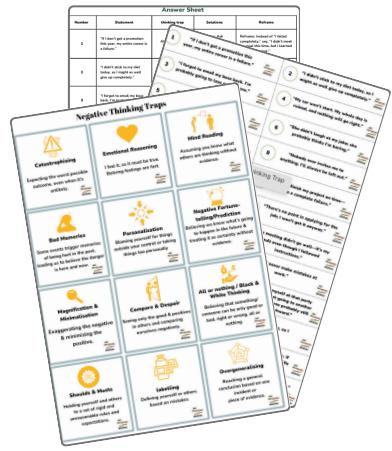


Wellbeing: Activity Name: Thinking Trap Detective

Instruction page



1

Activity Type

Age: 10-18+

Participation Style

Team activity
1-1 activity
Team play solo point

Theme
Interactive

2

General Activity Info

This interactive activity helps participants identify and challenge common negative thinking traps, such as catastrophising, mind reading, and all-or-nothing thinking. By recognising these patterns, participants learn how to reframe negative thoughts into more balanced, realistic perspectives. The activity promotes self-awareness and mental resilience, offering practical strategies to navigate daily challenges and foster a healthier mindset.

3

Materials Needed

- List of Thinking Traps (printed and laminated or on a slide show)
- Scenario Cards or Statements (pre-prepared and printed) laminated for repeated use.
- Sticky notes or paper for responses and reframing.
- Markers/pens.

4

Step by Step Instructions

Introduction (5-7 minutes)

1. Explain what thinking traps are and why recognising them is important.
2. Introduce each thinking trap briefly and provide examples for clarity.

Detective Challenge (15-20 minutes)

1. Divide participants into small groups or have them work individually.
2. Present a series of scenario cards with statements like: "I failed one exam, so I'm a complete failure.", "They didn't text back immediately; they must be angry with me." Participants must identify which thinking trap(s) apply to each scenario and write their answers on sticky notes or response cards.

Group Discussion (10-15 minutes)

1. Reveal correct answers and discuss why each scenario fits a particular trap.
2. Encourage participants to share how they encounter these traps in real life.

Reframing Challenge (10 minutes)

1. Ask participants to rewrite the negative thought in a balanced or positive way.

Example:

- Original Thought: "I always mess up at work."
- Reframed Thought: "I made a mistake today, but I usually do a good job."

Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

1. Recap key strategies to catch and challenge thinking traps.
2. Encourage participants to use these strategies moving forward.

Negative Thinking Traps



Catastrophising

Expecting the worst possible outcome, even when it's unlikely.

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Emotional Reasoning

I feel it, so it must be true.
Believing feelings are fact.

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Mind Reading

Assuming you know what others are thinking without evidence.

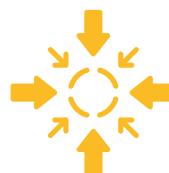
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Bad Memories

Some events trigger memories of being hurt in the past, leading us to believe the danger is here and now.

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Personalisation

Blaming yourself for things outside your control or taking things too personally

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Negative Fortune-telling/Prediction

Believing we know what's going to happen in the future & treating it as certainty without evidence.

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Magnification & Minimalisation

Exaggerating the negative & minimizing the positive.

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Compare & Despair

Seeing only the good & positives in others and comparing ourselves negatively.

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All or nothing / Black & White Thinking

Believing that something/someone can be only good or bad, right or wrong, all or nothing.

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Shoulds & Musts

Holding yourself and others to a set of rigid and unreasonable rules and expectations.

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Labelling

Defining yourself or others based on mistakes

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Overgeneralising

Reaching a general conclusion based on one incident or piece of evidence.

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1

"If I don't get a promotion this year, my entire career is a failure."

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3

"I forgot to email my boss back. I'm probably going to lose my job now."

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5

"They didn't say hi to me this morning—they must be mad at me."

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7

"I got one bad grade, so I'll never do well in school."

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9

"I made a mistake in the meeting; I'm such an idiot."

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11

"I know this presentation will be a disaster."

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13

"They canceled the party. It must be because I said I'd come."

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15

"I should always be available to help my friends, or I'm a bad person."

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17

"My friend just got a promotion, and I'm still stuck in the same job. I'll never be as successful as them."

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19

"She always looks amazing, and I'll never look that good."

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21

"I messed up this one thing—now everything is ruined."

the
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resource
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23

"I feel like nobody likes me, so it must be true."

the
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2

"I didn't stick to my diet today, so I might as well give up completely."

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4

"My car won't start. My whole day is ruined, and nothing will go right."

the
therapeutic
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6

"She didn't laugh at my joke; she probably thinks I'm boring."

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8

"Nobody ever invites me to anything. I'll always be left out."

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10

"I didn't finish my project on time - I'm a complete failure."

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12

"There's no point in applying for the job; I won't get it anyway."

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14

"The meeting didn't go well—it's my fault even though I followed instructions."

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16

"I should never make mistakes at work."

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18

"I embarrassed myself at that party last year, so I'm not going to another party again. Everyone probably still thinks I'm awkward."

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20

"I feel like a failure, so I must be one."

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22

"I failed that exam years ago. If only I had studied harder, my life would be different now."

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24

"My achievements aren't a big deal."

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Answer Sheet 1 of 3

Number	Statement	Thinking Trap	Solutions	Reframe
1	"If I don't get a promotion this year, my entire career is a failure."	All-or-Nothing Thinking	Challenge: Ask yourself, "Is there a middle ground?"	Reframe: Instead of "I failed completely," say, "I didn't meet my goal this time, but I learned what to improve."
2	"I didn't stick to my diet today, so I might as well give up completely."	All-or-Nothing Thinking	Challenge: Ask yourself, "Is there a middle ground?"	Reframe: Instead of "I failed completely," say, "I didn't meet my goal this time, but I learned what to improve."
3	"I forgot to email my boss back. I'm probably going to lose my job now."	Catastrophising	Challenge: Ask, "What's the most likely outcome?"	Reframe: Instead of "This will ruin everything," say, "This setback is frustrating but manageable."
4	"My car won't start. My whole day is ruined, and nothing will go right."	Catastrophising	Challenge: Ask, "What's the most likely outcome?"	Reframe: Instead of "This will ruin everything," say, "This setback is frustrating but manageable."
5	"They didn't say hi to me this morning—they must be mad at me."	Mind Reading	Challenge: Ask, "Do I have concrete evidence for this assumption?"	Reframe: Replace "They think I'm boring" with "I don't know what they're thinking unless I ask."
6	"She didn't laugh at my joke; she probably thinks I'm boring."	Mind Reading	Challenge: Ask, "Do I have concrete evidence for this assumption?"	Reframe: Replace "They think I'm boring" with "I don't know what they're thinking unless I ask."
7	"I got one bad grade, so I'll never do well in school."	Overgeneralising	Challenge: Ask, "Is this always true, or is it just this situation?"	Reframe: Change "I never get anything right" to "I struggled with this task, but I've succeeded in other things."
8	"Nobody ever invites me to anything. I'll always be left out."	Overgeneralising	Challenge: Ask, "Is this always true, or is it just this situation?"	Reframe: Change "I never get anything right" to "I struggled with this task, but I've succeeded in other things."

Answer Sheet 2 of 3

Number	Statement	Thinking Trap	Solutions	Reframe
9	"I made a mistake in the meeting; I'm such an idiot."	Labeling	Challenge: Ask, "Would I say this to a friend?"	Reframe: Instead of "I'm stupid," say, "I made a mistake, but I'm capable of learning from it."
10	"I didn't finish my project on time—I'm a complete failure."	Labeling	Challenge: Ask, "Would I say this to a friend?"	Reframe: Instead of "I'm stupid," say, "I made a mistake, but I'm capable of learning from it."
11	"I know this presentation will be a disaster."	Negative Fortune-Telling	Challenge: Ask, "Can I predict the future? What evidence do I have?"	Reframe: Replace "I know I'll fail" with "I'll do my best and see what happens."
12	"There's no point in applying for the job; I won't get it anyway."	Negative Fortune-Telling	Challenge: Ask, "Can I predict the future? What evidence do I have?"	Reframe: Replace "I know I'll fail" with "I'll do my best and see what happens."
13	"They canceled the party. It must be because I said I'd come."	Personalisation	Challenge: Ask, "What other factors might have caused this?"	Reframe: Instead of "It's all my fault," say, "There were multiple factors involved, not just me."
14	"The meeting didn't go well—it's my fault even though I followed instructions."	Personalisation	Challenge: Ask, "What other factors might have caused this?"	Reframe: Instead of "It's all my fault," say, "There were multiple factors involved, not just me."
15	"I should always be available to help my friends, or I'm a bad person."	Should & Must Statements	Challenge: Ask, "Is this expectation realistic or helpful?"	Reframe: Replace "I should never make mistakes" with "Making mistakes is part of learning."
16	"I should never make mistakes at work."	Should & Must Statements	Challenge: Ask, "Is this expectation realistic or helpful?"	Reframe: Replace "I should never make mistakes" with "Making mistakes is part of learning."

Answer Sheet 3 of 3

Number	Statement	Thinking Trap	Solutions	Reframe
17	"My friend just got a promotion, and I'm still stuck in the same job. I'll never be as successful as them."	Compare and Despair Thinking	Remind yourself that everyone has a different path and timeline.	"I'm happy for my friend, and I can work toward my own goals at my own pace."
18	"I embarrassed myself at that party last year, so I'm not going to another party again. Everyone probably still thinks I'm awkward."	Bad Memories / Rumination	Realize that people don't remember your mistakes as much as you do.	That was one small moment, and most people have likely forgotten. I've grown since then."
19	"She always looks amazing, and I'll never look that good."	Compare and Despair Thinking	Focus on your own unique qualities instead of comparing to others.	"I have my own strengths and beauty, and I can work on improving myself without needing to be like someone else."
20	"I feel like a failure, so I must be one."	Emotional Reasoning	Feelings aren't facts. Challenge emotions with logic.	"I feel down right now, but that doesn't mean I'm a failure. I've succeeded in many things before."
21	"I messed up this one thing—now everything is ruined."	Magnification and Minimisation	Put things in perspective. Will it matter in a week or a month?	"I made a mistake, but it's a small part of the bigger picture."
22	"I failed that exam years ago. If only I had studied harder, my life would be different now."	Bad Memories / Rumination	Learn from the past instead of dwelling on it.	"That exam was tough, but I've learned valuable lessons, and I can make better choices moving forward."
23	"I feel like nobody likes me, so it must be true."	Emotional Reasoning	Recognize that feelings are not always facts. Just because you feel a certain way doesn't mean it reflects reality.	"I'm feeling lonely right now, but that doesn't mean people dislike me. I can reach out and connect with friends or meet new people."
24	"My achievements aren't a big deal."	Magnification and Minimisation	Acknowledge your successes and give yourself credit.	"I worked hard and accomplished something meaningful."