

# Negative Thinking Traps

- **Black & White / All-or-Nothing / Dichotomous thinking**
  - Things are good or bad, safe or dangerous. No middle ground.
  - Things are perfect or they are a total failure, nothing in between
- **Focusing on the Negatives / Negative Filter**
  - Focusing in on the negative, scary, or unfair things, ignoring anything good.
- **Overgeneralization**
  - An “F” on one assignment means you’ll never succeed in anything.
  - One bad interaction and you decide someone is a jerk. Something bad in one area means something about all areas; something tough about right now means your whole future will be tough; etc.
- **Personalization**
  - Everything is about you. Your friend looks upset, you assume it must be your fault. Your Father doesn’t agree with you, you assume he’s trying to make you mad.
- **Catastrophizing**
  - Your friend doesn’t call when he says he will. You think the friendship must be over.
  - You forget to turn in an assignment, you think you’re going to flunk out of high school, never get into the college you want.
- **Perfectionism / Setting Unrealistic Expectations**
  - Asking yourself to be perfect, not allowing yourself to make mistakes.
  - This makes you feel like a failure when you do make mistakes (which is only human), and discourages you from trying anything new, making it hard to get a sense of achievement and preventing you from doing things you might enjoy.
- **Mind Reading**
  - Acting like you can tell what people are thinking about you. Getting very negative or angry when often it is only your imagination. Sometimes you might be right, but most of the time you got worried or upset over a situation that never really existed.
- **Minimizing/Discounting**
  - You maximize your failures and minimize your successes. You discount positive events and allow negative events to count more.
  - Even though I hit a home run earlier in the game, I let my team down when I struck out later in the game.
- **Blaming**
  - You focus on the other person as the source of the problem, when you may have had some part in it. You expect the other person to change or fix things when there are things you could do.

