

9 Negative Thinking Traps You Should Avoid

In light of the month of May being Mental Health Awareness week, we would like to take this week to talk about types of thinking that many people, including caregivers, can unconsciously slip into, affecting their view of themselves and their worth as a person or parent. The following are categories of common negative thinking traps--and ways you can positively readjust your thinking. Once you begin to recognize these traps yourself and how you can spin the situation positively, you can help your kids with this as well.

Catastrophizing

- What it is: You believe the worst will happen in any given scenario, even if it is not likely.
- What you may think: "My daughter hasn't called at the agreed time five minutes ago. Something terrible must have happened to her!"
- Reframe your thinking: "My daughter probably is busy right now, but she will call me when she can."



Emotional reasoning

- What it is: You believe what you're feeling is a reflection of the truth.
- What you may think: "I feel inadequate, so I must be worthless."
- Reframe your thinking: "Sometimes, my feelings do not reflect the truth."

Fortune telling

- What it is: You predict a negative outcome without considering evidence or facts that support that outcome.
- What you may think: "My teenager is starting to drive. He is going to get in an accident and injure himself!"
- Reframe your thinking: "My teenager is starting to drive. I trust that he learned good driving habits and will be responsible when out on the road."

now what? Keep Going.

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Over Generalization

- What it is: When you view a negative event and conclude it justifies a never-ending pattern of negativity and defeat. Often, you find yourself using words such as “always”, “never”, “everything” or “nothing”.
- What you may think: “My son got a bad grade at school. Now he’ll never be able to go to a good college.”
- Reframe your thinking: “Sometimes, bad grades happen. How can I help my son improve for the future?”

Should Statements

- What it is: You make statements about what you “should” be doing that hold you to unattainable standards or put unreasonable expectations upon yourself.
- What you may think: “I should cook a healthy, organic meal every meal.”
- Reframe your thinking: “If I have time and the energy, I will cook healthy meals, but I know it is also okay if every meal isn’t perfect--just getting food in my kids’ tummies is the most important thing.”

All-or-nothing

- What it is: You view the world or situation only in terms of extremes; everything is black or white, good or bad. There is no in-between or spectrum.
- What you may think: “I forgot to pick up what my son wanted at the grocery store. I am a bad mother.”
- Reframe your thinking: “Mistakes can happen, but they don’t diminish my worth as a parent.”

Labeling

- What it is: You reduce yourself to a characteristic based on a single event or behavior.
- What you may think: “I didn’t do anything today, so I am lazy.”
- Reframe your thinking: “Today, I recharged so that I can be ready to go for tomorrow.”

Personalization

What it is: You assume that it is your responsibility or you are to blame for circumstances that are not your fault or out of your control.

What you may think: “My daughter didn’t like his food tonight. I must be a bad cook.”

Reframe your thinking: “Kids can be picky eaters. And one meal does not define my abilities.”

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Mind reading

- What it is: You assume that you know what others are thinking.
- What you may think: “My toddler is throwing a fit at the store and I can’t get her to stop. Everyone must think I am incapable and a bad mom.”
- Reframe your thinking: “Other people understand that toddlers have tantrums. I have not done anything wrong.”

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One helpful way that can help you recognize these types--and more--of negative thinking is asking yourself if your thinking is rooted in facts. Is there hard evidence that what you think is undeniably true? If you can't say yes to those questions, then you likely have fallen into the trap of negative thinking.

Recognizing these negative thoughts, and then making the conscious effort to shift the thoughts into fact-driven, positive thinking can help you be more accepting of yourself.

And remember, you are awesome, you are enough, and you are valued!

This week's post was inspired by the Instagram account @theweightofwinning.



Originally posted on the Now What? Blog on 5.13.21 The Now What? Blog served for nearly 7 years to

- 1. Normalize parents seeking support and help as a manner of child abuse prevention*
- 2. Engage community in how they can work to prevent child abuse*
- 3. Work to build resiliency in families through promotion of the 5 protective factors*

Maybe you coach a baseball team or you help care for the neighbor kids from time to time. You are investing in the safety and security of the children in our community. Because it truly does take a village to raise our children, we want to offer the tools needed to bring awareness and education to preventing child abuse.

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