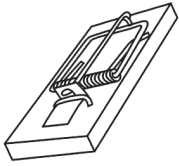


Worksheet 5.1: Common Thinking Traps



How we feel is directly related to what we believe and how we think. In any situation we can have different types of thoughts. While some thoughts can make us feel calm or happy, other thoughts can make us feel anxious, angry or down. We call these thoughts **thinking traps** because sometimes we get stuck in a pattern of unhelpful thinking.

Here is a list of common thinking traps. We cover some of these in session, and some may be new to you. Put a checkmark in the box next to each thinking trap that you sometimes fall into, and come up with your own example in the space provided.

- Jumping to Conclusions** – Thinking that the chances of something bad happening are much greater than they actually are.

Example: You think that there is a 90% chance that your plane is going to crash (when the real chance is more like 0.000013%)



Your example:

- Thinking the Worst** – Telling yourself that the very worst is happening or is could turn out.

*Example:
been in an accident.*

Your example:

- **Ignoring the Positive** – Telling yourself that your achievements or successes “don’t count” and that you just “got lucky.” Always focusing on the negative rather than the positive.

Example: You tell yourself that you only made a good grade on a test because the questions just happened to be easy.

Your example:



- **Black-and-White Thinking** – Thinking that a situation has to be either one way or the other, with no possibilities in between.

Example: Believing that if you don’t get 100% on a test you are a failure.

Your example:



- **Fortune Telling** – Predicting that something negative is going to happen in the future, as if you were gazing into a crystal ball.

Example: You decide not to perform in a recital because you are sure that you are going to mess up.

Your example:



- **Mind Reading** – Believing you know what others are thinking without considering other, more likely, possibilities. Making no effort to check out what others might truly be thinking.

Example: You think that a girl in your class definitely does not like you, even though you've never talked to her.

Your example:

- **Emotional Reasoning** – Thinking something must be true because you “feel” (actually believe) it so strongly, ignoring or disbelieving evidence to the contrary.

Example: If you feel it in your gut that your parents are in a car accident, you believe it is really true, even though they told you they might run a little late.

Your example:



- **Labeling** – Putting a fixed, global label on yourself or others without considering that the evidence might more reasonably lead to a less disastrous conclusion.

Example: Saying to yourself, “I am ugly,” or “I am stupid.”

Your example:

- **“Should” and “Must” Statements** – Having a precise, fixed idea of how you or others should behave, and overestimating how bad it is that these expectations are not met.

Example: Believing that if you and your classmates don't walk in a straight line like your teacher told you to, your teacher will call your parents and you will get in big trouble.

Your example:

- **Magical Thinking** – Believing that, through your actions, you have the power to control things that you actually can't control.

Example: Thinking that if you call your mom on her cell phone she won't get into an accident.

Your example:

