



# Spot Your Thinking Traps

*Ten common patterns that quietly distort how we see ourselves and our lives.*

Cognitive behavioral therapy rests on a simple idea: it isn't events alone that shape how we feel, but the way we interpret them. Under stress, the mind tends to fall into predictable shortcuts — “thinking traps” — that feel true but bend the facts. Learning to name them is the first step to loosening their grip.

## The ten classic traps

Thinking trap	What it sounds like
All-or-nothing	“If it isn't perfect, I've completely failed.”
Overgeneralizing	“This always happens to me. Nothing ever works out.”
Mental filter	Dwelling on the one criticism and ignoring ten compliments.
Discounting the positive	“That went well, but it was just luck — it doesn't count.”
Mind reading	“I just know they think I'm boring.”
Fortune telling	“There's no point trying; it'll go badly anyway.”
Catastrophizing	“If I make one mistake, my whole career is over.”
Emotional reasoning	“I feel like a failure, so I must be one.”
“Should” statements	“I should never need help. I shouldn't feel this way.”
Labeling / personalizing	“I'm an idiot.” · “The party flopped and it's all my fault.”

## Catch your own

Over the next few days, jot down moments your mood dips. Name the trap, then write a fairer thought.

Situation	Automatic thought	Trap(s)	Fairer thought

Bring this worksheet to your next appointment.