10 Forms of Twisted Thinking

**All or Nothing Thinking:** Black & white, absolutes. If a situation isn’t perfect it is a total failure.

**Overgeneralizations:** A single negative event is seen as a never-ending patter of defeat by using words such as “always, never, everyone, nobody.”

**Mental filter:** Dwelling on a single negative event creating a dark view of reality. Ignore the positives.

**Discounting the positive:** Reject positive experiences: they don’t count. This takes the joy out of life and creates a sense of inadequacy.

**Jumping to conclusions:** Interpret things negatively with no supporting data. **Mind reading** without checking out your assumptions. **Fortune-telling:** predicting the future will turn out badly.

**Magnification:** Exaggerating the importance of your problems/shortcoming or minimizing the importance of your desirable qualities. Also called binocular vision.

**Emotional reasoning:** Assume negative emotions reflect reality. “I feel hopeless so things must be hopeless.”

**Should statements:** Tell yourself that things *should* be as you hope/expect. The shoulds are directed toward self and lead to guilt and frustration. Some people use should/shouldn’t to motivate through punishment which leads to rebellion and exhaustion.

**Labeling:** Extreme all or nothing thinking. Instead of saying that I made a mistake you say “I’m a loser/fool, jerk, etc.” Labeling is irrational because you are not the same as what you do. All humans have value even though they may not express it. Labels are abstract and lead to anger, anxiety, frustration and low self-esteem. You may also label others. This makes others feel hostile and leave little room for communication.

**Personalization and blame:** You hold yourself responsible for an event that isn’t entirely under your control. You blame oneself instead of pinpointing the problem to find a solution. Personalization leads to guilt, shame and sense of inadequacy. Blaming others is another form that creates resentment and does not focus on the solution.