



THINKING ERRORS

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QUESTION: Why do we use thinking errors?

ANSWER: To avoid our own life responsibility and/or to manipulate and control others to get what we want, regardless of how it negatively affects others or ourselves in the end. Oftentimes these thinking errors are unconscious, and we are not aware of them until we take a closer look... and are honest with ourselves.

1. **ASSUMING:** We assume we know what the other person thinks, feels, and wants. We then do whatever we want without checking to see if it is okay with the other person. Using this thinking error, we can always get what we want and we avoid confrontation.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to first ask the other person what he thinks, feels, and wants... before we proceed. In other words, we can choose to consider the other person's true feelings and wants, as well as our own.

2. **AVOIDING THE HOT IRON:** We avoid, avoid, avoid. We may avoid talking about our past history, weaknesses, fears, pain, or problems because it is uncomfortable. We also may avoid activities that cause us temporary discomfort, even though doing them would add to our problem-solving, relationship-building, and life coping skills. We may even temporarily avoid our discomforts and pain by having addictions... substance abuse, workaholism, pornography, adultery, food, etc.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to face our fears and endure our temporary discomfort in order to grow and learn, and improve our lives.

3. **BLAMING:** We "point the finger" at someone or something else for a situation about which we are really responsible... or at least partially responsible. This takes the "heat" off us, but does not solve the problem.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to admit our responsibility... and take steps to correct the situation, whenever possible. That is called "being accountable".

4. **BROWN-NOSEING:** We overdo being nice to someone we don't particularly like. This is a Power-manipulation-control ploy. We do this in an attempt to fool the other person into thinking we are friends or "on the same side" because we want something from them.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to be honest with our communication and feelings. We can ask for our wants directly and without manipulation.

5. **BUILD ME UP/PUT YOU DOWN**: We build up our own self esteem by putting others down; also we may think we are always right and everyone else is wrong. This thinking error gives us a sense of power over others. It is emotional abusive and oppressive to the other person and can slowly destroy their self esteem and happiness.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to act in a kind and encouraging way toward others... that includes giving credit for when they are right.

6. **BULLYING**: We think its ok to hurt others emotionally and physically in order to have power over them. Bullying includes put-downs and cruel comments, "mean" teasing, threats, anger outbursts, intimidation, violating the other person's rights and boundaries, spreading malicious gossip, ganging up on, cutting off the person's emotional or financial support, pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, choking, etc.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to share the power and treat people with respect and kindness.

7. **CLOSED CHANNEL**: We close our minds to information that does not agree with our own thinking; we are selective, closed-minded, and self-righteous.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to open our minds to new information, even if it may not be complimentary or agree with our own thinking. When we act responsibly, we are open, receptive, and self critical.

8. **CODEPENDENCY ("I MUST TAKE CARE OF YOU")**: We worry about and focus on the problems of others... rather than look at our own pain, problems, actions, and changes that we need to make. We are drawn toward people who are needy and have lots of problems or addictions... so we can try to fix them instead of fixing ourselves.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to be honest and open about our own feelings and wants, weaknesses and errors, dreams and goals. We can choose to have a balance between helping others and helping ourselves. Assertiveness is a tool to help make this happen. "Assertiveness" means being honest and open, yet kind and empathetic... in expressing our feelings, wants, and requests. In other words, we need to stick up for ourselves in a compassionate and caring way.

9. **DEFERMENT (PROCRASTINATION)**: We put off a responsibility or obligation " until tomorrow". That procrastination has detrimental consequences for ourselves or another person. We may have good intentions to follow through, but it's easier not to.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to take care of our responsibilities now, instead of putting them off. We can choose to risk that we may make some mistakes in the process... and we can learn from those mistakes. We can put out the effort to do what is important for ourselves and others.

10. **DOMINANCE AND POWER**: We want power, control, and dominance over others. This desire is seen in all areas of life. When we appear to show caring, fair, and responsible behavior, it is generally a ploy to get power and control in the end. Sometimes we love to do forbidden things and get away with it... which further "proves" our dominance and power.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to understand that sharing of power with others is the right way, as well as the only way to have genuine relationships with others.

11. **DRAMA-EXCITEMENT**: We do not live life in reality... in the sense of getting our needs met directly or in an honest manner. Boredom is our enemy and we do anything to avoid it. Excitement is generated at the expense of everyone else. We are "crisis junkies", and create stressful situations in our lives in order to feel alive, needed, or to avoid taking responsibility for our behavior.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to get our needs met in honest and healthy ways which do not hurt ourselves or others. We can learn to tolerate boredom, and try to avoid unhealthy stressful situations, rather than create them.

12. **EXCUSE-MAKING**: We find simple excuses whenever we are confronted by our irresponsible behavior. "I didn't have a good teacher." "She pushed me first."

Straight Thinking: We can choose to throw out the excuses and accept responsibility for what we do.

13. **FACT STACKING (TWISTING THE TRUTH)**: We tell facts in such a way to benefit us-- in order to divert the listener's attention, confuse him, or mislead him. Facts may be rearranged, unimportant facts added, or important facts completely omitted. This is sometimes even done with religion... twisting the scriptures around to suite one's agenda.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to tell the important facts just as they are-- without twisting them around, adding, or deleting.

14. **FAILURE TO ACCEPT OBLIGATIONS**: We refuse to follow the rules or accept our Responsibilities. We don't complete our assignments, we break rules and contracts, we don't cooperate with our teachers or bosses, we don't respect other people's property. "I forgot", "it was an accident", and "I didn't mean to" are often used as excuses.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to accept our responsibilities, obligations, contracts. We keep our word and we follow the rules.

15. **FRAGMENTATION**: Our behavior is inconsistent, so that our personality appears fragmented. We may be loving and sentimental one minute... and the next minute be angry, threaten, damage, harm, or steal. We may make a commitment and break it within an hour. We start something, and then change our minds. Other people don't know what to expect from us. This behavior leaves others feeling confused, distrusting, frustrated, angry, discounted, helpless, powerless.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to be consistent in our behavior, so that we build trust. When we make a commitment, we can choose to follow through. When we start something, we can to finish it. We treat people in a consistent manner. We can make our behavior match our words. Others know what to expect of us.

16. **HOPOVER ('SUBJECT-CHANGING)**: We change the subject, sidetrack, or shift the focus of conversation when we are confronted with unpleasant facts about our behavior.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to stay on the subject so that we can truly hear the other person's observation and perspective.

17. **HOTSHOT (COCKINESS)**: We believe that we are triumphant over everything. We think we

know everything and don't need any further goal setting, maturing, or improvement. We have no doubt that we can be around high risk situations without making the same mistake again.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to understand that we don't know everything. There is always something more we can learn from others and improve on.

18. **I CAN'T**: We use this error when we want to avoid the responsibility of something hard to accomplish. Sometimes when we say, "I can't", we mean "I won't" or "that's really hard and I don't want to do that".

Straight Thinking: We can choose to try our best, even though what is requested of us may appear difficult, uncomfortable, or to our disliking. We then have the opportunity to grow and change in a positive direction.

19. **IMMEDIATE GRATIFICATION ("I WANT IT, AND I WANT IT NOW")**: We don't want to wait for what we want. We don't want to save the money, put in the time, or make the effort to earn what we desire. Sometimes that means stealing or conning.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to work honestly for what we want... and put off our need for gratification until later, rather than expecting it now.

20. **JUSTIFICATION (RATIONALIZATION)**: We use true facts to explain away why things are the way they are, why we chose our behavior, why we chose to be irresponsible.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to look at situations honestly and openly without rationalizing them away. We can choose to take responsibility for our behaviors.

21. **KEEPING SCORE**: We keep track of and talk about other people's mistakes or wrong doings. This helps us to avoid looking at our own behavior errors, and also diverts the other person's attention away from the issue at hand.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to be honest and open when it comes to looking at our own behaviors, rather than diverting attention to someone else.

22. **LACK OF EMPATHY**: We totally ignore or disregard how the other person feels. We have the attitude of "I don't really care how my actions and behaviors hurt the other person". We give ourselves permission to be inconsiderate or violate the rights of others.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to show empathy toward others and respect their rights.

23. **LACK OF TRUST (SUSPICIOUSNESS)**: We assume that all other people are devious, untrustworthy, and out to get us. However, we demand that others trust us. This thinking error is used to avoid obligations and responsibilities by blaming the other person. There are times when we sincerely trust others, but it does not last.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to trust those who listen to our feelings and needs... and treat us well. We can choose to be responsible and follow through with our obligations, rather than using lack of trust as an excuse to avoid them.

24. **LYING**: We lie in different ways at different times. Lying is a power play and we often use it

to confuse, distort, and make fools of other people. There are three kinds of lies:

A) commission: We make things up that are simply not true.

B) omission: We say part of what is true, but leave out major sections.

C) assent: We pretend we agree with the other person, in order to look good. However, we really don't agree or we really have no intention of going along with the idea. We make promises and commitments, but really have no intention of following through.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to tell the truth and the whole truth. We can choose to agree with the other person or their ideas only if we truly do, We can make promises or commitments only when we truly intend to follow through.

25. **MAKING FOOLS OF**: We make fools of someone or something else, in order to gain power... such as sarcastically asking "Are you really that stupid?"

Straight Thinking: We can choose to talk to others in a respectful way, and try to keep the power as even as possible.

26. **MANIPULATIVE ANGER AND RAGE**: We use anger to control and manipulate others. Throwing temper tantrums, acting violent and aggressive, flying into a rage, threatening, sarcastic responses, and intimidating others... all get others to focus on our anger rather than our responsibilities or accountability. Sometimes we use anger to avoid dealing with painful emotions such as shame, sadness, or fear.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to share our true thoughts, feelings, and needs in appropriate, calm, and compassionate ways.

27. **MARTAR STANCE**: We give in to the other person's needs and wants instead of our own, and then punish the other person by trying to make them feel guilty when our own needs are not met. This thinking error is used to gain power and control over others in a hidden and subtle way... and we avoid having to be responsible for expressing directly our feelings and wants.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to express our feelings and needs in a direct way. We can choose to think of the other person's feelings and wants... and yet also look out for our own needs and wants and get them met too. This is called "assertiveness".

28. **MAXIMIZING (GRANDIOSITY)**: We maximize when we try to make little things seem like very important things... we "make a mountain out of a mole hill". By setting little fires, we cause others to focus attention on little insignificant things rather than the important issues.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to focus our attention on the important issues at hand, even when it is very uncomfortable to deal with them.

29. **MINIMIZING OR DENIAL**: We state something in a way to make it look less serious than it really is... or to make it look like it is not a problem at all.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to give a situation the attention and seriousness that is warranted.

30. **MY WAY OR THE HIGHWAY**: We insist that things be done our way or not at all. Using this thinking error we exert power over others. Yet we loose our own power to choose among

different alternatives.. Using this thinking error, we think in terms of black and white, success or failure, win or lose. We believe we have to be "number one" ...anything less is failure.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to understand that "win-win" is the best situation. We don't always have to be "the best", be "the winner", or have "the most". We don't always have to have all the ideas. We don't have to have all the power and control in our relationships. We can choose to share these things with others... and still maintain safety and have true self worth in life.

- 31. NARCISSISM (ARROGANCE AND PRIDE):** We have an over-inflated view of ourselves. We think we are better than others and very self important. We rarely think of the feelings and needs of others. Empathy is foreign to us. We think only of ourselves (and sometimes extensions of ourselves, ie our children).

Straight Thinking: We can choose to see ourselves in more realistic way. We can choose to understand that we are not better than others... and that their feelings and wants are as important as our own.

- 32. OWNERSHIP (ENTITLEMENT) ("IT'S MINE"):** If we want it, we think it's ours. That includes people and possessions. We are jealous if anyone acts in a way that we dislike. We treat people as pawns. We may steal anything that we want from others.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to understand and respect the rights of others and show respect for boundaries. We can choose to earn things that we want, and get permission before using or taking something that belongs to another person.

- 33. PET ME (ATTENTION-GETTING):** We purposely do things so that others will notice, applaud, compliment, cuddle... or tell us how wonderful, smart, beautiful, etc. that we are. We are often very selfish and think only of our own needs. We set people up so that we are constantly emotionally fed.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to understand that our needs and wants are not more important than the needs and wants of others. We may need to shrink our need for importance, and focus more on the needs, wants and self esteem of others. A balance is needed. We can also get our need for importance and self worth met from within, instead of always from outside of ourselves.

- 34. PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE ("SURE I WILL--NOT")** We indirectly express our feelings and wants through uncooperative or sneaky negative behavior, instead of by directly using our words. We say we will, but don't. In that way. we don't have to be responsible for directly expressing ourselves. This thinking error leaves the other person feeling confused, frustrated, angry, and distrusting. It is self destructive because it damages our relationships, and often our true needs don't get met. It is self destructive and stifling to growth.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to express our feelings and wants directly and assertively, rather than in negative hidden ways. In this way, our needs and wants have a better chance of being met, our relationships will improve, and our self esteem will increase.

- 35. PITY-POT (SEEKING SYMPATHY):** We get others to feel sorry for us when we know we have done something wrong. Getting the sympathy makes us feel better and diverts the other person's attention from our error in behavior.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to admit and explore what we have done wrong, learn from it, and make a plan to change in a positive direction.____

36. **POWERPLAY:** We use power play whenever we aren't getting our way in a situation. Examples are: walking out of a room during a disagreement, giving up responsibilities, not completing a job that we've agreed to, refusing to hear what someone else has to say, organizing people to be angry in our support.
Straight Thinking: We can choose to listen and show respect for the feelings and needs of the other person, even when it is upsetting to us or when we're not getting our way.
37. **PUZZLEMENT (CONFUSION):** We play dumb or stupid about our responsibilities and obligations, in order to avoid responsibility for them.
Straight Thinking: We can choose to accept our responsibilities and obligations, and do them in a timely manner and to the best of our ability.
38. **REDEFINING:** We use a different name or label to make our actions seem ok. "I wasn't hitting him... I was trying to get his attention." This allows us to avoid looking at the real issue and diverts the attention or focus away from us.
Straight Thinking: We can choose to have the courage and responsibility to look at our issues head-on... honestly and openly.
39. **REFUSAL TO ACKNOWLEDGE FEAR:** We tell ourselves "nothing scares me". We cut off helpful fear that most people experience... the fear that stops us from doing what we know is wrong. We also cut off helpful anxiety... anxiety that helps us get what we really need in life. An example is, "I don't care if I flunk."
Straight Thinking: We can choose to experience the normal fear and anxiety that makes us human. We can use those feelings as a cue for a need to change the situation or our behavior.
40. **REVENGE SEEKING ("AN EYE FOR AN EYE"):** We believe it is ok, and even necessary, to seek out revenge when we are attacked or hurt. Revenge usually escalates anger and makes the situation worse.
Straight Thinking: We can choose to talk out our feelings and wants in a civilized way. Sometimes it is helpful to bring in authority figures, mediation, or the law to intervene. Sometimes one must just choose to leave the situation. Staying as calm as possible helps us to find an intelligent solution.
41. **SECRETIVENESS:** We keep lots of mysteries and secrets about ourselves. We may claim that the secret-keeping is for our confidentiality. Using this excuse, we may never open up to others and learn to trust. By keeping secrets, no one can know us well enough to help us or become close to us. This gives us ultimate control, but it hurts our relationship-building and life coping skills. It can be self-defeating and sabotage our goals.
Straight Thinking: We can choose to open up to people who treat us kindly and who have a history of treating others kindly. Doing this allows us to ask for help when we need it; this is called interrelatedness". It also helps us to build closeness in our relationships; this is called "intimacy".
42. **SILENT POWER:** We are quiet or silent so that others will be upset. We sometimes do this

to control and intimidate others. Sometimes we do it to avoid accepting responsibility.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to tell our feelings and needs... rather than try to control and manipulate others, or try to avoid responsibility.

43. **SLACKING:** We try to do the bare minimum required and nothing more. We want to finish our task as quickly as we can so we can relax and kick back...or get someone off our back. We are impatient and restless. We put forth minimum or mediocre effort and nothing more... rather than wanting to learn, grow, improve, or do quality work.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to do a thorough and complete job through hard work, patience, genuineness, commitment, and effort. Our goal can be "doing our best".

44. **SPLITTING ("LET'S GET YOU FIGHTING"):** We use the technique of getting others to fight, while standing back and acting as an innocent bystander. In this way we remove the focus from ourselves to avoid being responsible and accountable.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to keep the focus on ourselves and take responsibility for our thinking and behavior errors... so that we can change for the better.

45. **SUGGESTIBILITY:** We become involved in irresponsible behavior due to the influence of others. Rather than standing up for what is right, we go along with what others suggest... and then use our weakness as an excuse.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to stand up for what is right, though others may strongly try to influence us in a negative direction. That is what integrity is all about.

46. **SUPER-OPTOMISM (MAGICAL THINKING):** We think we can have what we want simply by "wishing it"... instead of going through the necessary steps. Because we want something to be a certain way, then we believe it is that way. We then function according to what we want, instead of "the facts".

Straight Thinking: We can choose to identify "the facts" of a situation, understand what it is we feel and need, find out what the other person feels and needs, figure out a solution whereby both people are "winners" in the situation. Honest and calm communication with the other person may be an important and necessary tool to this process.

47. **ULTIMATE DEFENSE:** We use the ultimate defense, which is to strike out or run away (fight or flight) before the other person does. We think we're going to be hurt by our relationships (due to past painful experiences) so we often sabotage intimacy by using this tactic... again and again. That helps us feel in control and avoid pain, yet leaves us feeling lonely and without a chance for close long-term relationships.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to stay with healthy relationships and improve on them by communicating our perspective, feelings, wants, and requests. We can also use good listening skills by mirroring back the other person's perspective, feelings, wants, and requests.

48. **UNIQUENESS:** We think we are so wonderful, powerful, or special that no one else is like us. Information, rules, and responsibilities that apply to other people simply don't apply to us. We may also believe "I'm different from all the rest." "I don't need anyone, no one understands me anyway." We think we don't have to make changes or work on more responsible behavior... that's for everyone else except us.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to understand that we are not so different or special, and the

rules *do* apply to us too. We may be using this "uniqueness thinking" as an excuse not to admit our weaknesses and errors, and our need for change. We can choose to be honest and open about our thinking and behavior errors, and work to change in a positive direction.

49. **VAGUENESS:** We are vague when communicating, in order to avoid being pinned down about a particular issue. This "fogs up" our communication and gives us a sense of control and power.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to be honest and open in our communication.. that includes being specific and clear when giving out information.

50. **VICTIM ("I AM HELPLESS AND PICKED ON"):** We present ourselves as victims helpless and unable to meet expectations, unable to get our needs met. We act as if it is not possible to think, solve problems, or do things for ourselves; we are dependent on others to do these things for us. We may even enjoy talking about our problems. If we don't get exactly what we want, we suffer and are victims. When confronted about this thinking error, we may make the other person appear uncaring.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to let go of the helpless-victim role, be responsible and accountable for our actions, and work at improving our weaknesses and life circumstances.

51. **WHITE KNIGHTING (MR. GOODGUY):** We present ourselves as really nice and helpful people. Sometimes we rescue others who are vulnerable. We do this, however, only for selfish reasons-- to get noticed, praised, rewarded, take advantage of or control the other person. We may act with kindness and caring to those outside the family... yet bully, mistreat, and control those within our family.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to act helpful and kind for the benefit of others, not for ourselves.

52. **YOU'RE FINE, I'M FINE:** We try to be overly positive in order to avoid looking at the reality of pain we may have caused, our errors and weaknesses, problems. We want to focus on the good things and ignore the bad, the unpleasant. We will often work at being helpful, cooperative, supportive. We may feel that we must constantly be complimenting others or be humorous. This thinking error helps us to avoid reality by focusing on how things ought to be, rather than how they really are.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to focus on reality, both the positive and the negative. In that way, we can accept the responsibility of looking at our errors, weaknesses, and problems straight on. We then have the opportunity to try to solve our problems... and improve ourselves and our life.

53. **ZERO STATE (HOPELESS):** We periodically see ourselves as being nothing, "a zero", worthless, hopeless... and/or we think our situation is hopeless. This thinking error gives us permission to not follow through with obligations... as well as to become totally self-centered and insensitive toward others.

Straight Thinking: We can choose to stop our self pity, and instead focus on and follow through with our responsibilities and obligations.

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