

Thinking Errors that Lead to Faulty Conclusions & Trauma-Related Guilt

Thinking error that contributes to faulty conclusions about knowledge possessed before the outcome was known (regarding the <i>foreseeability and preventability</i> of negative outcomes)	
HB	Hindsight-biased thinking
Thinking errors that contribute to faulty conclusions about <i>justification</i> or goodness of reasons for acting as one did.	
J #1	Weighing the merits of actions taken against idealized actions that did not exist
J #2	Weighing the merits of actions taken against options that only came to mind later
J #3	Focusing only on “good” things that might have happened had an alternative action been taken
J #4	Tendency to overlook “benefits” association with actions taken
J #5	Failure to compare available options in terms of their perceived probabilities of success before outcomes were known
J #6	Failure to realize that (a) acting on speculative hunches rarely pays off, and (b) occurrence of a low-probability event is not evidence that one should have “bet” on this outcome before it occurred
J #7	Failure to recognize that different decision-making “rules” apply when time is precious than in situations that allow extended contemplation of options
J #8	Failure to recognize that in heightened states of negative arousal, one’s ability to think clearly and make logical decisions is impaired
Thinking errors that contribute to faulty conclusions about degree of <i>responsibility</i> for causing negative outcomes	
R #1	Hindsight-biased thinking
R #2	Obliviousness to totality of forces that cause traumatic events
R #3	Equating a belief that one could have done something to prevent the traumatic event with a belief that one caused the event
R #4	Confusion between responsibility as accountability (e.g., “my job”) and responsibility as having the power to cause or control outcomes
R #5	Existential beliefs about accountability and the need to accept the consequences of one’s actions – which fail to take into account the causal power of situational forces
Thinking errors that contribute to faulty conclusions about <i>wrongdoing</i> or violation of values	
W #1	Tendency to conclude wrongdoing on the basis of outcome rather than on the basis of one’s intentions before the outcome was known
W #2	Failure to realize that strong emotional reactions are not under voluntary control (i.e., not a matter of choice of willpower)
W #3	The tendency to “inflate” the seriousness of a minor moral violation – from “misdemeanor” to “felony” status – when the minor violation leads unforeseeably to a traumatic outcome
W #4	Failure to recognize that when all available options have negative outcomes, the least bad option is a sound and moral choice
Thinking error that contributes to all of the faulty conclusions	
ALL:	Belief that an emotional reaction to an idea provides evidence for the idea’s validity – also called <i>emotional reasoning</i>