

## **Cognitive Distortions That Fuel Anger**

If you are concerned about having episodes of anger that are too intense, too frequent or misdirected, examine your thinking for the following distortions:

### *Labelling*

You generalize from a single or just a few flaws or mistakes someone might make and assign a global negative trait to them. This typically take the form of name calling.

“He’s a SOB”

“She’s a bitch”

“They are idiots”

### *Personalization and Blame*

You believe another person’s statements or actions are directed toward you, often without evidence. You feel personally attacked. You redefine an issue so as to blame others and tend to overlook your own role in the situation.

“He goes out of his way to make my life miserable.”

“It’s all my co-worker’s fault.”

### *Thresholding*

You set an arbitrary limit or standard which, when violated, you view as “unacceptable” and something you “cannot stand.” You then feel justified in letting your anger erupt or acting in a punitive or vindictive way when another person crosses that line.

“That’s it — I’ve given him enough warnings!”

“I can’t stand all her criticisms! I’ll show her!”

### *Mental Filter*

You filter out the positive and focus on the negative aspects of the other person. Thus, your perception of the other darkens, like a drop of ink that discolors a beaker of water. You dwell on what the person has done to upset you while ignoring the person’s good intentions and the positive things the person has done for you.

“He’s nothing but insensitive.”

“There she goes, late as always.”

### *Blueprinting*

When you are angry at someone, you preoccupy yourself with how you can get even or punish another.

“I know exactly what I can say to him to make him feel guilty.”  
“I’m going to ignore her tonight.”

### *Demandingness*

You unconditionally demand - rather than strongly prefer - that someone act, think or feel a certain way. When they don't, you view it as “unacceptable” and “awful”, something you “can't stand.”

“It's awful he doesn't have better manners!”  
“It's unacceptable for the kids to procrastinate on getting their chores done!”

### *Overgeneralization*

You think in all-or-none terms (e.g. always, never, every) and believe a person is always trying to irritate you.

“You never consider my wishes in where to go treat.”

Identifying a possible distortion in your thinking that contributes to anger is an important step. It turns around the blame dynamic and opens the door to re-evaluating your thoughts and assumptions in a manner that is honest and can impact your level and expression of anger.