

Does your child ever feel caught in a *thinking trap*?

Why It's Important

Cognitive distortions are like “thinking traps” — unhelpful thought patterns that can make us feel sad, worried, or stressed. These thoughts can trick our minds into seeing things more negatively than they really are. Learning how to recognize and reframe these thoughts helps children develop a more positive outlook, which can improve their mood, mental health, and resilience.

Tips for supporting children and teens

The following **Get Yourself Out of a Thinking Trap** tool can help children and teens identify their feelings and work on reframing their thoughts in a more realistic light. To support your child or teen in this practice:

Encourage open communication

Talk to your child about their thoughts and feelings. Asking them to share what’s on their mind, especially when they seem upset or stressed, helps them become aware of their thinking patterns.

Model positive thinking

Show your child how to reframe negative thoughts by doing it yourself. If you find yourself in a thinking trap, tell them: “I made a mistake and thought my project was ruined, but I can learn from it and do better next time.”

Teach problem-solving skills

When they express a negative thought, work with them to find evidence against it and come up with a more balanced way to think about it. This process can help them feel more in control and less overwhelmed.

Provide extra support for children with disabilities

Use visual aids or social stories to help them understand thinking traps and how to reframe their thoughts. These tools can make abstract concepts easier to grasp.



Additional guidance and support

[Activate your Spring Health account](#) to connect your child with a trusted therapist who can help them navigate unhelpful thought patterns.

Getting Out of a *Thinking Trap*

Thinking traps are tricks your brain might play to make you think in a negative way. These thoughts can make you feel sad, worried, or stressed. This tool will help you learn about thinking traps, so you can catch them, change them, and feel better. Remember to be patient and kind to yourself while practicing!

Types of Thinking Traps	<i>If you're thinking like this...</i>	<i>Try thinking about it this way</i>
<p>All-or-Nothing Thinking: Thinking something is all good or all bad</p>	<p>If I don't get an A, I'm a total failure.</p>	<p>I tried my best, and I can learn from this to do better next time.</p>
<p>Overgeneralization: Believing that if one bad thing happens, it will always happen</p>	<p>I didn't get picked for the team, so I'll never be good at sports.</p>	<p>I didn't get picked this time, but I can keep practicing and try again.</p>
<p>Blaming/Denial: Not taking responsibility for your actions or blaming others</p>	<p>It's not my fault I didn't study; the test was just too hard.</p>	<p>I could have studied more to be better prepared.</p>
<p>Mind Reading: Thinking you know what others are thinking without any proof</p>	<p>She didn't talk to me today, so she must be mad at me.</p>	<p>Maybe she was just busy. I'll talk to her and see how she's feeling.</p>
<p>Emotional Reasoning: Believing that if you feel something, it must be true</p>	<p>I feel like nobody likes me, so it must be true.</p>	<p>Just because I feel this way doesn't mean it's true. I have friends who care about me.</p>
<p>Labeling: Putting harsh labels on yourself or others</p>	<p>I'm stupid for forgetting my homework.</p>	<p>I forgot my homework, but that doesn't mean I'm stupid. I can try to remember next time.</p>
<p>Magical Thinking: Believing that your thoughts or actions can cause things to happen in an unrealistic way</p>	<p>If I wish hard enough, my problems will go away.</p>	<p>I need to take action to solve my problems.</p>
<p>Magnification: Making a big deal out of small problems</p>	<p>I made a mistake in my project, so it's all ruined.</p>	<p>I made one mistake, but the rest of my project is really good.</p>
<p>Fortune Telling: Predicting the future in a negative way without evidence</p>	<p>If I try out for the team, I'll definitely fail.</p>	<p>I won't know how I'll do until I try. I might even make the team.</p>
<p>Negative Thinking: Always expecting the worst to happen</p>	<p>Something bad is going to happen today.</p>	<p>Today could be a great day if I stay positive and try my best.</p>