

# THINKING TRAPS

Thinking traps are patterns or habits of thought that are inaccurate and which keep you stuck in negativity, anxiety, and distress. Some of the most common thinking traps are described below.

## Black and White Thinking

You think about and look at a situation as being either one extreme or the other. A situation can be either a success or a failure. You can be either good or bad. There is no middle ground or grey area.

—• **Example:** "I didn't get perfect, therefore I failed."

## Blanketing

You apply one negative experience to all experiences and you let a small, simple experience define a large, complex concept. You tend to use the words "always" or "never" to describe experiences.

—• **Example:** "Why does this always happen to me?" or "I can never do anything right!"

## Mind Reading

You make assumptions and inferences about what a person is thinking or feeling without any concrete evidence and without asking the other person for clarification.

—• **Example:** You see a group of friends laughing as you walk by and tell yourself that they're laughing about you.

## Fortune Telling

You believe that the future is set in stone and you "know" that things will turn out bad. You tend to act according to your beliefs, giving rise to a self-fulfilling prophecy.

—• **Example:** "I know that I am going to fail my exam, so I'm not going to study."

## Filtering

You only focus on the negative aspects of a situation and ignore, or filter out, the positive. In your mind, nothing positive happened. Everything is negative.

—• **Example:** Three people said "hi" to you, but you only remember the one person who didn't.

## Catastrophizing

You anticipate the worst-case scenario and predict that you won't be able to handle the outcome of that worst-case scenario when, in reality, the worst-case scenario is likely never going to happen and, if it did, you would probably be able to handle it.

—• **Example:** "The sky is falling!"

## Should Statements

You have specific rules about how you, or others, should and should not behave. You assume personal responsibility, or place blame on somebody, for the outcome of a situation and you believe that you, or the other person, is the reason behind that outcome.

—• **Example:** "We lost the football game because I should have played better."

## Emotional Reasoning

You take your emotions as evidence for the truth. You regard your feelings as being automatically and unconditionally true, regardless of any factual or concrete evidence otherwise. You take an "I feel therefore I am" approach.

—• **Example:** "I feel stupid, therefore I am stupid."

## Labelling

You attach a negative label to yourself or others, rather than to an action or a mistake.

—• **Example:** You say, "I am such a terrible person" instead of, "I did a terrible thing."

