

We are all prone at times to unhelpful 'distorted thinking', but when we are either under excess stress or are depressed, these distortions become more exaggerated. Research has shown that there are particular types of distorted thinking.

All-or-nothing thinking

You think in absolutes, as either black or white, good or bad, with no middle ground. You tend to judge people or events using general labels, for example 'he's an idiot', 'I'm hopeless. I'll never learn to drive. I'm a complete failure.' You may condemn yourself completely as a person on the basis of a single event.

Awfulising – catastrophising

You tend to magnify and exaggerate the importance of events and how awful or unpleasant they will be, over-estimating the chances of disaster; whatever can go wrong will go wrong. If you have a setback you will view it as a never-ending pattern of defeat.

Personalising

You take responsibility and blame for anything unpleasant even if it has little or nothing to do with you. If something bad happens you immediately think 'it's my fault'.

Negative focus

You focus on the negative, ignoring or misinterpreting positive aspects of a situation. You focus on your weaknesses and forget your strengths, looking on the dark side. If you've done a good job, you filter out and reject the positive comments and focus on the negative.

Jumping to conclusions

You make negative interpretations even though there are no definite facts. You start predicting the future, and take on the mantle of 'mind reader'. You are likely to predict that negative things will happen.

Living by fixed rules

You tend to have fixed rules and unrealistic expectations, regularly using the words 'should', 'ought', 'must' and 'can't'. This leads to unnecessary guilt and disappointment. The more rigid these statements are, the more disappointed, angry, depressed or guilty you are likely to feel.