



MINDSET RESET: METHODS FOR MEETING YOUR GOALS

**PRESENTED BY YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE
AND WORKLIFE PROGRAMS**

June 10, 2026

OBJECTIVES

- Define and identify common thinking traps
- Understand how cognitive distortions can inhibit productivity
- Reflect on personal stress-triggered thought patterns and communication habits
- Explore methods for managing and preventing thinking traps

SECTION 1

THINKING TRAPS

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Thinking traps are grounded in centuries of philosophy and decades of research:

- **Epictetus (~100 AD):** First to argue we can control our response to circumstances, not the circumstances themselves
- **Positive Psychology:** Scientific study of what makes a fulfilling, successful life
- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):** Links thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; evidence-based and widely accessible
- **Positive Sports Psychology:** Athletes visualize correct movement before performing; the same principle applies to work

TYPES AND EXAMPLES



Catastrophizing

Expecting the worst possible outcome



All-or-nothing thinking

Seeing situations in black and white



Over-generalization

Drawing broad conclusions from single events



Labeling

Defining yourself by one trait or mistake



Discounting the positive

Minimizing achievements and good outcomes



“Should” statements

Rigid rules that breed guilt and resentment

TYPES AND EXAMPLES



Mind reading

Assuming you know what others think



Fortune-telling

Predicting a negative future outcome as a certainty



Personalization

Blaming yourself for external events



Externalization

Blaming others for problems within your control



Unconscious bias

Acting on unexamined assumptions about others



Denial

Refusing to acknowledge reality or feedback

THINKING TRAPS IN ACTION

Example 1: Discounting the positive

- A manager receives strong reviews but fixates on one critical comment
- Dismisses all praise as irrelevant or undeserved

Trap: Filtering out the good and magnifying the negative

Example 2: Personalizing

- A team misses a deadline due to multiple contributing factors
- One employee assumes it was entirely their fault

Trap: Taking disproportionate personal responsibility for shared outcomes

DEAD-END OUTCOMES



Derails performance

Distracts from goals, purpose, and mission



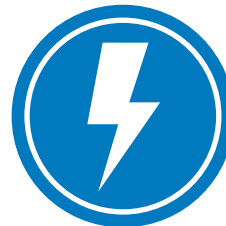
Damages relationships

Creates friction with colleagues and clients



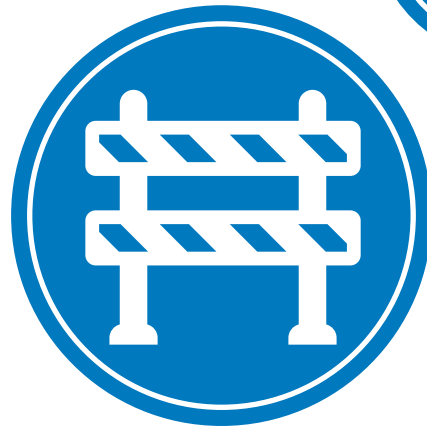
Suppresses creativity

Blocks problem-solving and innovation



Increases anxiety

Amplifies stress and emotional reactivity



Limits potential

Keeps us stuck in unhelpful patterns

SECTION 2

THINKING TRAP MANAGEMENT AND PREVENTION

STEPS FOR CHANGING A THINKING TRAP



- **Identify it**
 - Name the trap
 - Awareness is the first and most critical step



- **Suspend it**
 - Stop the thought pattern before it escalates



- **Tell someone about it**
 - Share with a trusted colleague or mentor
 - Accountability accelerates change



- **Change it**
 - Build new stress responses and stronger problem-solving habits

IDENTIFY IT: NOTICE YOUR PATTERN

Ask yourself:

- Do I revert to a default style or tendency when under pressure?
- Do I genuinely seek real feedback, and can I absorb it without becoming defensive?
- Can I view a conflict from an objective self-view rather than a reactive one?
- What does my body language, word choice, volume, and pace communicate to others?



IDENTIFY IT: NOTICE YOUR WORKPLACE TRIGGERS

Situations and interactions

- Conflict or tension
- Giving or receiving feedback
- Assigning or being assigned tasks
- Responding to complaints

People or relationships

- Manager/Employee
- Coworker/Coworker
- Employee/Vendor
- Employee/Client



SUSPEND IT

Deliberately pausing to create space between the trigger and your response is where choice lives and change is possible

- **Stop the thought pattern** before it escalates and don't let it run unchecked
- **Use a physical cue** to interrupt the spiral
 - Take a deep breath, stand up, or step away for a moment
- **Slow your nervous system** before responding — the body and mind are connected
- **Ask yourself:** Is this thought a fact, or is it an assumption?



TELL SOMEONE ABOUT IT

Thinking traps lose power when we bring them into the light

- **Say your thinking trap out loud**
 - Verbalizing the trap reduces its grip, moving it from an internal spiral to a shared reality
- **Choose a trusted colleague, mentor, supervisor, or professional**
 - Accountability accelerates change, as we grow faster in community than in isolation
- **Seek perspective, not just validation**
 - Sharing reduces shame around negative or distorted thinking patterns



CHANGE IT

To escape thinking traps, we must:

- **Recognize warning signals**
 - **Internal:** Confusion, frustration, anger
 - **External:** Frowning, crossed arms, withdrawal
- **Use thought-stopping**
 - Use a physical cue to quickly interrupt negative thought patterns in the moment
- **Insert a new thought**
 - Replace the automatic negative response with a prepared, constructive alternative



REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Take a moment to think about a recent workplace situation. Use the prompts below to guide your reflection.

- Recall a time when you felt frustrated or misunderstood at work. **Which thinking trap might have been at play?**
- Have you ever assumed what a coworker or manager was thinking, **only to find out later that you were wrong?**
- When under pressure, do you tend to catastrophize, personalize, or use all-or-nothing thinking? **What triggers this pattern?**
- What would it look like if, in that moment, you had **paused and reframed instead of reacted?**

There are no right or wrong answers.

Awareness is the goal.

SECTION 3

BEST PRACTICES

BEST PRACTICES



Stop: Pause before reacting



Prepare: Practice questions that shift your inner dialogue



Breathe: Reset your nervous system



Reframe: Choose a constructive interpretation



Listen: Tune into your inner voice



Use positive self-talk:
“I can do this,” “I will be okay,” or “I will do my best.”

SUMMARY



- Thinking traps are automatic mental patterns that distort perception and judgment
- They show up most in high-stress moments
 - Conflict, feedback, task delegation
- Self-observation is key
 - You must recognize the trap before you can change it
- Four steps to intervene
 - Identify it, suspend it, tell someone about it, change it
- Best practices
 - Stop, breathe, listen, prepare, reframe, use positive self-talk

RESOURCES

Books

- Mindset: The New Psychology of Success
 - Carol S. Dweck
- Progress Over Perfection Workbook: Practice Mindful Productivity
 - Emma Norris

TED Talk

- [The Power of Believing That You Can Improve](#)

Podcasts

- [Beyond the To-Do List](#)
- [Mindful Productivity Podcast](#)

Online Articles

- [6 Ways to Push Through Analysis Paralysis](#)
- [Breaking Through Perfectionism: A Journey Toward Progress](#)
- [Cognitive Distortions: 15 Examples and Worksheets](#)

Apps

- [MindShift CBT](#)
- [Thinkladder](#)
- [Todoist](#)

THANK YOU



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