

# Thinking Errors

## AKA: Cognitive Distortions

Thinking Errors or Cognitive Distortions lead us to trouble when we use them to make sense of our poor choices and antisocial behavior. We also end up with consequences that we do not like. The four thinking errors we learn about in Moral Reasoning are:

**Self-centered Thinking:** Thinking about only your own needs or interests, not caring about others. One example is saying “If I lie to people, it is nobody’s business but mine.”

**Assuming the Worst:** Acting as if the worst outcome in a situation is the only possible outcome. Thinking people are out to get you. One example is saying, “I might as well lie, people won’t believe me if I tell the truth.”

**Blaming Others:** Not accepting responsibility for your choices and consequences. Making it seem like someone forced you to act how you did. Saying someone else is responsible. One example is saying, “People make me lie when they ask too many questions.”

**Minimizing/mislabeling:** Trying to make something ‘okay’ by making it less than or different from what it really is. One example is saying, “Everybody lies, it’s no big deal.”

These same styles of thinking can also lead us to positive decisions.

Style of Thinking	Positive/Pro-social	Okay Because
Self-Centered Thinking	I am not going to rob a bank with you because I don’t want to get in trouble. You do whatever you want.	You are using <i>Thinking Ahead</i> to stay out of a situation that may lead to trouble.
Assuming the Worst	If I drink and drive, I will die.	You are using <i>Thinking Ahead</i> and may save your own life.
Blaming Others	If there weren’t so many drug dealers in my neighborhood, it would be a safer place to live.	If it is a factual statement, then you are not trying to blame someone else.
Minimizing/mislabeling	It is no big deal to get a flu shot, the needle just hurts for a second.	You are using a <i>Reminder</i> to help to calm yourself down.