

## 36 Thinking Errors

### 1. ENERGY

I am very energetic, I want action, I want to move when I am bored, I have a **high level** of mental activity directed to a flow of ideas about what would make my life more exciting. I do not know how to cope with **boredom**.

### 2. FEAR

My fears are widespread, persistent, and intense, especially fear of being caught for something, fear of injury or death, and fear of being put down or rejected. I will do almost anything to avoid or medicate away my fears. They dominate me.

### 3. ZERO STATE

This is a periodic experience of feeling like I am an absolute nothing, a zero; feeling absolute worthlessness, hopelessness, and futility. My greatest fear is that I am a nothing and I compensate by attempting to prove that I am everything.

### 4. ANGER

To work with me is like a war against anger. I respond with anger to anything or anyone I see as opposing what I want for myself. Anger is a major way of controlling people and situations.

### 5. PRIDE

Unhealthy pride is an unrealistically high evaluation of oneself. I think I am better than anyone else, even when this is clearly not the case. This pride preserves my rigid self-image that I have created of and for myself. I see only my thinking and ideas as valid and refuse to accept any ideas that do not originate within me. Threats of consequences may mean nothing to me when I see myself having to choose between compromising (backing down) or maintaining my unhealthy pride.

### 6. POWER THRUST

I need power and control over others. I spend my life seeking power over others instead of spending life improving myself. My greatest power excitement is doing the forbidden and getting away with it. I seek power, control, and dominance in all areas of my life. Unless things go my way, I am not satisfied with the outcome.

### 7. SENTIMENTALITY

I may express a lot of sentiment (nice words, nice thoughts) about mothers, old people, invalids, babies, animals, etc, but my sentiments are not backed up by responsible, caring behavior. The people I say that "I love" are often those I hurt the most, and are often the people who are easiest for me to control and dominate.

## **8. RELIGIOSITY**

I may be very active in religion but it is isolated – I do not practice its principles in my daily behavior. Like sentimentality, my religious beliefs do not stop me from unhealthy thinking or unhealthy activities. Instead they support my self-image as a “good and decent person.” which enables me to continue acting out as I see fit.

## **9. CONCRETE THINKING**

I miss the point. I focus on particular objects and events and do not understand abstract principles or see larger patterns and general concepts. I may misuse words, not understanding their abstract meaning, such as “love”, “friendship”, “trust”, etc. I pay attention to the surface and superficial without understanding deeper meanings. My interpretations are literal and utilitarian. I interpret situations and events such that it confirms my viewpoint on life. I refuse to see anything in a light other than what I already know and viewing information at a surface level enables me to do so.

## **10. FRAGMENTATION**

Extreme changes in my mental state occur within short periods of time. There is a pattern of starting something, then changing my mind. I go with whatever I’m thinking about at the moment, “forgetting” anything that might contradict my plan. Fragmentations is used to dismiss sentimentality and religion when they do not fit with current desires or plans.

## **11. UNIQUENESS**

I consider myself to be special, one-of-a-kind, and totally different from others, especially other unhealthy individuals. I want to be “above” the rest and stress my “unique” set of circumstances. I think my circumstances and/or situation are different from others. This thinking enables me to ignore all outside input.

## **12. PERFECTIONISM**

I have extreme standards of perfectionism but do not apply them consistently. I may apply my high standards to others, then criticize them when they fall short in any way I deem important. Or I may use perfectionism to avoid a difficult task because I might not succeed “perfectly”. My perfectionism depends on what I value, usually something I want to do at the moment.

## **13. SUGGESTIBILITY**

I am easily swayed to any behavior I like, especially when I am **bored** and looking for **action/excitement**. I may take huge risks with behavior that leads to something I want. I am not “**suggestible**” to responsible thinking and behavior and do not look towards responsible people for role models; I do not want to be like them.

#### **14. LONERISM**

I lead a secretive life, I'm against the world. I feel I am apart from others even if I am socially active. Although I voice sentimentality, I am never so tight with anyone that I cannot get up and go at a moment's notice if something more exciting comes along. "Only I will care for my needs" is my thinking and as such, when I feel my needs are not being met, I am justified in meeting anyway I see fit.

#### **15. SEXUALITY**

My sexuality is solely focused on control. I do not view my sexuality as a means to greater intimacy in a committed marriage relationship, but as a means to gaining a sense of control. I may manipulate through coercion, intimidation, grooming or force of all kinds to achieve this. The "partner" is inconsequential to me, for my sexuality is totally self-centered.

#### **16. LYING**

Lying is a way of life for me – it is another way to gain control and to save me from consequences. More common than premeditated lying is automatic, habitual lying or deception. I lie by omitting important facts or distorting them. Lying defines my reality and helps me maintain control by depriving others of information.

#### **17. CLOSED CHANNEL**

Secrecy equals powers. I do not give out information about myself willingly. I have a closed mind and do not take in messages that contradict **my way of thinking**. I am not receptive to challenges of my perspective – I do not hear what I do not want to hear.

#### **18. "I CAN'T"**

I use "I can't" when I mean "I won't", that is, when I am not willing to do something. I use this to excuse myself, justify and escape responsibility. At the same time I believe there is nothing I cannot do if I put my mind to it.

#### **19. VICTIM STANCE**

When I am held accountable for my actions, I blame others and portray myself as a victim. Having no regard for the rights of others, I expect total respect for my rights and desires from everyone. If I do not get what I want or feel I am entitled to, I see myself as poorly treated and thus a victim. I see how I have always been a victim but not how I have victimized others. (**Note:** A person who refuses to give up the victim stance will not change. According to Samenow and Yochelson, this particular error is the single best predictor regarding the change process.)

#### **20. LACK OF TIME PERSPECTIVE**

I expect immediate success or possession of what I want. I do not realistically view the past or learn from experience, nor do I learn to make realistic plans or predictions of my future. I want everything now. If my unrealistic expectations are not met, then I believe the end goal is unreachable: I quit too early to see results.

## **21. FAILURE TO PUT ONESELF IN ANOTHER'S POSITION**

I demand every break and consideration for myself, I do not stop to think about what other people think, feel, or expect. I may disregard another's position, even ignore their existence while planning to get what I desire. I do not recognize how many people are affected by my actions, nor how each is affected.

## **22. FAILURE TO CONSIDER INJURY TO OTHERS**

My life has involved extensive injury to those around me, but I do not view myself as hurting others. When held accountable I see myself as the injured party. I can witness tears, physical and verbal resistance, and even physical symptoms of injury and still deny that I hurt anyone.

## **23. FAILURE TO ASSUME OBLIGATION**

I have no sense of real obligation or responsibility and use any excuse to avoid them. Obligations interfere with what I want to do. Obligation is seen as a position of weakness vulnerable to others' control. Obligations are irritating to me and, if pushed, I will respond with resentment and anger.

## **24. FAILURE TO ASSUME RESPONSIBLE INITIATIVES**

I do not want to assume responsible initiatives (planning and starting projects) because (a) they fail to provide the excitement and power thrust of forbidden activities, (b) they do not guarantee success or triumph, and (c) I am often afraid that taking on responsible tasks will expose my lack of knowledge and ineptness. I am a "get-by-artist", expecting others to figure out everything that needs to be done, tell me how, and make it easy for me to accomplish.

## **25. OWNERSHIP**

if I am looking at it, want it, it is mine (including human beings). I do not recognize that other people own things. I do not recognize that there is such a thing as "theft". I consider myself as a decent person with a right to anything I desire – I "deserve" to have it. I see people as pawns or checkers waiting to be dealt with as I wish. I justify taking something from someone by saying they do not need it as much as I do, they do not deserve it, or they don't care if I have it, etc...

## **26. FEAR OF FEAR**

I am afraid that fear will keep me from doing things. I do not discern the difference between healthy fear and unhealthy fear. As such I view all fear as bad and refuse to acknowledge it. Fear is my enemy. Sometimes I use drugs or alcohol to eliminate fear. When I experience fear (including doubt, concern, apprehension, anxiety) I deny it or consider it a put down.

## **27. LACK OF TRUST**

Although I refuse to trust others, I demand that they trust me, even though my behavior clearly shows I am not trustworthy. I do not think of “trust” in terms of relationship or responsibility to others. Trust, to me, means that others will always accept my version of reality. “Trusting God” means that if I pray at the right time, God will get me out of a spot. I rely on control, not trust. My favorite victims are those who are the most trusting, those I have manipulated to believe I have their best interests at heart. I don’t actually trust anyone.

## **28. REFUSAL TO BE DEPENDENT**

Like anyone else, I am dependent upon others for some things in life. But I do not see myself this way. To me, dependence equals weakness and makes me vulnerable. I do not understand the concept of interdependence. I like others to depend on me even though I am not dependable.

## **29. LACK OF INTEREST IN RESPONSIBLE PERFORMANCE**

I do not experience the feeling of satisfaction that comes from doing a task responsibly or putting out long term effort. Responsible performances look dull and boring because it doesn’t guarantee immediate excitement. When I do become interested in a responsible project, my interest is short lived unless I feel the excitement of being noticed a lot.

## **30. PRETENTIOUSNESS**

I have tremendously over-rated ideas about myself. I think I am the best, I will be the best, but not that I will do my best. I may like to flash money, drive a big truck, or appear superior to others, feeling I do not need to put forth the same effort as others to be a success or get what I want. I set unrealistic goals but I am not willing to follow through with the real work involved in honest achievement.

## **31. FAILURE TO MAKE AN EFFORT OR ENDURE ADVERSITY**

“Effort” means doing what one does not want to do, or not doing what one does want to do. Instead of enduring the adversity of life, I escape into coping thoughts and actions. Adversity is anything that is not going my way, which I see as a failure to control. I do not learn and grow from life experiences or difficulties, because I do not believe I my life should have difficulty.

## **32. POOR DECISION-MAKING FOR RESPONSIBLE LIVING**

I do not use sound reasoning, fact-finding, or consideration of costs, risks, or options. I am reluctant to ask questions to learn facts before making decisions. If my pretensions or desires are contradicted by the facts, I do not want to hear them.

### **33. CORROSION AND CUT-OFF**

I may stop myself from an unhealthy activity due to my conscience, a sincere wish to change, sentimental, religious thinking, or fear of getting caught. However, I gradually overcome my inhibitions by a process of “corrosion” and “cut-off”. Corrosion is a mental process in which I gradually drown out my inhibitions by repeating and increasing my thoughts towards the unhealthy behavior, until my desire to act-out outweighs my inhibitions. Cut-off is a mental process that gets rid of my inhibiting thoughts quickly and completely by shifting my entire focus onto the act itself. I enter a tunnel vision, seeing only the desired behavior without consideration of the consequences.

### **34. BUILDING UP THE OPINION OF ONESELF AS A GOOD PERSON**

I convince myself that I am really a good and decent person and reject that I engage in destructive behaviors even though I have clearly committed engaged in them long term. The false image of myself as a good person gives me a license to not change. I minimize the harm I have caused through both my actions and lack of action. I may refer to planned, serious failures as “mistakes”. My actions may lead to lifetimes of devastation, pain or even death for others, but I view my few good deeds as “canceling out” the harm I have done.

### **35. DEFERMENT**

I am going to stop my unhealthy destructive behavior and it’s supporting behaviors and I am going to do the hard work – tomorrow. But today I cannot. I think that on some future date it will be easier to change, but that day never comes. I may commit to long term effort and change needed, but continually put off or postpone the start date.

### **36. SUPER-OPTIMISM**

If I decide I want to do something, I consider it as good as done. As I approach an unhealthy activity, I reach a state of absolute certainty that I will not face any negative consequence, no matter how unrealistic my plan is. I do not examine reasonable doubts about anything if I want it done. If someone tells me “maybe” I regard it as a “yes”. If I decided to become a responsible person, I am sure of my success and consider the change to have already happened just because I want it that way. I use super-optimism to convince myself that I do not really have to do any work to make things turn out alright. – this applies to future job, future relationships, etc...”