



# Cognitive Distortions:

## **How your thoughts can quietly shape your confidence (and your timeline)**

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If you ever catch yourself thinking, “I’m behind,” “I’m failing,” or “I’ll finally feel good when I hit the next milestone,” you may be experiencing **cognitive distortions**. **Cognitive distortions** are common thinking patterns that can sound true in the moment—but they’re often **biased, extreme, or incomplete**. They can increase anxiety, shame, and self-doubt, and they often show up when you’re stressed, overwhelmed, or comparing yourself to others. Here’s the good news: you can learn to spot them and respond differently.

## **Common Cognitive Distortions (Quick Guide)**

### **1) All-or-Nothing Thinking**

Seeing things in extremes: success or failure, good or bad.

“If I’m not where I want to be, I’m not doing well at all.”

### **2) Should Statements**

Rigid rules about how life “must” look.

“I should be further by now.”

### **3) Mental Filter**

Focusing only on what’s missing and ignoring what’s going well.

“None of this counts until I reach the big goal.”

### **4) Discounting the Positive**

Minimizing your effort, growth, or progress.

“That doesn’t count—it was luck.”

### **5) Unfair Comparisons**

Measuring yourself against someone else’s highlight reel.

“Everyone is passing me.”

## 6) Catastrophizing

Assuming the worst-case scenario is the most likely.

“If I don’t hit this milestone soon, my life is over.”

## 7) Mind Reading

Assuming you know what others think about you.

“They probably think I’m behind.”

## 8) Labeling

Turning a moment into an identity.

“I’m a failure.”

# 60-Second Thought Reset

When you notice a painful thought, try this quick reset:

**1) Name it:** What am I telling myself right now?

**2) Label it:** Which distortion is this? (Shoulds? All-or-nothing? Comparison?)

**3) Reframe it:** What’s a more balanced, compassionate thought?

### Example:

Old thought: “If I don’t hit this milestone, I’m failing.”

Reframe: “My timeline isn’t proof of my worth. I can want growth without shaming myself.”

## Reminder:

**Milestones are markers of progress—not proof of worth.**

You are allowed to grow at your pace, in your season, in your real life.

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