COMMON COGNITIVE ERRORS

We all have patterns of thinking, and this may impact our emotional state and behavior. Sometimes our patterns are less than accurate. These are cognitive errors or cognitive distortions, and they typically fall into certain categories. Learning to recognize our own cognitive errors increases our ability to ignore the negative thought or actively change it, which enables us to intentionally change our emotions and our behaviors. The following is a list of the most common cognitive distortions:

1. **All-or-Nothing Thinking**
   Putting experiences in one of two categories
   Examples: 1) People are all good or all bad. 2) Projects are perfect or failures. 3) I am a sinner, or I am a saint.

2. **Overgeneralizing**
   Believing that something will always happen because it happened once
   Examples: 1) I will never be able to make friends at a party because I once made an awkward statement to someone, and they didn't want to be my friend. 2) I will never be able to speak in public because I once had a panic attack before giving a speech.

3. **Discounting the Positive**
   Deciding that if a good thing happens, it must not be important or doesn't count
   Examples: 1) I passed the exam this time, but it was a fluke. 2) I didn't have a panic attack today, but it's only because I was too busy to be worried.

4. **Jumping to Conclusions**
   Deciding how to respond to a situation without having all the information
   Examples: 1) The man/woman I am interested in never called me back because he thinks I'm stupid. 2) That person cut me off in traffic because he/she is a jerk!

5. **Mind Reading**
   Believing that you know how someone else is feeling or what they are thinking without any evidence
   Examples: 1) I know she hates my guts. 2) That person thinks I'm a loser.

6. **Fortunetelling**
   Believing that you can predict a future outcome, while ignoring other alternatives
   Examples: 1) I'm going to fail this test. 2) I'm going to have a panic attack if I go out in public.

7. **Magnifying (Catastrophizing) or Minimizing**
   Distorting the importance of positive and negative events
   Examples: 1) I said the wrong thing so I will never have a boyfriend/girlfriend. 2) My nose is so big that no one will ever love me. 3) It doesn't matter if I'm smart because I will never be attractive, athletic, popular, rich, etc. 4) Making a mountain out of a molehill

8. **Emotional Reasoning**
   Believing something to be true because it feels true.
   <u>Examples:</u> 1) I am a failure because I feel like a failure. 2) I am worthless because I feel worthless.

9. **"Should-y" Thinking**
   Telling yourself you should, should not, or should have done something when it is more accurate to say that you would have preferred or wished you had or had not done something
   <u>Examples:</u> 1) I should be perfect. 2) I should never make mistakes. 3) I should not be anxious. 4) I should have done something to help.

10. **Labeling (or Mis-Labeling)**
    Using a label to describe a behavior or error
    <u>Examples:</u> 1) He's a bad person (instead of "He made a mistake when he lied.") 2) I'm stupid (instead of "I didn't study for my test, and I failed it.")

11. **Personalization**
    Taking blame for some negative event even though you were not responsible, you could not have known to do differently, there were extenuating circumstances, or other people were involved.
    Examples: 1) It's my fault he hits me. 2) My mother is unhappy because of me.