

Cognitive Distortions: All Or Nothing Thinking

All or nothing thinking is a cognitive distortion in which a person thinks in extremes. Their thoughts will have patterns, like all or nothing, always or never, and is and is not. Thinking in these kinds of extremes prevents people from having a balanced perspective. It can cause people to see things through a negative lens that assumes they are a victim of their circumstances.

Example: "All of my relationships fail!" or "Why can this never go right?!"

The goal of challenging the distortion of all or nothing thinking is to have a balanced perspective. This balanced perspective claims ownership over the unfavorable circumstances, and challenges the extreme thoughts a person suffers from.

Example: "This is frustrating and I feel discouraged, but [there is a way to make it work] [I can grow from this] [I will do better next time] [I can learn from this]."

Directions: Answer the questions below to challenge your all or nothing thinking.

What is the upsetting situation?

What is the 'all or nothing' thought?

What is your responsibility in how this thought or situation keeps occurring?

How can you take ownership for the recurring situation to change the outcome in the future?
