



# Increase Well-Being by Identifying and Changing Counterproductive Thinking Habits



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Have you found yourself experiencing more unhelpful emotions than usual lately? Maybe you're feeling angrier and more frustrated, or you've been feeling down and helpless? Learn how your thinking patterns can affect your emotions and behaviors.

### What are Thinking Patterns?

Thinking patterns are our brain's habitual way of sorting out information and interpreting situations, events and experiences.

### Why should I care?

- Even though it may seem like our daily experiences determine our mood and behavior, it's really our thoughts that determine how we feel and what we do. This is why people react differently to the same event! So, if our thought patterns are rigid or inaccurate, they will directly impact our daily experience.
- The patterns in our thinking can have a big impact on those around us—whether it's our friends and coworkers, or our Family members, kids or those we lead. Thinking patterns are usually learned from those around us by early adolescence.

### What can I do about it?

Gain some awareness of your thinking patterns—do you fall into any of the traps below? Use the strategies mentioned to help re-train your brain and challenge your brain's bad habits.

- **Me x 3:** Blaming yourself for bad things that happen, even if other circumstances or people contributed to the issue. Falling into this trap on a regular basis can lead to re-occurring feelings of guilt, shame or sadness. If you find that you fall into this trap, remind yourself to **Look Outward**, and ask yourself 'How have others or circumstances also contributed to this problem?'
- **Always x 3:** Thinking bad circumstances will last forever and there's nothing you can do about them. This can lead to a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness. If you find yourself falling into this trap, remind yourself to **Grab Control**, and ask yourself 'What is changeable about the situation, and what can I control?'
- **Everything x 3:** Thinking that a mistake or negative event in one domain of your life (e.g. work, health) will spill over and negatively affect many other domains of your life (e.g. home life, relationships). This can also lead to hopelessness and helplessness. If you find yourself falling into this trap, remind yourself to **Get Specific**, and ask yourself 'What specific area of my life will be affected? And what specific behavior explains the situation?'



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Thinking traps, as well as catastrophic thinking (ruminating about unlikely worst-case outcomes), can challenge your ability to be resilient. Certain thinking patterns can lead to sadness, lack of energy, apathy, sleep disturbances and difficulty concentrating. Noticing you are falling into a trap and rerouting your thinking patterns in the moment can help you to be more flexible, accurate and thorough in your thinking.

### **Additional Resources:**

[ARD Thinking Patterns Video](#)

[ARD Thinking Patterns Infographic PDF](#)

[Ted.com article on irrational thinking patterns by author and psychologist, Joan Rosenberg](#)

[YouTube video on Learned Optimism](#)

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