

THE TEN FORMS OF TWISTED THINKING

1.	All-or-nothing thinking	You see things in black-or-white categories. If a situation falls short of perfect, you see it as a total failure. When a young woman on a diet ate a spoonful of ice cream, she told herself, "I've blown my diet completely." This thought upset her so much that she gobbled down an entire quart of ice cream!
2.	Overgeneralization	You see a single negative event, such as a romantic rejection or a career reversal, as a never-ending pattern of defeat by using words such as "always" or "never" when you think about it. A depressed salesman became terribly upset when he noticed bird dung on the windshield of his car. He told himself, "Just my luck! Birds are <i>always</i> crapping on my car!"
3.	Mental filter	You pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively so that your vision of all of reality becomes darkened, like the drop of ink that discolors a beaker of water. Example: You receive many positive comments about your presentation to a group of associates at work, but one of them says something mildly critical. You obsess about his reaction for days and ignore all the positive feedback.
4.	Discounting the positive	You reject positive experiences by insisting they "don't count." If you do a good job, you may tell yourself that it wasn't good enough or that anyone could have done as well. Discounting the positive takes the joy out of life and makes you feel inadequate and unrewarded.
5.	Jumping to conclusions	You interpret things negatively when there are no facts to support your conclusion. Mind reading: Without checking it out, you arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you. Fortune-telling: You predict that things will turn out badly. Before a test you may tell yourself, "I'm really going to blow it. What if I flunk?" If you're depressed you

		may tell yourself, "I'll never get better."
6.	Magnification	You exaggerate the importance of your problems and shortcomings, or you minimize the importance of your desirable qualities. This is also called the "binocular trick."
7.	Emotional reasoning	You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are: "I feel terrified about going on airplanes. It must be very dangerous to fly." Or "I feel guilty. I must be a rotten person." Or "I feel angry. This proves I'm being treated unfairly." Or "I feel so inferior. This means I'm a second-rate person." Or "I feel hopeless. I must really be hopeless."
8.	"Should statements"	You tell yourself that things <i>should</i> be the way you hoped or expected them to be. After playing a difficult piece on the piano, a gifted pianist told herself, "I shouldn't have made so many mistakes." This made her feel so disgusted that she quit practicing for several days. "Musts," "oughts" and "have tos" are similar offenders. "Should statements" that are directed against yourself lead to guilt and frustration. Should statements that are directed against other people or the world in general lead to anger and frustration: "He shouldn't be so stubborn and argumentative." Many people try to motivate themselves with shoulds and shouldn'ts, as if they were delinquents who had to be punished before they could be expected to do anything. "I shouldn't eat that doughnut." This usually doesn't work because all these shoulds and musts make you feel rebellious and you get the urge to do just the opposite. Dr. Albert Ellis has called this <i>musterbation</i>." I call it the "shouldy" approach to life.
9.	Labeling	Labeling is an extreme form of all-or-nothing thinking. Instead of saying "I made a mistake," you attach a negative label to