

LIST OF THINKING ERRORS

Recognize Thinking Errors

Filtering: When you make this error, you observe only some information and filter away other information. This is a natural and even necessary process; without it, you would be overloaded with information. But sometimes, the wrong information is filtered out, which distorts your perception of reality. You get tunnel vision: you focus on something and ignore the rest (which could be the most important). For example, let's say you think someone is rude. Then, you will be acutely aware of any of this person's behaviors that *support* your belief. But when the person does something that does *not* support that belief, your brain could catch it in the filter and *not* make that information available to you—for instance, an act of courtesy. That way, you (incorrectly) build up your belief that the person is rude.

Jumping to conclusions: When you jump to conclusions, you guess or assume things you don't have enough information about, which can lead you to form random opinions that may be completely false. For example, if your manager asks you to see him or her in the office the following morning, you may jump to the conclusion that you're going to have an unpleasant conversation about a mistake or a complaint. But, in fact, you don't *know* that. That's just your inference. It may be something completely different and entirely positive that your manager wants to talk with you about.

Mind reading. This is a variation of jumping to conclusions where you believe that you know what other people are *thinking*. But, of course, you don't *know* what they are thinking. For example, that may lead you to believe that a rude person doesn't like you or is critical of you. But, in reality, the person's rudeness could be just a bad habit that has nothing to do with you. You may just be taking it personally with your (incorrect) mind reading.

All-or-nothing thinking: When you make this error, you think categorically; people or things are either "good" or "bad," "stupid" or "smart," "hardworking" or "lazy," etc.—but nothing in between. It is either black or white, with no shades of gray. This error is harmful because it'll make you judge people or things in categorical terms, which is seldom correct. For example, it's much more realistic to see people as complex and emotional beings with strengths and weaknesses, good and bad days, and so on. People are not just two extremes of a scale. And that goes for yourself as well: if you're prone to all-or-nothing thinking, you will evaluate *yourself* in equally unforgiving ways as either "perfect" or "failure." That is not only erroneous thinking but hurtful self-evaluation.