

The Ten Distortions that Trigger Conflict

Distortion	Description	Example
1. All-or-Nothing Thinking	You look at the conflict, or the person you're not getting along with, in absolute, black-and-white categories. Shades of gray do not exist.	You tell yourself that the person you're mad at is a complete zero. Or if your relationship breaks up, you may think that it was a total failure.
2. Overgeneralization	You view the current problem as a never-ending pattern of frustration, conflict, and defeat.	You tell yourself, "She'll always be like that."
3. Mental Filter	You catalog the other person's faults, dwell on the negative things he or she has ever done or said to you, and filter out or ignore all of the other person's good qualities.	You tell your spouse, "This is the tenth time I've told you to carry out the trash." Or, "How many times do I have to remind you not to leave your dirty socks on the floor?"
4. Discounting the Positive	You insist that the other person's good qualities or actions don't count.	If someone you're fighting with does something positive, you tell yourself that she's trying to manipulate you.
5. Jumping to Conclusions	<p>You jump to conclusions that may not be warranted by the facts. There are 3 common problems:</p> <p>Mind-Reading – You assume that you know how the other person thinks and feels about you.</p> <p>Reverse Mind-Reading – You tell yourself that the other person should know what you want and how you feel without your having to tell him or her.</p> <p>Fortune-Telling – You tell yourself that the situation is hopeless and that the other person will continue to treat you in a shabby way, no matter what.</p>	<p>You tell yourself that a friend is totally self-centered and only wants to use you. You tell your spouse, "You should have known how I was feeling!"</p> <p>You tell yourself that the person you're not getting along with will never change.</p>

6. Magnification and Minimization	You blow the other person's faults way out of proportion and shrink the importance of his or her positive qualities.	During an argument, you may blurt out, "I can't believe how stupid you are!"
7. Emotional Reasoning	You reason from how you feel, or assume that your feelings reflect the way things really are.	You feel like the other person is a loser and conclude that he really is a loser.
8. Should Statements	<p>You criticize yourself or other people with should, shouldn'ts, oughts, musts, and have tos. There are 2 common patterns:</p> <p>Other-Directed Shoulds. You tell yourself that other people shouldn't feel and act the way they do, and that they should be the way you expect them to be.</p> <p>Self-Directed Shoulds. You tell yourself that you shouldn't have made that mistake or shouldn't feel the way you do.</p>	"You've got no right to feel that way!" Or, "You shouldn't say that. It's unfair!"
9. Labeling	You label the other person as a "jerk" or worse. You see his or her entire essence as negative, with no redeeming features.	"She is such a witch!" Or, "He is a loser!"
10. Blame	<p>Instead of pinpointing the cause of problem, you assign blame. There are 2 patterns:</p> <p>Other-Blame. You blame the other person and deny your own role in the problem.</p> <p>Self-Blame. You feel guilty and worthless because you blame yourself for the problem, even if it isn't entirely your fault.</p>	<p>You tell your spouse, "It's all your fault!" Then you get angry, frustrated, and resentful.</p> <p>You tell yourself, "It's all my fault." Then you use all your energy beating up on yourself instead of finding out how the other person is feeling and trying to solve the problem.</p>