



# Distortions that Trigger Marital Conflict

- **Overgeneralization.** Creating sweeping conclusions about yourself denies what is true about your life. For example, *“She’ll always be like that!”*
- **Fortune Telling.** Pretending you know what the future holds only sabotages your change efforts. For example, *You tell yourself that the person you’re not getting along with NEVER change.*
- **Mental Filter.** You can create the reality you want by only focusing on what you deem important. You can recognize this when you say, *“I’ve told you this many a hundred times! How many times is it going to take for you to get it?”*
- **Should Statements.** Saying what you “should,” “must” or “ought” to do only set you up for failure. Ask yourself, “Where’s the rule book that says I should do this?” This line of thinking takes away your choices. For example, *“You shouldn’t say that! It’s unfair. It’s not true.”*
- **Dismissing Positives.** If you’ve heard yourself say, *“We aren’t arguing now because that’s how a NORMAL relationship is and for once we were sort of normal,”* you might not be recognizing your changes! This kind of self-sabotage keep you stuck in what’s going WRONG as opposed to what’s going RIGHT.
- **Blaming.** Not taking responsibility for your own thoughts, emotions and actions keeps you stuck as a victim and blaming others. If you’ve said, *“My husband just doesn’t understand me and that’s why we argue so much,”* or *“That homework assignment my therapist gave me was stupid – it set me up to fail,”* you aren’t taking responsibility and this will create negative emotions and actions.
- **All or Nothing.** This is black and white thinking that leaves you no alternative but to fail, especially when you have an unrealistic expectation of success. **For example, you have an argument and see that the relationship is a total failure because of the one argument.**
- **Emotional Reasoning.** You assume your feelings reflect the way things really are – this isn’t always the case! *You feel like the relationship is doomed to failure, and therefore, BEHAVE like the relationship really is failing!*
- **Mind Reading.** Telling yourself that the other person should have known what you were feeling or what you want. For example, *“You should have known what I was feeling!”*

