

# Automatic Negative Thoughts

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*Every thought produces a chemical reaction, effecting your brain and body. Identifying and reframing these patterns is your ticket to freedom, health, and more effective communication.*

1. **Focusing on the negative and/or discounting the positive:** Even if there is only one single negative detail, you exaggerate and focus on it, which distorts the overall picture. This maintains a negative belief by ignoring any information that contradicts it. You trivialize your successes/positive qualities, which often keeps you stuck in not trying out new ways of being.
2. **Over generalizing:** Taking a single event/feeling and making it into an ongoing issue. Using words like “always”, “never”, “forever”, “no one”, “every time”, “everything”. “It’ll never get better.” “No one appreciates me.” Making all or nothing statements like this often results in lack of responsibility to change the situation because of the perception of hopelessness and feelings of fear.
3. **Labeling:** This is a result of over generalizing. Instead of describing one aspect that isn’t working for you, you label yourself or others as “inconsiderate”, “cold-hearted”, “irresponsible”, “lazy”, “airhead”. Instead of addressing a behavior by setting a boundary or a plan for improvement, you simmer in righteous labeling/mislabeling. This sets you up for perpetuating the other cognitive distortions.
4. **Mind Reading:** Assuming that you know what another person intends, thinks or feels, and you react negatively without checking it out. Others often respond with distancing and defenses. Do you *really* know, or are your fears keeping you distant from others?
5. **Future Tripping:** Anticipating the worst, you don’t put your best foot forward, or your energy is depressed or defensive because you’ve already determined failure is coming. You set yourself up for a self-fulfilling prophecy and your brain/ego feels reassured, but the rest of you feels lousy.
6. **Thinking with your Feelings:** You reason with your feelings and make them a truth without evidence. “I feel inadequate” “I feel you don’t trust me” Those are thoughts to check out. Oftentimes, we are feeling based on past events and other cognitive distortions rather than facts.
7. **Guilt beating with “should”:** Beating yourself up with what you “should”, “must”, or “ought to” do or have done. This keeps you from acting on what you want to, can and will do because shame settles in. Perhaps you were parented this way to keep you in line, how do you want to parent yourself now?
8. **Personalizing:** Interpreting events or actions of others to mean something about you. You take on responsibility/fault/shame/blame that is not yours. You are likely to do this to others, as well. What others say or do is about them, not you. This fault finding critical voice keeps you small and fearful.

***Break free from these narrow minded, fault-finding, critical voices: experience truth.***

**I help people bring structure and calm to chaos.**

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