

# Fortune Telling

## An REBT Skills Building Exercise

This resource is designed to help you understand the concept of **Fortune Telling**, a cognitive distortion frequently addressed in REBT. Identifying extreme, irrational beliefs that stem from certain situations and challenging them can help you reframe these beliefs into more rational and balanced beliefs.

Negative Event

Rational Belief  
creates a

Healthy Negative  
Emotion

Negative Event

Irrational Belief  
creates an

Unhealthy Negative  
Emotion

Irrational beliefs are automatic, unchallenged thoughts or assumptions we might hold about ourselves, others, or the world around us. These beliefs are often rooted in past experiences, societal influences, or inherent fears.

While they might feel true or justified in the heat of the moment, they're frequently extreme, negative, and not based on current reality. Recognizing and challenging these beliefs is crucial, as they can influence our emotions and behaviors in unproductive or harmful ways.

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These are some of the most common irrational thoughts and beliefs people may find themselves using:

1. **Perfectionism:** "If I'm not perfect, I'm a failure."
2. **Overgeneralization:** "I messed up once; I'll always mess up."
3. **Mind Reading:** "I know they must think I'm stupid."
4. **Catastrophizing:** "If I lose this job, my life is over."
5. **Labeling:** "I'm a loser because I made a mistake."
6. **All-or-Nothing Thinking:** "If I can't do it perfectly, there's no point in doing it at all."
7. **Discounting the Positive:** "That doesn't count because anyone could do it."
8. **Emotional Reasoning:** "I feel guilty, so I must have done something wrong."
9. **Should Statements:** "I should always be strong and never show weakness."
10. **Magnification/Minimization:** "My successes are just luck, but my failures are because of my shortcomings."
11. **Fortune Telling:** "I know I'm going to embarrass myself at the party."
12. **Personalization:** "It's my fault they're in a bad mood."
13. **Blaming:** "It's all their fault that I'm unhappy."
14. **Comparison:** "Everyone else has their life together except for me."
15. **Fallacy of Fairness:** "It's not fair that they got the promotion, and I didn't."
16. **Fallacy of Change:** "If I change to please them, I'll finally be happy."
17. **Control Fallacies:** "I have no control over my life, things just happen to me."
18. **Always Being Right:** "I must prove that I am right, no matter what."
19. **Heaven's Reward Fallacy:** "I've been good and self-sacrificing, so life owes me happiness."
20. **Filtering:** "No matter what I do, all I see are my mistakes."

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Here are two examples of situations along with irrational thoughts of **Fortune Telling** someone might apply to the situation. The rational thoughts show how reframing the situation works.

Situation	Irrational Thought	Rational Thought
<i>You're about to attend a networking event.</i>	<i>"No one will want to talk to me, and I'm going to be wasting my time."</i>	<i>"I can't predict others' actions. All I can control is my effort and attitude. I'll do my best to engage, and any connections made will be a bonus."</i>
<i>Attending a new yoga class.</i>	<i>"I'm sure I'll mess up all the poses and look foolish."</i>	<i>"Everyone in the class was once a beginner. It's okay to be imperfect. I'm here to learn and enjoy the experience."</i>

Take two situations where you may have used **Fortune Telling**. Write down the irrational thoughts you had. Next write out what rational thoughts would be.

Situation	Irrational Thought	Rational Thought