# What Are Thinking Traps?

## Can you actually retrain your brain to avoid negative thought patterns?

As you watch the KQED *Above the Noise* video "How Your Brain Tricks You into Negative Thinking," capture your thoughts in the chart below.

| | Things I have learned |
|---|---|
| **What is a *thinking trap*?** | 00:53–01:07<br>• Also called "cognitive distortions."<br>• As Myles said, they are "types of mental shortcuts that our brains can take to help us process the world around us." They're basically exaggerated or irrational negative thought patterns that can lead us to believe things that aren't necessarily true.<br>• And as Dr. Ruth Smith defined, "It's a distorted way of thinking about either yourself or the world around you." |
| **What are the 5 thinking traps mentioned in the video?** | 02:08–06:50<br>1. **All-or-Nothing Thinking** (02:18)<br>2. **Labeling** (03:27)<br>3. **Mind Reading** (03:51)<br>4. **Negative Filter** (04:38)<br>5. **(Fallacy of) Shoulds** (05:38) |
| **What are some tips to avoid falling into thinking traps?** | • Ask yourself: What is the evidence that what I'm believing is true? (02:53–03:09)<br>• Notice your thought and be willing to see it differently. (04:33–04:39)<br>• Search for evidence that goes against your thinking. (05:16–05:23)<br>• Don't judge yourself if you find that you're falling back into negative thinking. It takes time to shift a habit. (07:14–07:20)<br>• Practice coming up with alternative thoughts, or alternative ways of thinking.<br>• As Myles notes, "... one thing psychologists recommend is watching TV." (07:29–07:45)<br>  ○ Watching shows and identifying when characters engage in these types of thinking traps.<br>  ○ Recognizing these patterns in other people can make it easier to recognize them in yourself. |



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