## **Thinking Traps**

| **Thinking Trap** | **Definition** | **Swapping strategy** | **Example of thinking trap**  | **Swapped example** |
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| **All or Nothing**  | Only focused on extremes - black or white thinking  | Finding a middle ground/ middle option instead of extremes Using 0-100 scale to identify if the situation truly represents extremes  | If I can't complete everything on my list today, I have failed  | I was able to complete 60% of things on my list for today. I accomplished a lot and there are things that I will plan to complete in the next few days.  |
| **Overgeneralizing** | “Always” and “Never” statements  | Search for what is being ignored Consider situations where the absolutes do not apply Check facts  | I forgot about my friend’s birthday. I am a thoughtless person  | While I forgot my friend’s birthday, there are other times where I have remembered it, and i have been three for my loved ones.  |
| **Mental Filter** | Only allowing certain facts to be identified that support a belief  | Identify what is being ignored  | I yelled at my daughter. I am a terrible father.  | Today I had a mix of parenting styles - there were times I was impatient and other times, i was caring.  |
| **Disqualifying the Positives** | Discounting good things that have happened  | Good for Me’s Intentionally identify positives of a given situation Trying looking at the situation from another person’s perspective  | I only completed half of the home practice for the group | I did 50% of the home practice and I spent a lot of time learning new things.  |
| **Jumping to conclusions - Mindreading**  | When we think we know what others are thinking about  | Identify what is being ignored in a given situation - acknowledge what remains uncertainIdentify evidence for and against the thought  | People at my school think I am incompetent  | Noone has actually expressed their thoughts or concerns about my performance at school so far  |
| **Jumping to conclusions - Fortune telling** | Predicting the future with certainty  | Acknowledge that we cannot predict outcomes with certainty, identify what remains uncertain  | I will not have fun at this hangout  | I am unsure if I will have fun, i am open minded to see how things will go.  |
| **Catastrophizing**  |  Predicting the worst possible outcome “What ifs”  | Look for evidence that would predict less than disastrous outcomes Search for what facts are being ignoredIdentify coping statements and skills  | What if I am late to my doctor’s appointment? | C:. I cannot predict exactly when I will get there but I have timed how long it will take to get there. I cant predict the traffic. I can try to call the office to let them know if we are late.  |
| **Minimizing** | Pretending something is less important that it is  | Ask yourself - am I in denial of something? Search for what facts are being ignored | I am sure my brother won’t mind if I cancel our plans to spend time together  | I am feeling guilty about canceling plans at the last minute. Ignoring or minimizing the impact on my brother does not help. Let me reach out and apologize and reschedule.  |
| **Emotional reasoning** | Believing that if you feel something strongly, it must be true  | Remind yourself that feeling does not equate facts of a situation Identify facts of the situation available to you  | Noone wants to be my friend  | I feel lonely right now. That may not last forever. Not does that mean that noone likes me.  |
| **Shoulds and Musts** | Telling yourself how you “should” or “must” behave  | Change to “could”, “would like to”  | I must be in control of my emotions at all times  | I would like to be in control of my emotions, and also realize that it may not be realistic to be able to do so 100% of the time  |
| **Labeling** | Assigning ourselves or others “labels”  | Instead of labeling self or others, label or name the problem or the behavior  | Drivers are idiots  | I get frustrated when people dont drive in a safe manner  |
| **Personalization**  | Taking blame or responsibility for things that were not entirely within your control or your fault  | Identify what you can truly control in a given situation Check the facts  | My mum hasn't reached out to me in a while. I must have done something to upset her  | I am unsure why my mother has not reached out to me. Maybe she needs some time to herself.  |

**General techniques to work through thinking traps:**

1. Name the thinking trap(s)
2. Check the facts of the situation - what is the kernel of truth in the situation. What is the shell of interpretation?
3. Are there aspects of the situation that remain uncertain? Are there gaps in your information? Are there ways to gather more information about the situation ? Bring acceptance to the fact that you may never have 100% certainty or all facts available to you.
4. Hypothesize all possible explanations when facts are not available and there are gaps in the information available - this allows to soften the rigidity held by the thinking traps
5. Take a new perspective - how would others view this situation? Are there any opposing views or options?