



## Understanding the anxiety (assessment)

Assessment approach  'Thinking traps'	Making it successful	Resources
<p>When people feel anxious, their thinking can become negative and less flexible.</p> <p>Knowing some common 'thinking traps' and having people around you that can help you to notice these traps and change your thinking can help.</p>	<p>Those around the child/young person should build their assessment about what 'thinking traps' regularly influence the individual.</p> <p>Recoding some examples in the child's/young person's actual words will assist.</p> <p>After a period of time of assessment, determined if dominant thinking traps are influencing the child/young person and if so, which ones.</p>	<p>See attached sheets for a list, explanation and example of common thinking traps.</p>

## Maladaptive Thinking - Common 'thinking traps'

Martin Seligman, a well-known psychologist has found our ability to deal with hard things is partly determined by 3 P's.

These P's are ways that we see the world:

- **Personalization**
- **Permanence**
- **Pervasiveness**

**Personalization** is thinking that the problem is yourself, instead of considering other outside things that have caused it. Realizing outside factors have caused a bad situation allows us to reduce the blame and criticism we put on ourselves.

**Permanence** is thinking a bad situation will last forever. Those who think setbacks are temporary have improved ability to accept and adapt for the future.

**Pervasiveness** is thinking a bad situation applies across all areas of your life, instead of only happening in one area. People who think bad situations are pervasive feel that all areas of their life are impacted. This can make it hard to carry on.



**Mind reading**

You assume that you know what people think without having sufficient evidence of their thoughts. For example: "He thinks I'm a loser."

**Arbitrary inference**

Drawing a conclusion in the absence of sufficient evidence

**Selective abstraction**

Focusing on one aspect of a situation while ignoring more important (and more relevant) features

**Fortune telling**

You predict the future—that things will get worse or that there is danger ahead. For example: "I'll fail that exam" or "The exact same thing will happen again."

**Catastrophizing**

You believe that what has happened or will happen will be so awful and unbearable that you won't be able to stand it. For example: "It would be terrible if ....."

**Labelling**

You assign global negative traits to yourself and others. For example: "I'm ugly and stupid" or "He's a bad person."

**Discounting positives**

You claim that the positive accomplishments you or others attain are trivial. For example: "That's what teachers get paid to do—so it doesn't count when she's nice to me" or "Those successes were easy, so they don't matter."

**Negative filter**

You focus almost exclusively on the negatives and seldom notice the positives. For example: "Look at all of the people who don't like me."

**Overgeneralizing**

You perceive a global pattern of negatives on the basis of a single incident. For example: "This generally happens to me. I seem to fail at a lot of things."

**Dichotomous thinking**

You view events, or people, in all-or-nothing terms. For example: "I get rejected by everyone" or "It was a waste of time."

**"Shoulds"**

You interpret events in terms of how things should be rather than simply focusing on what is. For example: "I should do well. If I don't, then I'm a failure."

**Personalizing**

You attribute a disproportionate amount of the blame for negative events to yourself and fail to see that certain events are also caused by others. For example: "My parents were fighting because of me"

**Blaming**

You focus on the other person as the source of your negative feelings and you refuse to take responsibility for changing yourself. For example: "She's to blame for the way I feel now" or "(name)..... caused all my problems".

**Unfair comparisons**

You interpret events in terms of standards that are unrealistic by focusing primarily on others who do better than you and then judging yourself inferior in the comparison. For example: "She's more successful than I am" or "Others did better than I did on the test."

**Regret orientation**

You focus on the idea that you could have done better in the past, rather than on what you could do better now. For example: "I could have..... if I had tried" or "I shouldn't have said that."

**What if?**

You ask a series of questions about "what if" something happens, and you are never satisfied with any of the answers. For example: "Yeah, but what if I get anxious?" Or "What if I can't catch my breath?"

**Emotional reasoning**

You let your feelings guide your interpretation of reality. For example, "I feel depressed; therefore, my friends don't want to spend time with me".

**Judgment focus**

You view yourself, others, and events in terms of black/white evaluations (good-bad or superior-inferior) rather than simply describing, accepting, or understanding. You are continually measuring yourself and others according to arbitrary standards and finding that you and others fall short. You are focused on the judgments of others as well as your own judgments of yourself. For example: "I didn't perform well in maths" or "If I take up tennis, I won't do well" or "Look how successful she is. I'm not successful."