

Resilience Spotlight

NGB Ready & Resilient Schoolhouse



MRT Skill: Avoid Thinking Traps

What is the skill?

Avoid Thinking Traps is a skill that helps us recognize when we fall into counterproductive patterns in thinking and change our thoughts to be more flexible, accurate, and thorough.

What competency does the skill build?

The skill of Avoid Thinking Traps helps us build the competency of **Mental Agility** by deliberately considering alternate perspectives and ultimately training ourselves to be more flexible, accurate, and thorough in our thinking.

It's a Trap

Based on research Martin Seligman and Aaron Beck

Thinking Traps are when our brain takes short cuts to explain why bad things happen, and these short cuts cause us miss critical information. They offer a quick, easy explanation, but can be inaccurate and get us in trouble.

Common Thinking Traps

Below is a scenario and examples of a few common Thinking Traps. Each Thinking Trap has a specific **Mental Cue** and **Critical Question** designed to help us get out of the trap and find the information we might be missing.

Scenario: You and your significant other just had a fight about money.

Jumping to Conclusions

"She's going to give me the silent treatment."

Believing you are certain about a situation despite having little or no evidence to support it

Slow Down: *What is the evidence for and against my thoughts?*

Them, Them, Them

"He wastes too much money."

Believing others or circumstances are the sole cause of every problem you encounter

Look inward: *How did I contribute to the situation?*

Mind Reading

"He should've known I was saving to pay off the credit card."

Assuming you know what someone is thinking or expecting them to know what you are thinking

Speak Up: *Did I express myself? Did I ask for information?*

Everything, Everything, Everything

"If we can't agree on finances, how are we supposed to make this marriage work."

Believing one event will negatively impact many areas of your life or allowing one bad thing to define yourself or someone else

Get specific: *What specific area of my life will be affected?*

Me, Me, Me

"I should be making more money."

Believing you are the sole cause of every problem you encounter

Look Outward: *How did others or circumstances contribute to the situation?*

Always, Always, Always

"We will never get out of debt."

Believing that negative events are unchangeable and you have little or no control over them

Grab Control: *What's changeable, what can I control?*

Apply it

Watch out for Thinking Traps in your own thoughts, keeping an eye for any **patterns** you might fall into. When you think you might be in a Thinking Trap, use the **Mental Cues** and **Critical Questions** to change the way you're thinking and look for any information you might be missing.