**Cognitive Distortions**

1. **All-or-nothing thinking:** Viewing situations on one extreme or another instead of on a continuum. Ex. “She looked upset that I was late so now she hates me.”

2. **Catastrophizing**: Predicting extreme negative outcomes for the future and that you can’t handle or manage. Ex. “If I don’t pass this test, I’ll fail out of school.”

3. **Labeling:** You identify with your shortcomings. Instead of saying, “I made a mistake,” you tell yourself, “I’m an idiot,” or “I’m a loser.”

4. **Emotional reasoning**: Evaluating things illogically, based only on feelings. Ex. “I feel useless so I must be useless,” “I feel scared so something bad is going to happen.”

5. **Magnification/minimization**: Emphasizing the negative or playing down the positive of a situation. Ex. “My teacher said he made some corrections on my paper, so I know I’m going to fail.”

6. **Mind reading:** Believing you know what others are thinking. Ex. “That person looked at me when I walked in the cafeteria and I know they think I’m ugly.”

7. **Fortune Telling**: You arbitrarily predict things will turn out badly. Ex. You believe that people you don’t know are going to reject you so you avoid becoming friends with them.

8. **Overgeneralization:** Because you’ve had one bad experience, you believe that it will repeat itself again. For instance, you messed up once at public speaking and now assume you’ll never be able to speak in public again.

9. **Personalization:** Thinking the negative behavior of others has something to do with you. Ex. “My girlfriend is in a bad mood, I must have done something to upset her.”

10. “**Should Statements”:** You criticize yourself or others by using “shoulds” or “shouldn’ts” to pressure yourself to meet unreasonably high expectations. Ex. “I should never be scared.” “I should never need help.”

11. **Disqualifying or discounting the positive**: Telling yourself that the good things that happen to you don’t count. Ex. “I gave the feared speech, but I didn’t make good eye contact and my voice was shaking so it was a waste.”

12. **Mental filter/tunnel vision**: Placing all one’s attention on, or seeing only, the negatives of a situation and ignoring any positives. Ex. You get a solid performance review, but you focus and obsess over the two areas of constructive criticism.

Adapted from Burns, David. The Feeling Good Handbook. New York: Plume, 1999.