

Thinking Traps

Common mistakes in our Thinking

Personalizing: The tendency to automatically attribute the cause of an adversity to one's personal characteristics or actions. A 'ME' person. *Accountability is good – but you can't blame yourself for everything.*

Externalizing: The tendency to automatically attribute the cause of an adversity to another person or to circumstances. A 'NOT ME' person. *Constantly passing the buck – shifting the blame.*

Magnifying & Minimizing: Exaggerating the importance of certain aspects of a situation and underestimating the importance of other aspects. Almost all Magnifiers & Minimizers will magnify the negative and minimize the positive. Not keeping things in proportion. *Blow up the bad/negate the good.*

Mind Reading: Expecting another person to know what you are thinking, or assuming that you know what another person is thinking. *Practicing telepathy without a license!*

Pessimism: Exaggerating the negative impact of an event. Always future oriented. It bleeds starting with achievement at work, then social life, then (mental) health status. *Occurs 3am – threats (still) come at night!*

Overgeneralizing: Jumping on thoughts about global qualities in oneself or others without the evidence to support it. *Character assassination or character suicide.*

Emotional Reasoning: Assuming that your emotions are accurate indicators of the nature of an adversity e.g., "I feel really depressed, so this problem must be uncontrollable" or "I'm feeling anxious so something bad must be about to happen". Most insidious of emotional traps – circular reasoning.

Thinking Trap	Early Detection Cues	Skill
Personalizing	Sadness, Guilt, Embarrassment, Shame	What's one thing that others or circumstances contributed to this problem and one thing I can do about it?
Externalizing	Anger, Frustration	What's one thing I contributed to this problem and one thing I can do about it?
Magnifying & Minimizing	Low-grade, chronic negativity	Identify 3 positive things each day.
Mind Reading	Frustration with relationship/s and anger at perceived unfulfilled entitlements	If in doubt, speak up!
Pessimism	Chronic, high-level anxiety	Worst/Best/Most Likely. Whitewater analogy - analyze probabilities of each link in the chain given what is known (not the preceding link).
Overgeneralizing	Character assassinations, Character suicide, 'never' 'always' tickertape, big emotionality	The bigger the theory the bigger the evidence needed to support it.
Emotional Reasoning	Negative emotion has been in place for significant time	Tackle the relevant Emotion Radar.