

# The Common Mental Mistakes

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(Edited by Charles M. Rice, Ph.D.)

- (1) **All or None Thinking**: Seeing no middle ground.
- (2) **Overgeneralization**: Unintentional exaggeration of the frequency of a situation or an inaccurate extrapolation.
- (3) **Mental Filter**: Acknowledging only information that is consistent with already-believed thoughts.
- (4) **Discounting the Positive**: Believing that positive information (that is contrary to your current beliefs) somehow “doesn’t count” as evidence that the situation is better than it had seemed.
- (5) **Jumping to Conclusions**: Forming an opinion (on which you would act) without knowing the facts.
- (6) **Magnification or Catastrophizing/Minimization**: Thinking something to be terrible, horrible, and or awful, rather than it being simply “bad”. In short, exaggerating the importance of something or the opposite thinking it is OK, nothing or “no big deal”.
- (7) **Emotional Reasoning (& Gut Thinking)**: Thinking in a certain manner that is heavily influenced by your current mood. Also, you believe that your feelings are proof that your thoughts are accurate.
- (8) **Labeling**: Assigning a name to someone or something and the name does not accurately reflect or describe the person or object.
- (9) **Personalization & Blame**: Mistakenly assigning the cause of something to either yourself or someone else.
- (10) **Irrational Should Statements**: (1) Rigid, unbending rules that often have no evidence to support them. (2) Imply belief in magic.
- (11) **Confusing Needs with Wants**: Thinking that you “need” something when in fact you only “want” it.
- (12) **Confusing “Choosing To” with “Having To”**: Not realizing that something is a choice rather than a necessity.
- (13) **Can’t Stand-its**: Believing that you cannot withstand or tolerate something when you can.

- (14) **Magical Worry**: Believing that somehow your worry keeps the feared event from occurring.
- (15) **Irrational Definitions**: Having a definition of something that usually is not based on fact and insisting that your definition is the only correct way to define it.
- (16) **Confusing Relying with Depending**: Thinking that you need someone's assistance when in fact you only want it.
- (17) **Confusing Inability with Unwillingness**: Thinking that you cannot do something when in fact you do not do it because you are reluctant.
- (18) **Confusing Possibility with Probability**: Usually in the form of taking a remote possibility and making it a distinct probability.
- (19) **Projection**: Assigning your own motives or thoughts to someone else, thinking that they must think like you do.
- (20) **Being upset about an "Idea" rather than the "Facts"**: Being upset about a circumstance despite the fact that it is the way you want it to be. You are upset because you think that you are supposed to be.
- (21) **Nonsense Arguments**: Distracting self with an obvious statement of fact.
- (22) **Irrational Hopelessness / Helplessness**: Believing that your idea that there is no solution to your problem is accurate.
- (23) **Too Much / Too Little Problem**: Believing that the amount of something (an attribute like red hair, for example) is responsible for some undesired condition / situation (like anger, for example).
- (24) **Life "Should" Be Just**: Believing things should be "fair". If things don't go your way, it is unfair and you have the right to get upset and maybe even get even. This can lead to keeping score in a relationship. If I don't get as much as you, am not treated equally as well, "It's unfair", or "They or You're unfair."