

THINKING TRAPS

| | THINKING TRAP | EXAMPLES | PERSONAL EXAMPLE |
|----|--|---|------------------|
| 1. | <p>Probability Overestimation: Overestimating or exaggerating the likelihood of a negative outcome. In this trap, we confuse a possibility with a probability.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I will get food poisoning from the chicken ➤ I'll get fired if I make a mistake at work ➤ I'll get into a car accident ➤ My house will get broken into ➤ I will fail my exam | |
| 2. | <p>Catastrophizing: This trap occurs when we "blow things out of proportion". Rather than considering more moderate outcomes, we quickly jump to the worst-case scenario.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I'll never get into college ➤ My anxiety symptoms are going to cause a heart attack ➤ I haven't heard from my son in a few days ... I'm sure he's been in an accident ➤ My plane will crash | |
| 3. | <p>Fortune Telling: This kind of thinking leads us to predict how things will turn out, and we often assume they'll turn out badly. We believe our prediction is fact, even if the situation hasn't happened yet.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I will have a panic attack if I go too far from my house ➤ The party won't be fun ➤ I know I'm going to fail this exam ➤ I won't be able to do it ➤ I'm going to get lost | |
| 4. | <p>Mind Reading: This trap involves guessing what others are thinking. It is usually the assumption that others are thinking negatively about you, even when there is little or no evidence to support this assumption.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ She thinks I'm stupid ➤ My boss doesn't like me ➤ People would think I'm a weirdo if they really knew me ➤ They think my idea was stupid ➤ She thought I was being selfish ➤ He didn't understand what I meant ➤ They don't care about me | |
| 5. | <p>Black & White Thinking: Also called all-or-nothing thinking. In this trap, you see things in one extreme or the other, without considering all the possibilities in-between.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unless it's perfect, it's a failure ➤ I had a piece of cake so my whole diet is ruined ➤ My boss gave me some constructive feedback ... that means I'm bad at my job ➤ I'm worthless | |
| 6. | <p>"Should" Statements: You criticize yourself or other people with "shoulds" and "shouldn'ts." "Musts," and "have to's" are similar offenders. These types of statements usually lead to feelings of guilt or anger.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I should exercise five times per week ➤ I should have my anxiety under control by now ➤ My house should always be clean ➤ I should always be patient with my kids ➤ I shouldn't have said that | |

| | | | |
|-----|--|--|--|
| 7. | <p>Mental Filter: You focus on some parts of the situation and ignore others. Instead of considering the big picture, you focus only on certain details and you filter out other pieces of information. This has the potential to create a very unbalanced and distorted view of the situation.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Focusing on the person who looked bored during your presentation, and ignoring the people who looked interested. ➤ Remembering the times when your partner was late and overlooking the times when they were punctual ➤ Remembering the critical comment you got from your mom, but forgetting all the nice things she has said in the past | |
| 8. | <p>Discounting the Positive: You reject or dismiss positive experiences by insisting that they “don’t count” for some reason or another.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ My boss only gave me a positive review because she didn’t want to deal with giving me negative feedback ➤ She only said she liked my haircut because she’s trying to be nice ➤ I only got this job because I got lucky | |
| 9. | <p>Discounting Coping Skills: Sometimes stressful things happen in our lives or to those around us. We may overlook our ability to cope with problems and underestimate our resilience. Sometimes we forget that problems are a part of life, but that we have a number of resources at our disposal to deal with them.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I couldn’t handle it if I lost my job ➤ I wouldn’t know what to do if I got lost when driving ➤ I’m totally helpless ➤ I just couldn’t stand it if my partner broke up with me ➤ I can’t deal with anxiety ➤ I can’t deal with this ➤ If I don’t get a good night’s sleep, I won’t be able to get through tomorrow | |
| 10. | <p>Labelling: Using a single word to describe ourselves or other people. People are complicated and can’t be summed up in a single word!</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I’m stupid ➤ I’m a loser ➤ He’s a jerk ➤ I’m worthless ➤ He’s a moron ➤ I’m awkward | |
| 11. | <p>Personalizing: This thinking trap involves blaming yourself for everything that goes wrong or could go wrong. It occurs when you take responsibility for a situation, and don’t recognize that other people or factors may have contributed</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It’s my fault we broke up. I’m too uninteresting and unattractive ➤ It’s my fault that conversation went badly ... I have nothing to say ➤ I could have prevented the accident from happening ➤ It’s my fault my kid is failing math | |