

## **EXAMPLES OF COMMON “DISTORTIONS IN THINKING”**

(after *The Practice of Rational Emotive Therapy* by Ellis & Dryden, 1987)

**1. All-or-none thinking:** "I've failed at being a good parent when my children were young. Good parents would never make the mistakes I did. I'm a total failure and completely unlovable!"

**2. Jumping to conclusions & negative non sequiturs:** "Since my boss and coworkers have seen me dismally fail, as I must not, they will surely view me as an incompetent worm."

**3. Fortune-telling:** "Because my parents were laughing at me for failing, they know that I must succeed or I become a worm, and they will almost certainly despise me forever for my failures which are bound to continue."

**4. Focusing on the negative:** "I can't stand things going wrong, as they so often do with my ADD (substitute anything else – Asperger's, schizophrenia, chronic pain). I can't see any good that is happening in my life."

**5. Disqualifying the positive:** "When my mate compliments me on the good things I have done, s/he is only being kind to me and forgetting the foolish things that I actually did in the past or likely will do again in the future."

**6. Allness and neverness:** "Because the conditions of my life must be better than they are, and actually are so bad as to be intolerable, they'll always be this way and I'll never have any happiness."

**7. Minimization:** "My good work was mostly lucky and unimportant. But my bad work, which should never have been allowed to happen in the first place, could not have been worse and is totally unforgivable."

**8. Emotional Reasoning:** "Having performed so poorly, I feel like a total fool, and my strong feeling proves that I truly am a total fool and no damn good."

**9. Labeling and overgeneralization:** "Because I must not fail my comprehensive exams (dissertation or whatever) as I might do, I risk being a complete loser and total failure!"

**10. Personalizing:** "Since my so called 'friends' are laughing, they are surely laughing only at me, and that is awful and proves I don't know how to be in a social situation"

**11. Phonyism:** "When I don't do as well as think I must do and my mate still praises and accepts me, I am proving that I am really a phony and will soon reveal what a total loser I truly am! Then, they will leave me"

**12. Perfectionism:** "I realize that I did fairly well raising my children. However, since I should have done perfectly well on a task as important as parenting, I am therefore really a total worm!"