

10 Forms of Twisted Thinking – And How to Replace Them

Based on “The Feeling Good Handbook,” David D. Burns, MD

Thinking Error:	Description:	Impact:	Replacement:
1-All or Nothing Thinking	<i>Black-or-white thinking</i>	Promotes discouragement/anger – no middle ground.	<i>Continuum thinking – “The Dial”</i>
2-Overgeneralization	<i>Thinking “always / never”</i>	Expands a specific problem to an everlasting issue.	<i>Stay specific, focused on the “now”</i>
3-Negative Mental Filter	<i>Seeing only the negative</i>	Makes the positive invisible – even if there’s a lot of it.	<i>Identify and appreciate the positives</i>
4-Discounting the Positive	<i>Positives “don’t matter”</i>	Eliminates joy and satisfaction in the positives.	<i>Purposely take delight in the positives</i>
5-Jumping to Conclusions:	<i>Judgment without facts</i>	Brings on anxiety, anger, and/or depression	<i>Consider all the alternative scenarios</i>
5a-Fortune Telling	<i>“What if...;” catastrophizing</i>	Dread, envisioning disaster; can escalate to panic	<i>Stay present; Decatastrophizing</i>
5b - Mindreading	<i>“Reading” others’ thoughts</i>	Anxiety/sadness/anger, assuming the worst	<i>Clear communication; gather input</i>
6 - Magnification	<i>Comparing unfairly</i>	Pits your worst against others’ best - discouraging	<i>See your strengths and others’ as well</i>
7-Emotional Reasoning	<i>“I feel it – therefore it’s true”</i>	Upsetting judgments are made without evidence	<i>Listen to both your head & your heart</i>
8 - Should Statements	<i>Heavy demands - self/others</i>	Discouragement (about oneself); anger (at others)	<i>Bring expectations in line with reality</i>
9 - Labeling	<i>Unkind names – self/others</i>	Discouragement (about oneself); anger (at others)	<i>Describe specific circumstances</i>
10- Blame / Self-Blame	<i>Assuming one single cause</i>	Discouragement (about oneself); anger (at others)	<i>“Blame Pie: (Consider all the contributing factors)</i>

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