

Common Cognitive Distortions or “Thinking Traps”

As adapted from The Feeling Good Handbook by David Burns

All-or-Nothing Thinking

- What’s the point of coming to school anyway? I’m already failing a bunch of classes
- Nobody ever asks me out on the weekends
- I have no friends
- It’s not worth even trying

Overgeneralization

- I’m always the last person to know what’s going on
- Everything I do is a failure

Mental Filter

- I can’t believe I said that! I’m such an idiot!
- I’m going to do poorly on my exam and everyone will think I’m dumb!
- When I try to dance, everyone is going to think I’m an idiot.

Discounting the Positives

- The only reason she sat with me is that she had no one else to sit with.
- She’s my mother, of course, she’s going to say something nice about me.

Mind-Reading

- I know she doesn’t want to hang out.
- Everyone is looking at me. They are thinking (something negative).
- Don’t ask her, she always says “no” when we invite her.

Fortune-Telling

- My mom is going to be so mad!
- No one is going to understand me.
- If I fail at (school, sports, relationship), then I will never (get into college, have a good career, get married).
- I’m never going to be as successful as my brother.

Magnification (or minimization)

- Today was a total failure. Nothing ever goes right for me.
- What if she never talks to me again?

Emotional Reasoning

- I hate being in school. I should just skip class today.
- I get so nervous; I'm never going to be able to make it on my own.
- I am worthless

"Should" Statements

- I should have known this would happen!
- I should never have said anything!
- I should never tell you anything.
- I should have known how to do (fill in the blank).

Labeling

- I screw up everything
- I'm such an idiot
- I don't have any good ideas

Personalization (or blame)

- She never listens to me!
- If only I hadn't sent that note – now this is all my fault!
- People always let me down
- It's always my fault