A common cognitive distortion, which tricks us into believing that we know what others are thinking, although we don't actually have any realistic evidence of that. Mind reading can isolate us from other people and keep us from engaging in activities that would make us feel good, because we are sure that others would see us in a negative light.

## **Personalizing**

This cognitive distortion refers to our tendency to believe that the negative behavior of others,

is somehow a reaction to us. For instance, you may think that someone didn't say "Hello" to you because they do not like you, while disregarding the possibility that they might have not seen you, might have been focused on a personal issue, etc.

## **What Can You Do?**

The best strategy you can apply, is to uncover, challenge and change your cognitive distortions. In the next few articles you will see how to do that, in order to lay your own foundation to a happier life.

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