PITFALLS IN THINKING

Labeling or Stereotyping
Seeing people or situations as fixed and unchanging, and ignoring other aspects or possibilities; for example, “My doctor doesn’t care.” or “Cancer always comes back.”

Jumping to Conclusions
Making an interpretation in the absence of clear evidence to support it; for example, when your doctor fails to mention a test result, you conclude, The results must be bad; or when a friend fails to return a phone call, you determine, “She doesn’t want to talk to me; she must be mad at me.”

Magnification (Catastrophizing) and Minimization
Exaggerating the importance or likelihood of something seen as negative, or minimizing the importance or likelihood of something seen as positive; for example, “It’s terrible and unbearable that my doctor recommends another treatment or My accomplishments don’t amount to much.”

Emotional Reasoning
Believing that it must be true because you feel it or fear it; for example, the oncologist spends only a few moments with you during a clinic visit, so you think, I feel uncared for; my oncologist doesn’t like me; or when you notice your fear, you think, If I have negative thoughts my disease will return.

Mental Filters
Picking out a limited aspect of a situation or experience and allowing it to color your perception of the whole event; for example, you have a hard time finding parking at the hospital, so The hospital is a horrible place.

All-or-Nothing Thinking
Seeing everything in black-and-white categories; for example, your spouse doesn’t help you clean up after dinner, so you declare, “I do everything around here. You don’t care about me at all!” or you receive an unwelcome test result, so you think, Nothing ever goes right for me!

Fortune Telling
You believe everything that your mind predicts as reality despite lack of evidence; for example, you have a day when you feel more tired than usual and you think, The cancer is coming back and I’m not going to be able to beat it this time.

Personalization
Interpreting an event as being about you when there are many other plausible causes or interpretations; for example, someone you know initially walks in your direction but, after getting closer, suddenly turns and walks the other way, so you think, That person dislikes me and was trying to avoid me.

Perfectionism
Thinking that you must or should behave in a certain way or else!—often combined with an unrealistic conclusion regarding the consequences of failing to do it; for example, I must be a good patient, or my doctor won’t give me the attention I need or I must keep appearances, or others will see my imperfections and reject me.

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