

Thinking Trap Inventory

Thinking Trap	Example Thoughts
Polarized Thinking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You see things as black or white, good or bad, wrong or right, always or never. You see the extremes and nothing in between. No middle ground and no room for mistakes. This oversimplification is common for perfectionists. Your emotional reactions are also extreme; from despair to elation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I never have fun when I go out." "People always make fun of me." "I need to get 100% or I've failed myself (or others)." "I planned to eat only healthy foods, but I had a piece of chocolate cake. Now my diet is completely ruined!"
Catastrophizing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You expect disaster, even picture it. You notice a problem and ask "What if..." You become overly concerned about small things. People say you "make mountains out of mole hills" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "If I gained weight today, I'll just keep gaining and gaining." "What if I don't get into college?" "I don't think I could handle it if someone saw me sweating."
Magnifying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You see negative or difficult things as worse than they are. You "turn up the volume" on anything bad and make it loud, large or overwhelming. You make negative things more important than they are. Small mistakes become tragic failures. Minor suggestions become scathing criticism. Minor setbacks are a cause for despair. Slight obstacles are overwhelming barriers. This is like looking at life through a telescope that magnifies problems. It creates a sense of doom and pessimism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You use words such as huge, impossible or overwhelming. You are really bothered by a comment or criticism and can't stop thinking about it.
Minimizing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You make positive things less important than they are. This is like looking through the wrong end of the telescope, so that everything positive is minimized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You think your assets, such as your ability to cope and find solutions, are not good enough. When someone gives you a complement, you think he or she doesn't really mean it.
Emotional Reasoning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You base your views of things on what you are feeling rather than what is really going on. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You feel tired and unhappy, so you think "My life totally sucks"
Labelling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You call yourself names instead of just describing an event or behavior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you make a mistake, you are a "stupid loser" instead of just telling yourself that you made an error.
Probability Overestimation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have exaggerated beliefs about the chances of something bad happening. Even though, in reality, it is unlikely to occur. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You assume that everyone notices your shaking hands, even though most people are not aware of your hands. "I will faint." "I'll go crazy." "I'm dying."
Fortune-Telling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You predict the future, usually with a high likelihood of a negative outcome. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You think "I know I'm going to fail that test", even when you have been studying and the chances of failing are low. "I know I'll mess up." "I will never be able to manage my anxiety."

<p>Should's</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have a strict list of rules about how you and other people should act. People who break the rules make you angry. You feel guilty when you break the rules. • You have incorrect or exaggerated assumptions about the way things should be. You criticize yourself when you don't live up to your expectations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I should be studying." • "I should always be busy." • "I should know, understand and foresee everything." • "I should be self-reliant." • "I shouldn't enjoy eating." • "I should never say no to a request." • "I should never make mistakes." • "I should never feel certain emotions, such as anger or jealousy."
<p>Mind Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without them saying so, you think you know how other people are feeling and why they act the way they do. In particular, you think you know how people think and feel about <u>you</u>. • You make snap judgments about others and assume you know their feelings and motivations. • You think you can read people's minds. You interpret things people do as negative responses to you. Even though there is no proof of this. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Everyone thinks I'm fat." • "Everyone is wondering why I am eating." • "Nobody likes me, they think I'm..." • "He didn't say hello, he must hate me." • If someone slams a door, you assume it is because he or she is angry with you, even though nothing has happened between the two of you.
<p>Personalization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You think that everything people do or say is some kind of reaction to you. You compare yourself to others. • Even though situations are complex and determined by many things, you accept too much responsibility and blame yourself for negative outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "She is smarter (or more competent, better looking, etc.) than I am." • Your team loses and you think "It's all my fault that we lost."
<p>Filtering or Tunnel Vision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You focus on the negative details, while ignoring all the positive aspects of a situation. • You pass over positive experiences and dwell on memories that leave you angry, anxious or depressed. • Fears, losses and irritations become exaggerated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I didn't get the MVP award." (although you did receive other awards or recognition) • Believing that you did a poor job on a presentation because some people looked bored, even though a number of people looked interested and you received several compliments on how well you did.
<p>Overgeneralization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You make broad conclusions based on a single incident or piece of evidence. • One bad experience means that whenever you are in a similar situation, the result will be bad. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You use absolute words such as "all, every, none, never, always, everybody, nobody." • One dropped stitch makes you believe "I'll never learn how to knit." • "No one would stay friends with me if they really knew me." • "I always screw up." • "Everyone thinks I'm"