Eleven common cognitive distortions that affect self-esteem


2. Over-generalization: generalized conclusions are drawn from a single incident or piece of evidence.

3. Filtering: in a given situation, negative details are focused on and magnified at the exclusion of the positive aspects of the situation.

4. Catastrophizing: thinking the worst. Fueled by “what ifs”.

5. Global labeling: tendency to make stereotyped generalizations about people, places and things, etc., and project these qualities into a global judgment about them.

6. Polarized thinking: perfectionistic thinking. Things are one extreme or the other, with no middle ground.

7. Personalization: assuming that everything people say or do is directed at you. Also involves comparing self to others.

8. Emotional reasoning: tendency to assume that what ever you are feeling must be true.

9. Mind reading: without any real evidence, you assume that you know what others are thinking and why they act the way they do.

10. Control fallacies: you either feel that you have no control (helplessness) or you feel overly responsible for everything.

11. Shoulds: you run your life from a list of inflexible ironclad rules about how you and others should be.

Adapted from: Thoughts and Feelings, M. McKay, M. Davis, & P. Fanning
Self-Esteem, M. McKay & P. Fanning