THINKING ERRORS

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http://powerstates.com/10-cognitive-thinking-errors#.UIBVwq7z5Xs

Many mental health issues people face are rooted in unhealthy thinking habits. Based on the work of Aaron Beck and others, in the book *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy*, David Burns outlines 10 common mistakes in thinking, which he calls cognitive distortions. Review the following thinking errors and work to change your negative mental habits:

1. **ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING** – Also called Black and White Thinking – Thinking of things in absolute terms, like "always", "every" or "never". For example, if your performance falls short of perfect, you see yourself as a total failure. Few aspects of human behavior are so absolute. Nothing is 100%. No one is all bad, or all good, we all have grades. To beat this cognitive distortion:

    o Ask yourself, "Has there ever been a time when it was NOT that way?" (all or nothing thinking does not allow exceptions so if even one exception can be found, it's no longer "all" or "nothing")

    o Ask yourself, "Never?" or "Always?" (depending upon what you are thinking)

    o Investigate the Best-Case vs Worst-Case Scenario NLP Meta program

2. **OVERGENERALIZATION** – Taking isolated cases and using them to make wide generalizations. For example, you see a single negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat: "She yelled at me. She's always yelling at me. She must not like me." To beat this cognitive distortion:

    o Catch yourself overgeneralizing

    o Say to yourself, "Just because one event happened, does not necessarily mean I am (or you are or he/she is…[some way of being])"

    o Investigate the Big Chunk vs. Little Chunk NLP Meta program

3. **MENTAL FILTER** – Focusing exclusively on certain, usually negative or upsetting, aspects of something while ignoring the rest. For example, you selectively hear the one tiny negative thing surrounded by all the HUGE POSITIVE STUFF. Often this includes being associated in negative ("I am so stupid!"), and dissociated in positive ("You have to be pretty smart to do my job"). To beat this cognitive distortion:

    o Learn to look for the silver lining in every cloud

    o Count up your negatives vs your positives – for every negative event, stack up a positive

against it. Make a list of both negative and positive character attributes and behaviors.

    o Investigate the Associated/Dissociated NLP Meta program – seek to be associated in positive and dissociated in negative.

4. **DISQUALIFYING THE POSITIVE** – Continually "shooting down" positive experiences for arbitrary, ad hoc reasons. In this way you can maintain a negative belief that is contradicted by your everyday experiences. The good stuff doesn't count because the rest of your life is a miserable pile of doo-doo. "That doesn't count because my life sucks!" To beat this cognitive distortion:

    o Ask yourself, "So what does count then?" "In what way?"

    o Accept compliments with a simple, "Thank you."

    o Make lists of personal strengths and accomplishments

5. **JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS** – Assuming something negative where there is actually no evidence to support it. Two specific subtypes are also identified:

    o Mind reading – assuming the intentions of others. You arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you, and you don't bother to check it out. To beat this one, you need to let go of your need for approval – you can't please everyone all the time. Ask yourself, "How do you know that…?" Check out "supporting" facts with an open mind.

    o Fortune telling – anticipating that things will turn out badly, you feel convinced that your prediction is an already established fact. To beat this, ask, "How do you know it will turn out in that way?" Again, check out the facts.

    o To beat this cognitive distortion:

        ▪ When the conclusion is based on a prior cause (for example, the last time your spouse behaved in this manner s/he said it was because s/he felt angry so s/he must be angry this time, too), ask yourself, "What evidence do you have to support your notion that s/he feels…" "How did you arrive at that understanding" "What other conclusion might this evidence support?"

        ▪ When the conclusion is based on a future consequence ("I'll die for sure

if she keeps harping on this…") Ask yourself, "How does this conclusion serve you?" and "If you continue to think that way… [what will happen to you]?" and "Imagine 5 years from now…" (Future Pace)

6. **MAGNIFICATION & MINIMIZATION** – Exaggerating negatives and understating positives. Often the positive characteristics of other people are exaggerated and negatives understated. There is one subtype of magnification/catastrophizing – focusing on the worst possible outcome, however unlikely, or thinking that a situation is unbearable or impossible when it is really just uncomfortable: "I can't stand this." To beat this cognitive distortion:

    o Ask yourself, "What would happen if you did [stand this]?"

    o Ask yourself, "How specifically is [this/that/he/she] so good/too much/too many/etc. or so bad/not good enough/too little/etc.?"

    o After asking question b., ask yourself, "Compared to what/whom?"

7. **EMOTIONAL REASONING** – Making decisions and arguments based on how you feel rather than objective reality. People who allow themselves to get caught up in emotional reasoning can become completely blinded to the difference between feelings and facts. To beat this cognitive distortion:

    o NLP Pattern Interrupts and new anchors are the most powerful state changers – interrupt anything negative: "X makes me mad" "How does what I do cause you to choose to feel mad?" Interrupt: "How could you believe that?"

8. **SHOULDING** – (Necessity) Must, Can't thinking. Shoulding is focusing on what you can't control. For example, you try to enlighten another's unconscious – they *should* get it. Concentrating on what you think "should" or ought to be rather than the actual situation you are faced with will simply stress you out. What you choose to do, and then do, will (to some degree, at least) change the world. What you "should" do will just make you miserable. To beat this cognitive distortion

    o Ask, "What would it feel like, look like, sound like if you could/did or could not/did not?" or, "What would happen if you did/didn't?" or, "What prevents you from just doing it then?" or, "What rule or law says you/I SHOULD?" or, "Why should I?" or, "Could you just prefer instead?" or, "Why SHOULD I/YOU?"

    o Investigate the Match vs Mismatch NLP Meta program

9. **LABELING and MISLABELING** – Related to overgeneralization, explaining by naming. Rather than describing the specific behavior, you assign a label to someone or yourself that puts them in absolute and unalterable negative terms. This is a logic level error in that we make a logic leap from behavior/action ("he called me a name…") to identity ("therefore, he's a jerk"). To beat this cognitive distortion:

    o Ask yourself, "What could be a better way of looking at this that would truly empower you/me?" or, "Is there another possible more positive meaning for this?"

    o When you recognize you are labeling or are being labeled, ask, "How specifically?" Example: "How specifically am I a jerk?" – which will evoke behaviors rather than identity.

    o Remember who you/others are in spite of behaviors: "Even though I failed the test, I'm still a worthy person."

10. **PERSONALIZATION & BLAME** – Burns calls this distortion "the mother of guilt." Personalization occurs when you hold yourself personally responsible for an event that isn't entirely under your control. For example, "My son is doing poorly in school. I must be a bad mother…" and "What's that say about you as a person?" – instead of trying to pinpoint the cause of the problem so that she could be helpful to her child. When another woman's husband beat her, she told herself, "If only I were better in bed, he wouldn't beat me." Personalization leads to guilt, shame, and feelings of inadequacy. On the flip side of personalization is blame. Some people blame other people or their circumstances for their problems, and they overlook ways that they might be contributing to the problem: "The reason my marriage is so lousy is because my spouse is totally unreasonable." – instead of investigating their own behavior and beliefs that can be changed. To beat this cognitive distortion:

    o Ask, "How do you know [I am to blame]?" "SAYS WHO?"

    o Ask, "Who/what else is involved in this problem?"

    o Ask yourself, "Realistically, how much of this problem is actually my responsibility?"

    o Ask, "If there was no blame involved here, what would be left for me/us to look at?"

    o Investigate the NLP Self/Others Reference Meta program

These 10 cognitive errors are all habits of thinking that are deeply ingrained. The good news is, like any habit, these patterns of thinking can be broken and discarded through awareness and practice.