

The following distortions are in no way a comprehensive list of all the possible distortions the therapist might encounter. The distortions occur in many combinations and permutations. They are presented here in isolation for the sake of discussion. Typical distortions include:

1. **All-or-none thinking.** “I’m either a success or a failure.” “The world is either black or white.”
2. **Mind reading.** “They probably think that I’m incompetent.” “I just know that he/she disapproves.”
3. **Emotional reasoning.** “Because I feel inadequate, I am inadequate.” “I believe that I must be funny to be liked, so that is a fact.”
4. **Personalisation.** “That comment wasn’t just random, it must have been directed toward me.” “Problems always emerge when I’m in a hurry.”
5. **Overgeneralization.** “Everything I do turns out wrong.” “It doesn’t matter what my choices are, they always fall flat.”
6. **Catastrophizing.** “If I go to the party, there will be terrible consequences.” “I better not try because I might fail, and that would be awful.”
7. **Should statements.** “I should visit my family every time they want me to.” “They should be nicer to me.”
8. **Control fallacies.** “If I’m not in complete control all the time, I will go out of control.” “I must be able to control all of the contingencies in my life.”
9. **Comparing.** “I am not as competent as my co-workers or supervisors.” “Compared to others, there is clearly something flawed about me.”
10. **Heaven’s Reward fallacy.** “If I do everything perfectly here, I will be rewarded later.” “I have to muddle through this life; maybe things will be better later.”
11. **Disqualifying the positive.** “This success experience was only a fluke.” “The compliment I received was unwarranted.”
12. **Perfectionism.** “I must do everything perfectly, or I will be criticized and a failure.” “An adequate job is akin to a failure.”
13. **Selective abstraction.** “The rest of the information doesn’t matter. This is the salient point.” “I must focus on the negative details while I ignore and filter out all the positive aspects of a situation.”
14. **Externalisation of self-worth.** “My worth is dependent upon what others think of me.” “They think, therefore I am.”

15. **Fallacy of change.** “You should change your behaviour because I want you to.” “They should act differently because I expect it.”
16. **Fallacy of worrying.** “If I worry about it enough, it will be resolved.” “One cannot be too concerned.”
17. **Fallacy of ignoring.** “If I ignore it, may it will go away.” “If I don’t pay attention, I will not be held responsible.”
18. **Fallacy of fairness.** “Life should be fair.” “People should all be fair.”
19. **Being right.** “I must prove that I am right, as being wrong is unthinkable.” “To be wrong is to be a bad person.”
20. **Fallacy of attachment.** “I can’t live without a man.” “If I was in an intimate relationship, all of my problems would be solved.”

While all of the preceding distortions are stated in the first person, they can also apply to expectations of others, including family and social, religious, or gender groups.