

think that what you thought in your mind was never a thought in another's.

Magical Thinking. This problem is tied to emotional reasoning. This cognitive problem equates emotions, thoughts, and feelings to have an actual impact on real-life events. It is similar to the Butterfly Affect.[8] For instance, someone may say “if I would not have thought about so and so getting in a wreck, they would not have been injured,”[9] or “I can't walk this way because the black cat I saw will bring bad luck.”[10] This superstitious mindset can be harmful as it can lead to a detriment in daily life functions.[11] We fix this by cognitive restructuring (reframing our thoughts and asking about their validity). Sometimes we equate two things that have no correlation. Also, just because we think something doesn't make it true or that something will happen. Intentions are vastly different from mere thoughts. Our emotions like to play with our reality, but we must remember that they are too wavy to trust (Proverbs 14:12; 28:26; Jeremiah 10:23). When reality seems distorted, trust the One who made it and controls it (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Personalization. This distortion is personal. It seeks to take the blame for someone's actions or attitude.[12] One might begin to construct a false perception of an interaction because of another's facial expression.[13] One might say “My mom is always upset. She would be fine if I did more to help her.”[14] Some children who undergo a divorce of their parents tend to do this. They might say “its my fault that my parents divorced. If I never would have disobeyed, they would still be together.” Individuals struggling with this distortion may have low self-esteem. But this faulty process can be dispelled by first examining the evidence of our fears. Might the mother in the above example be upset because of a bad day at work? Might the divorce happened due to infidelity? Second, it can also be corrected when we ask if situations truly involve us.[15] We cannot be blamed for everything because we are not involved in everything. God only expects us to feel sorry for things we did (2 Corinthians 7:10; 1 John 1:9), not for things we did not do. Third, we can remind

ourselves that God is in control (Psalm 115:3; Proverbs 19:21) and we have little say in what goes on.[16] There are so many things that happen in this world and our God knows each one. Minimally, when we ponder how little we affect things, it can help us trust that we are not responsible for everything that happens (cf. Psalm 8:4; Job 7:17). Our names are not signed on every deed!

Sometimes our thoughts betray us; we can deceive ourselves. Not everything we think is true about us or the world. Let us therefore dispel the harmful narratives by taking every thought in the interrogation room (2 Corinthians 13:5). We have the power to bind our thoughts (2 Corinthians 13:5). We are what we think and we think what we want. You can control your thoughts—God has confidence in you.

Endnotes

[1][1]<https://www.verywellhealth.com/cognitive-distortions-5226061>

[2]<https://www.verywellhealth.com/cognitive-distortions-5226061>

[3]<https://www.healthline.com/health/cognitive-distortions#polarized-thinking>

[4]<https://www.verywellhealth.com/cognitive-distortions-5226061>

[5]<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/catastrophizing>

[6]<https://www.simplypsychology.org/how-to-stop-catastrophic-thinking.html>

[7]<https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/cognitive-distortions>

[8]The Butterfly Affect states that the smallest of actions produces the largest of actions elsewhere. For instance, a butterfly's wings can impact the weather (Wikipedia). While small events can lead to bigger ones, when exaggerated, this can be harmful to mental health (<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-the-butterfly-effect-really-means-11950487>).

[9]<https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/cognitive-distortions>

[10]<https://www.goodrx.com/health-topic/mental-health/magical-thinking-effects-cognitive-distortion>

[11]<https://www.goodrx.com/health-topic/mental-health/magical-thinking-effects-cognitive-distortion>

[12]https://openemotionwheel.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/cognitive_distortions_complete.pdf

[13]https://openemotionwheel.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/cognitive_distortions_complete.pdf

[14]<https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/cognitive-distortions>

[15]<https://ctrinstitute.com/resources/identifying-cognitive-distortions/>

[16]https://www.arrows.church/uploads/1/3/3/8/133876246/cognitive_distortions.pdf

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Cognitive Distortions



& Their Biblical Cures

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Humans think thousands of thoughts per day. Some of them are positive and some are negative. Some float away while others stick harder. Often, the ones that stick are the ones we might call Cognitive Distortions.

Cognitive distortions are wrong ways in which we view the world, a situation, or an event. These thoughts are common when walking through times of depression, sadness, or perhaps grief. When persistent, they can create a paralyzing way of life.[1] Sometimes people can develop disorders such as Anorexia Nervosa, Bipolar Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, and many others due to them.[2] Marcus Aruelius said, “A man’s life is what his thoughts make him.” Since a man is what he thinks (Proverbs 23:7) it is imperative that men correct these cognitive misconceptions in order to live a fruitful spiritual life. What are some common distortions and the Biblical cures to them?

Overgeneralizing. This refers to perceiving that one individualistic event is the basis for all others.[3] People often use negative terms like “always,” “never,” or “everything.”[4] Self-esteem issues are also common with this distortion. Included in way of thinking are rumination and deep illogical categorization. We might call this the apples and oranges distortion. It is like painting your present adult self with the brush you had as a baby. We must remember however that not all futural occurrences

gain their strength from one singular past experience. Yesterday’s weaknesses and failures do not have to be weights that drag us down (Philippians 3:12-14)—they can be motivators to help us succeed tomorrow. Our past sins do not define our tomorrows; our identity does not have to be explained by yesterday, it can be illustrated by actions today (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Instead of negative expectations, expect God to work all things together for good (Romans 8:28). Not every situation, experience, or action is the same, nor will it ever be the exact same again, so work hard to cultivate a positive future.

Catastrophizing. People having this distortion place the worst connotation on everything that happens. They expect the worst to happen. It could be illustrated in a mother who notices her child’s sickness and believes it to be an incurable disease when it is just a common cold. Teens who struggle with this may believe a friend’s single worded text means they hate them and will never speak to them again. This problem plays with someone’s biggest fears and includes ruminating thoughts, making one trapped inside their own mind.[5] When we engage in “end of the world” thinking, we should remind ourselves that much of what we fear does not come to pass. Such thinking also takes us out of today, and places us into tomorrow—a day in which we were never meant to go (Matthew 6:34). Trust that God holds tomorrow (Proverbs 3:5-6). Don’t look forward but upward (Colossians 3:1-4). Thinking about tomorrow only leads to ruined today’s (Proverbs 27:1; Matthew 6:34). Replace catastrophic thinking with prayerful mediation (Philippians 4:6-7) and expect to be filled with peace. Therapeutically, if you must, practice mindfulness or acceptance. To get your mind off of the present worry, do the 5-4-3-2-1 technique.[6] Sit comfortably in a chair, take a few breaths and notice 5 things you see, 4 items you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 items you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.

All or Nothing Thinking. If this thought process were a map, there would only be two paths. If it were color, black and white would be the only options. If space, either top or bottom, there would be no middle.

Looking at situations, actions, words, and thoughts through the scope of this distortion can corrupt and destroy the soul. This distortion offers no grace and only accepts perfection. When met with the slightest mark of weakness or error, the person will count the project, situation, or person as a total failure. This leads people to disappointment, discouragement, and even resentment toward good things which are to be welcomed despite their imperfect state. Spiritually, this leaves souls tormented by their failures and can lead to a disinterest in religion. Not everything is black and white; God made other colors too. The Bible stresses man’s imperfection (Romans 3:23) and gives grace when man falls down. God does not utterly reject a man with mistakes; He gives Him grace to help him become better. Solomon wrote: “For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again” (Proverbs 24:16). The blood of Jesus is present for those who want to do better but sometimes fail (1 John 1:7-9). In Christ does not mean sinless, it means doing one’s best to walk in the light. In Christ does not mean perfection, it means growth (2 Peter 3:18). We stand in grace (Romans 5:2) and if we are stewards of it (1 Peter 4:10), should we not be ready to give ourselves some?

Mind Reading. One of the worst mind problems is assumption. This cognitive distortion seeks to read what other people are thinking and therefore draw conclusions. One may say “She probably thinks I’m ugly,”[7] or “he doesn’t want to be my friend.” Such conclusions are obviously without support seeing no one can have the ability to peer into another’s mind. Sometimes attempts are made at reading body language or tone inflection that are used as “evidence” for thoughts; however, no man can fully read the mind by the body. The body is a good liar and can compartmentalize to fit specific situations. We must be careful of judgement by appearance (1 Samuel 16:7; John 7:24). We can correct this way of thinking by examining fruit, for it is there we can obtain the truth about what someone thinks (Matthew 12:33-34). Also, talk to people. Don’t play God when interacting with others, instead be researcher. Gather the facts before you make an assumption. You might be surprised to