

Common, destructive thinking patterns

Aaron T. Beck, M.D., father of cognitive therapy, identified 15 common, but harmful, thinking patterns we all fall into at times. These are habits that, once we become familiar with them, we can challenge and weed out. And, as a result, be much happier, more productive people.

1. *All or Nothing*: ("I haven't gotten everything I want, so obviously, I've accomplished nothing...")
2. *Perfectionism*: ("It's no good if it isn't perfect..." "No one respects me, I'm not perfect.")
3. *Overgeneralization*: ("Gay men hang out together. All men who hang out together are gay. If I'm seen with a man, people will think I'm gay.")
4. *Global labeling*: ("I failed at that, so of course, I'll fail at everything." Translating a minor event into a global extreme.)
5. *Catastrophizing*: ("The boss didn't smile at me today, he must be mad at me, I'm probably going to be fired, my life is ruined, I'll blow my mortgage and lose my home, my car will be repossessed, my wife will leave me...")
6. *Minimizing*: ("I'm just not good enough, I shouldn't even try." Or, "Who's the joker yelling 'Fire! Fire!' I'm too busy for this nonsense. Of course there's no fire.")
7. *The Jones's*: ("My house isn't as big as theirs. I'm a failure.")
8. *Uncritical Acceptance of Criticism*: ("They think my new friend is strange. I'd better drop him.")
9. *Selective Editing*: (Ignoring evidence that conflicts with a preconceived view. "She dislikes me. She's never said 'hi' to me in the two years I've worked here." This ignores that she's never said *anything* to you. You've never spoken to *her*. And everyone says she's really *shy*.)
10. *Disqualifying the Positive*: (Rejecting compliments. "They don't *really* mean that." "Yes, that was nice, but....")
11. *Mind Reading*: ("There's no reason to ask, I know how he feels.")
12. *Personalization*: ("They rejected my proposal for a new copier, therefore they dislike me.")
13. *Fortune-Telling*: ("Why ask for the job? I already know they'll turn me down.")
14. *Shoulds and Ought-tos*: ("I should have done it that way." "I ought to do it this way, it's the only right way, but since I can't, I'll just continue being a failure, I won't even try.")
15. *Emotional Reasoning*: ("I feel like a fool, therefore I am a fool.")

(The above list was adapted from *Woulda, Coulda, Shoulda* by Dr. Arthur Freeman and Rose DeWolf.)

These are negative traps.