

# More Mind Traps

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Many feelings such as sadness, anxiety and anger are caused and kept alive by the conclusions that we make. Sometimes we make wrong conclusions over and over because we get stuck in mind traps that rob us of our ability to be logical. Here are a few more thinking traps we can fall into.



## Labeling

**Trap:** You place yourself or someone else in a negative category by applying a permanent or rigid label. This is not based on looking at all the data.

**Example:** I'm a loser. He's a jerk. She's an idiot.

**Escape:** Remind yourself that a person's actions in one moment don't define that whole person. Open your mind to seeing both the positive and negative sides of yourself or the other person. Tell yourself that even though you believe you have the person (or you) all figured out, there are people who don't see that person in the same way.

## Poisoning the Positive

**Trap:** Something positive happens and you find a way to dismiss it or turn it into a negative.

**Example:** You do something well and you convince yourself that it doesn't count. Your friend gives you a compliment and you tell yourself that she's just after something or is trying to manipulate you.

**Escape:** Give yourself permission to accept the positive this time. Experiment for one day by finding a positive side to every negative thing that happens.

## Magnification or Minimization

**Trap:** You exaggerate or downplay the significance of an event rather than seeing it realistically.

**Example:** I absolutely have to get this project finished today or my career is over. Even though it went well this time it's not good enough.

**Escape:** Put it in perspective. Ask yourself how you'll look back on this in 1 or 5 years from now.

## Fortune Telling

**Trap:** You expect that a certain future event will be negative and you act as if it's already true even though there is no evidence to support it.

**Example:** Before starting a new activity you think that it will be too hard so you don't even try it.

**Escape:** Tell yourself that your negative expectation is just one possibility and then think of other possible outcomes. Remind yourself of a time in your life when things turned out *better* than you expected. Keep a record of your forecasts and see how accurate you are.

## I Should

**Trap:** You motivate and punish yourself by focusing on how you think you *should* be rather than how you actually are. Then you feel guilty.

**Example:** I should be able to do this without having problems concentrating and that means I'll never get well or I'm useless.

**Escape:** Tell yourself you'd like it if you could live up to all your shoulds but that for now you can survive without it.

## They Should

**Trap:** You continually impose your standards or expectations on others by thinking about how they *should* act. Then you feel angry.

**Example:** They should know how I feel and help me more.

**Escape:** Let go. Tell yourself you'd like them to be different but that you can choose to accept reality.

## Unfair Comparisons

**Trap:** You keep comparing yourself to exceptional or unusually successful people. You set unfair standards for yourself.

**Example:** I have less money than Bill Gates so I'm a failure. I'm not as attractive as (your favorite movie star) so I'm ugly. I'm not as popular as (the most popular person you know) so I'm not likable.

**Escape:** Start comparing yourself to regular people. Have somebody help you set realistic standards for yourself. How are you doing compared to other people with the same problems and life circumstances?

## Thoughts as Things

**Trap:** You have a thought about something and start to believe that it must be true just because it came into your mind.

**Example:** I can't do anything right. I think my friend doesn't like me.

**Escape:** Tell yourself that it is just a thought, not reality. Remind yourself that there are other ways of looking at the same thing or situation and that you don't want to be so closed minded.