

Changing Negative Thinking Patterns (Sample Responses)

When people are anxious, sad or depressed, they tend to view situations in a more negative light. Their thoughts often contain mistaken perceptions or thinking errors. Analyzing and correcting these thinking errors can make it easier to have a more positive outlook.

- **Jumping to Conclusions:** Assuming the worst or framing the situation in the worst possible light; automatically concluding that a negative event will happen
 - **Mind Reading:** Making assumptions about what others are thinking
 - **Fortune Telling:** Anticipating a negative outcome before the outcome has even been established
- **Overgeneralizing:** Assuming that a negative event is part of an endless pattern of failure; Allowing one small problem or perceived flaw to define the entire experience
- **All or Nothing Thinking:** Experiences are seen in discrete black and white absolutes. Life situations are perceived as all good or all bad or as a total success or failure with nothing in between.
- **Ignoring the Evidence, Disqualifying the Positive:** Viewing situations through a negative filter that blocks valuable or positive information; Rejecting, discounting or explaining away any positive aspect of the experience; Discounting strengths
- **Magnifying and Minimizing:** Exaggerating the importance of the accomplishments and positive experiences of others while minimizing one's own successes; Minimizing the failures and negative experiences of others while maximizing one's own
- **Personalizing:** Taking responsibility and assigning personal blame for anything that goes wrong.

Learning to Change Thinking Patterns

Listed below are some self talk containing thinking errors. On the line under each statement, identify the thinking error or errors. In the column to the right of the statement, write an appropriate healthy thought. The first one is done for you.

Thinking Error	Healthy, Logical Thoughts
My son was in a fight at school and was suspended. If I had been a good enough parent, this would not have happened. Type of error(s): <u>Personalizing, Ignoring the Evidence</u>	My son has been very angry since the divorce. His father has not called or had any contact with him. I've tried very hard to give him what he needs but I can't control or fix his relationship with his father.

Thinking Error	Healthy, Logical Thoughts
<p>It doesn't pay to trust people. I always get hurt.</p> <p>Type of error(s): <u>Overgeneralizing; All or Nothing Thinking</u></p>	<p>Some people are trustworthy and some are not. I have been hurt many times. I need to be on guard, move slowly and carefully determine who is trustworthy. Educating myself about the red flags of unhealthy behavior can give me the power to make good judgments and avoid being hurt.</p>
<p>Something must be seriously wrong with me because everyone has a relationship but me.</p> <p>Type of error(s): <u>Personalizing, Magnifying and Minimizing</u></p>	<p>Not everyone has a relationship. I have made some poor relationship choices but that does not mean I am defective and incapable of having a good relationship.</p>
<p>Mark is so intelligent and always knows what to say. I always say and do the wrong thing.</p> <p>Type of error(s): <u>Magnifying and Minimizing, Overgeneralizing, Ignoring the Evidence</u></p>	<p>I am capable and smart. Sometimes I don't act with confidence because I doubt myself. Just because I make mistakes does not mean I am incapable.</p>
<p>I forgot to bring the annual report to the meeting. My boss must think I'm a real loser.</p> <p>Type of error(s): <u>Jumping to Conclusions-Minding Reading</u></p>	<p>I have been working very hard and have a lot on my mind. My boss knows I have been working late to get this project finished. I have done my best and that is all I can do.</p>
<p>I'll will never get that job. I just don't have what it takes.</p> <p>Type of error(s): <u>Jumping to Conclusions-Fortune Telling, Ignoring the Evidence, Overgeneralizing</u></p>	<p>I have worked hard on my resume and gave my best effort during the interviews. I have good skills and work hard. It may take a while but if I don't get this job, I will find another one.</p>