

Cognitive Errors

We all make **thinking mistakes** sometimes. These are called **cognitive errors** or **thinking traps**. They happen when our thoughts are not fully accurate or balanced. Thinking traps can make us feel worse and influence our behavior in unhelpful ways.

The good news: once we **spot** these traps, we can **challenge them** and find more balanced thoughts.

Common Thinking Traps

1. **All-or-Nothing Thinking** – Seeing things as only good or bad, no in-between.
“If I make one mistake, I’m a total failure.”
2. **Mind Reading** – Assuming you know what others think.
“She didn’t smile at me, she must not like me.”
3. **Fortune Telling** – Predicting the future negatively.
“I’ll never get this job.”
4. **Catastrophizing** – Expecting the worst possible outcome.
“If I fail this test, my whole life is ruined.”
5. **Overgeneralizing** – Making a broad rule from one event.
“I was rejected once, so no one will ever like me.”
6. **Should Statements** – Putting strict rules on yourself or others.
“I should always be perfect.”
7. **Personalization** – Blaming yourself for things outside your control.
“It rained on the picnic—it’s my fault for planning it.”

Practice

Think of a recent situation where you felt upset. Write down your thought, then see if it fits into one of the thinking traps.

- Situation: _____
- Thought: _____
- Which thinking trap is this? _____
- How could I see it in a more balanced way? _____

Reflection

- Which thinking traps do I fall into most often?

- What could help me catch them sooner?
