

## Thinking Errors that Create Problems in Relationships

**Anger:** We may use anger to keep others away and help us avoid unpleasant feelings like shame, sadness, or fear. Rather than focusing on real feelings or actual actions, this error causes us to focus on something besides the real issues at hand. When we throw tantrums, act aggressively, respond sarcastically, or fly into a rage, we get others to focus on our anger rather than on real, solvable issues.

**Making Assumptions:** We use this when we believe that we know how others think or feel. Rather than checking facts, we assume that we know something based on a lack of fact-checking.

**Blaming, Justifying, and Excuses:** We use the error of blaming in order to avoid our own responsibility. Blaming can be used to build resentment toward someone else. Justifying allows us to explain a reason, usually not valid, and therefore, disallows responsibility and change. Justifying and blaming are defensive acts that don't allow real solutions for problems and avoids personal responsibility. Making excuses, blaming, and justifying prevents personal responsibility and also denies possible real solutions to problems.

**Confusion:** Playing at being confused can be a power-move. Using confusion, we claim to be without understanding but it can really be a way to reject clarification of a problem. When we remain confused, we don't have to meet expectations or make change.

**Fact Stacking:** We "fact stack" to make a powerful case. We believe it gives us more power. We usually arrange the facts for our own benefit, not for the benefit of the other. Again, there is no possible of solution when facts are stacked to make a case.

**Fronting:** This is when we present ourselves as helpful when we are really trying to manipulate others so that we won't be confronted. This message has a hidden meaning: "Since I'm nice to you, you must be nice to me (not confront)".

**Grandiosity or Maximizing:** This is "making a mountain out of a mole hill". Using this behavior often causes others to focus on insignificant things rather than the issue at hand. Sometimes by "setting little fires", we can focus attention on trivial matters and create chaos. This way, we do not have to focus on the facts of our behavior.

**Helplessness or Victim Stance:** This error occurs when we present ourselves as helpless, unable to meet expectations, and/or in need of others. Helplessness and Victim Stance are a method for maintaining control over others.

**Hopovers:** This error is also known as sidetracking or "changing the subject." We use this when we change the subject to avoid confrontation. In this manner, we can distract others from the real issues, thereby disallowing any solution to any real problem.

**Cockiness:** In this, we overestimate the amount of change we made and underestimate the amount of change the needs to be made. When we do this, we pretend there is no need for further goal setting, development, or improvement.

**Attitude of “I Can’t”:** We use this so that others won’t expect us to do what is required or expected. This will ultimately lead to disappointment, failure, and a loss of control.

**Entitlement:** This is the belief that it is proper to take whatever we want. We may expect others to do what we want them to do. We may treat the property of others as ours, to do with as we please.

**Keeping Score:** We may “keep score” when we quietly keep a record of the mistakes other’s make, rather than focusing on one particular issue at hand. This allow us to feel better about ourselves because we haven’t made as many mistakes as the other person.

**Lack of Empathy:** This is a refusal to think of how our actions impact others. We choose not to have any concept of emotionally hurting another person or causing mental or emotional pain.

**Splitting:** Some people like to start fights in order to stand back and watch. Using this error, people can manipulate and control others so that they become aggressive or hostile toward one another, while we the initiator can “solve” the problem.

**Lying:** We may use this to distort, confuse, or make fools or other people. There are three forms of lying:

1. Omission: We leave out important truths in our explanations.
2. Commission: This is when we make up things that are not true.
3. Action: This is when we behave in a way that is not accurate or that suggests something that is not true. We may show support for someone else, when in fact, we are being critical of that person. By showing support, we encourage the person to make a mistake, which may make us look better.

**Ridicule:** Ridicule gives us a false sense of power. We can keep others waiting and hoping for approval.

**Minimizing:** We use this when we try to make things seem smaller than they really are. Often we use words like “just” and “only” to make what we did seem smaller or less important.

**My Way or No Way:** This is the insistence that things must be done our way or nothing will be allowed to happen. This error leaves no alternatives or choices for the other person in the relationship.

**Pet Me:** This is when we set up other people so that our needs are constantly being met. We often seek compliments. We want to be noticed, cuddled, recognized, get attention, and certainly want to avoid feeling bad.

**Powerplay:** This is when we insist on being right, no matter what. We may enjoy arguing and fighting for the sake of winning. We may get a “high” from dominating other people.

**Refusal to Accept Obligations:** This may look like forgetfulness, but it can actually be an excuse for not completing assignments or tasks. We may ignore our responsibilities and promises by subtly refusing to accept the obligations.

**Secretiveness:** We may want to keep mysteries about ourselves in order to avoid intimacy and prevent the pain of possible rejection. By doing this, no one can help us or know us well enough to create intimacy. We believe that we can avoid rejection by doing this. It can also be a statement of power. If no one knows us, they can have no power over us.

**Seeking Sympathy:** This is when we say and do things in order to get others to feel sorry for us.

**Silent Power:** This error builds frustration in others and gives us a sense of power. However, silence, will never accomplish the real goal of working with others, creating intimacy, and solving problems.

**Uniqueness:** This allows us to believe that we are so special that the rules are for others, certainly not for us. This error allows us to believe that we are one of a kind and unlike all others.

**Vagueness:** When we avoid giving specific information, we can't get pinned down. When we are not precise and clear, our actions can never be examined.

**Victim Stance:** Often we want others to feel sorry for us. To do this, we present ourselves as the "true victim." Sometimes we use this thinking error by explaining, "I wouldn't have hurt him, if I hadn't been hurt myself". I we use this thinking error to try to make others see us as powerless and, therefore, not responsible for our own behavior.

**You're Okay, I'm Okay:** We often try to be extremely positive in order to avoid looking at the reality of the pain we have caused. We may even start to worry about other's problems, rather than think about our own actions and any hurt we may have caused. Most often, we focus on the "good things" and ignore the bad. Using this, we avoid reality and the possibility of real change.