

15 Types of Problematic Thinking

- Filtering:** You take the negative details and magnify them while filtering out all positive aspects of a situation.
- Polarized Thinking:** Things are black or white, good or bad. You have to be perfect or you're a failure. There is no middle ground, it's 'all or nothing.'
- Overgeneralization:** Coming to a general conclusion based on a *single* incident or piece of evidence. If something bad happens once, you expect it to happen over and over again.
- Mind Reading:** Without them saying so, you *know* what people are feeling and why they act the way they do. In particular, you are able to tell how people are feeling toward you.
- Catastrophizing:** You expect disaster. You notice or hear about a problem and start "whit ifs". What if tragedy strikes? What if it happens to you?
- Personalization:** Thinking that everything people do or say is some kind of reaction to you. You also compare yourself to others, trying to determine who's smarter, better looking, etc.
- Control Fallacies:** If you feel externally controlled, you see yourself as helpless, a victim of fate. The fallacy of internal control has you responsible for the pain and happiness of everyone around you.
- Fallacy of Fairness:** You feel resentful because you think you know what's fair but other people won't agree with you.
- Blaming:** You hold others responsible for your pain. Or, you take the other tack and blame yourself for every problem or reversal without regard to external causes.
- Shoulds:** You have a list of ironclad 'rules' about how you and other people should act. People who break the rules anger you and you feel guilty if you violate the rules.
- Emotional Reasoning:** You believe that what you feel must be true – automatically. If you *feel* stupid and boring, than you must *be* stupid and boring.
- Fallacy of Change:** You expect that other people will change to suit you if you just pressure or cajole them enough. You need to change people because your hopes for happiness seem to depend entirely on them.
- Global Labeling:** You generalize one or two qualities into a negative global judgement.
- Being Right:** You are continually on trial to prove that your opinions and actions are correct. Being wrong is unthinkable and you will go to any length to demonstrate your rightness.
- Heaven's Reward Fallacy:** You expect all your sacrifice and self denial to pay off, as if there were someone keeping score. You feel bitter when the reward doesn't come.

Adapted from: Johnson, SL, Therapist's Guide to Clinical Intervention (Academic Press: San Diego, CA, 157