

Ten Ways to Think Yourself Sick!



This is a list of how we unnecessarily make ourselves depressed, anxious, guilty or angry.

- 1. ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING:** You see things in black and white categories. If your performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself as a total failure. **I am perfect just the way I am...I am perfectly imperfect!**
- 2. OVERGENERALIZATION:** You see a single negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat. **Life happens and I can handle this.**
- 3. MENTAL FILTER:** You pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively so that your vision of all reality becomes darkened, like the drop of ink that discolors the entire beaker of water. **I choose to focus on the positive aspects of my life.**
- 4. DISQUALIFYING THE POSITIVE:** You reject positive experiences by insisting they "don't count" for some reason or another. In this way, you can maintain a negative belief that is contradicted by your everyday experiences. **I celebrate ALL my accomplishments no matter how big or small.**
- 5. JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS:** You make a negative interpretation even though there are no definite facts that convincingly support your conclusion. **I wait until I have all the facts.**
- 6. MAGNIFICATION (CATASTROPHIZING) OR MINIMIZATION:** You exaggerate the importance of things (such as your goof-up or someone else's achievement) or you inappropriately shrink things until they appear tiny (your own desirable qualities or the other fellow's imperfections). This is also called the "binocular trick." **I choose to live in reality.**
- 7. EMOTIONAL REASONING:** You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are: "I feel it, therefore it must be true." **My feelings are ONLY feelings.**
- 8. SHOULD STATEMENTS:** You try to motivate yourself with shoulds and shouldn'ts, as if you had to be whipped and punished before you could be expected to do anything. "Musts" and "oughts" are also offenders. The emotional consequence is guilt. When you direct should statements toward others, you feel anger, frustration, and resentment. **I choose_____.**
- 9. LABELING AND MISLABELING:** This is an extreme form of overgeneralization. Instead of describing your error, you attach a negative label to yourself: "I'm a loser." When someone else's behavior rubs you the wrong way, you attach a negative label to him: "He's a damn louse." Mislabeling involves describing an event with language that is highly colored and emotionally loaded. **I see the good and beautiful in everything and everyone, including myself.**
- 10. PERSONALIZATION:** You see yourself as the cause of some negative external event which, in fact, you were not primarily responsible for. **I am responsible for only me.**

From [*Feeling Good*](#), by David D. Burns, M.D.