

# Common Cognitive Distortions or “Thinking Traps”

As adapted from The Feeling Good Handbook by David Burns

## **All-or-Nothing Thinking**

- What’s the point of coming to school anyway? I’m already failing a bunch of classes
- Nobody ever asks me out on the weekends
- I have no friends
- It’s not worth even trying

## **Overgeneralization**

- I’m always the last person to know what’s going on.
- Everything I do is a failure.

## **Mental Filter**

- I can’t believe I said that! I’m such an idiot!
- I’m going to do poorly on my exam and everyone will think I am dumb! (& labeling)
- When I try to dance, everyone is going to think I am an idiot.

## **Discounting the Positives**

- The only reason she sat with me is that she had no one else to sit with.
- She’s my mother, of course she’s going to say something nice about me.

## **Mind-Reading**

- I know she doesn’t want to hang out.
- Everyone is looking at me. They are thinking (negative assumption).
- Don’t ask her, she always says “no” when we invite her.

## **Fortune-Telling**

- My mom is going to be so pissed!
- No one is going to understand me.
- If I fail at \_\_\_ (school, sports, relationship), then I will never \_\_\_ (get into college, have a good career, get married)
- I’m never going to be as successful as my brother.

## **Magnification (or minimization)**

- Today was a total failure. Nothing ever goes right for me.
- What if she never talks to me again?

## **Emotional Reasoning**

- I hate being in school. I should just skip class today.

- I get so nervous; I'm never going to be able to make it on my own.
- *I am worthless*
- I might as well have a drink before the test, I'm going to do really poorly anyway

### **"Should" Statements**

- I should have known this would happen!
- I should never have said anything!
- I should never tell you anything.
- I should have known how to do \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Labeling**

- *I screw up everything.*
- I'm such an idiot.
- I don't have any good ideas.

### **Personalization (or blame)**

- She never listens to me!
- If only I hadn't sent that note – now this is all my fault!
- *People always let me down*
- It's always my fault