Thinking Traps

Thinking Traps	Examples
Fortune-telling: This is when we predict that things will turn out badly. But, in reality, we cannot predict the future because we don't have a crystal ball!	*"I know I'll mess up."* *"I will never be able to manage my anxiety."*
Black-and-white thinking: This is when we only look at situations in terms of extremes. For example, things are either good or bad, a success or a failure. But, in reality, most events call for a more "moderate" explanation. For example, cheating once on your diet does not mean you have failed completely. You had a small setback, and all you need to do is to get back on your diet tomorrow.	*"Anything less than perfect is a failure."* *"I planned to eat only healthy foods, but I had a piece of chocolate cake. Now my diet is completely ruined!"*
Mind-reading: This trap happens when we believe that we know what others are thinking and we assume that they are thinking the worst of us. The problem is that no one can read minds, so we don't really know what others are thinking!	*"Others think I'm stupid."* *"She doesn't like me."*
Over-generalization: This is when we use words like "always" or "never" to describe situations or events. This type of thinking is not helpful because it does not take all situations or events into account. For example, sometimes we make mistakes, but we don't always make mistakes.	*"I always make mistakes."* *"I am never good at public speaking."*
Labelling: Sometimes we talk to ourselves in mean ways and use a single negative word to describe ourselves. This kind of thinking is unhelpful and unfair. We are too complex to be summed up in a single word!	*"I'm stupid."* *"I'm a loser."*
Over-estimating danger: This is when we believe that something that is unlikely to happen is actually right around the corner. It's not hard to see how this type of thinking can maintain your anxiety. For example, how can you not feel scared if you think that you could have a heart attack any time?	*"I will faint."* *"I'll go crazy."* *"I'm dying."*
Filtering: This happens when we only pay attention to the bad things that happen, but ignore all the good things. This prevents us from looking at all aspects of a situation and drawing a more balanced conclusion.	*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.*

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Catastrophizing: This is when we imagine that the worst possible thing is about to happen, and predict that we won't be able to cope with the outcome. But, the imagined worst-case scenario usually never happens and even if it did, we are most likely able to cope with it.	*"I'll freak out and no one will help."* *"I'm going to make such a fool of myself, everyone will laugh a me, and I won't be able to survive the embarrassment."*
Should statements: This is when you tell yourself how you "should", "must", or "ought" to feel and behave. However, this is NOT how you actually feel or behave. The result is that you are constantly anxious and disappointed with yourself and/or with others around you.	*"I should never feel anxious."* *"I must control my feelings."* *"I should never make mistakes."*