



How to Recognize Destructive Thoughts

“Why do I continue to act in ways that sabotage my life?”

This is a common question, and the answer is very simple: *Because of what you THINK!* Change happens all the time, everyday, about 60,000 times a day *even when you don't know it.* The external world doesn't determine your emotions, your thoughts do. When you want to *change what you feel or do, you must change your own thoughts.*

- ❑ **Overgeneralization.** Creating sweeping conclusions about yourself denies what is true about your life. For example, *“I've never been successful, so I won't be successful now.”* Or, *“I always fail!”*
- ❑ **Fortune Telling.** Pretending you know what the future holds only sabotages your change efforts. For example, *“I've seen a therapist before and it didn't work. I just know this isn't going to work for me now either.”*
- ❑ **Mental Filter.** You can create the reality you want by only focusing on what you deem important. You can recognize this when you say, *“I don't have to exercise because I'm really good at counting calories and that will take the weight off.”*
- ❑ **Should Statements.** Saying what you “should,” “must” or “ought” to do only set you up for failure. Ask yourself, “Where's the rule book that says I should do this?” This line of thinking takes away your choices. For example, *“I must not have a cookie because I will gain back all of my weight.”*
- ❑ **Dismissing Positives.** If you've heard yourself say, *“Anybody can do this, it's no big deal,”* you might not be recognizing your changes! This kind of self-sabotage keep you stuck in what's going WRONG as opposed to what's going RIGHT.
- ❑ **Blaming.** Not taking responsibility for your own thoughts, emotions and actions keeps you stuck as a victim and blaming others. If you've said, *“My husband just doesn't understand me and that's why we argue so much,”* or *“That homework assignment my therapist gave me was stupid – it set me up to fail,”* you aren't taking responsibility and this will create negative emotions and actions.
- ❑ **All or Nothing.** *“My yelled at my kids again today, which proves I'm a horrible mother!”* This is black and white thinking that leaves you no alternative but to fail, especially when you have an unrealistic expectation of success.
- ❑ **Emotional Reasoning.** Saying *“It's been such a stressful, hard week, and I deserve to drink as much as I want this weekend”* is only justifying your destructive behavior. If you feel negative emotions, don't work it out by giving up on your life change!

