zach baldridge
COUNSELING

1420 W. Exchange Pkwy. Suite 140
Allen, TX, 75013
zbaldridge@zbcounseling.com I 469.718.7306

10 Common Cognitive Distortions

1. **All-or-nothing thinking:** You look at things in absolute, black-and-white categories. If your performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself as a total failure.

2. **Overgeneralization:** You view a single negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat.

3. **Discounting the positives:** You insist that your accomplishments or positive qualities "don't count."

4. **Mental filter:** You dwell on the negatives and ignore the positives.

5. **Jumping to conclusions:**
   a. Mind reading – you assume people are reacting negatively to you when there's no definite evidence for this and you don't bother to check it out.
   b. Fortune-telling – you arbitrarily predict that things will turn out badly, and you feel convinced that your prediction is an already established fact.

6. **Magnification or minimization:** You blow things way up out of proportion or you shrink their importance inappropriately

7. **Emotional reasoning:** You reason from how you feel: "I feel like an idiot, so I really must be one." Or "I don't feel like doing this, so I'll put it off."

8. **"Should statements":** You try to motivate and criticize yourself and others with "should" or "shouldn'ts." "Musts,", "oughts", and "have tos" are similar offenders. The emotional consequence is guilt. When directed towards others you feel anger, frustration, and resentment.

9. **Labeling:** This is an extreme form of overgeneralization. Instead of describing your error, you attach a negative label to yourself. Instead of saying, "I made a mistake," you tell yourself, "I'm a jerk," or "a fool," or "a loser." When someone else's behavior rubs you the wrong way, you attach a negative label to him or her: "He's a louse. She's a witch."

10. **Personalization and blame:** You blame yourself for something you weren't primarily responsible for, or you blame other people and overlook ways that your own attitudes and behavior might contribute to a problem.

Source: Burns, D.D. (1990). *The Feeling Good Handbook,* New York: Plume.