Cognitive distortions: the 10 patterns

These are thinking habits everyone has, not things wrong with you. When a thought stings, find the pattern it fits, ask its question, and make a mark in the box. One thought can fit more than one pattern.

All-or-nothing thinking

Two boxes only: perfect or a failure.

Where does this sit on a scale from 0 to 100?

Times this week:

Overgeneralization

One event becomes "always" or "never".

How many times has it not happened?

Times this week:

Mental filter

One bad detail colors the whole picture.

What else happened that I am leaving out?

Times this week:

Disqualifying the positive

Good things get explained away.

Would I let this count for a friend?

Times this week:

Jumping to conclusions

Mind reading or fortune telling without the facts.

What do I know for sure, and what am I filling in?

Times this week:

Catastrophizing

Leaping to the worst outcome and treating it as likely.

What is most likely, and how would I cope?

Times this week:

Emotional reasoning

I feel it, so it must be true.

What would the facts say if I felt calm?

Times this week:

Should statements

Rigid rules for me or others: should, must, have to.

Whose rule is this, and what is the reason for it?

Times this week:

Labeling

One action becomes a verdict: I'm an idiot.

What did I do, instead of what am I?

Times this week:

Personalization

Taking the blame for what was not mine to control.

Who and what else played a part?

Times this week:

One thought I caught this week

The thought, word for word

The pattern or patterns it fits

The pattern's question, and my answer

If it is a worry about the future: what I fear, and the date to check

Pattern names from David Burns, Feeling Good (1980). Made by Joel Dean, Joyful AI Journal. joyfulaijournal.com/thinking/cognitive-distortions

If you are thinking about harming yourself, call or text 988 (US) or contact local emergency services.