

TABLE 3.2. Thinking Errors That Are Common in Anxiety

The following is a list of thinking errors that are common when people feel afraid or anxious. You may find that you make some of these errors when you feel anxious, but you probably don't make all of the errors every time you are anxious. Read through the list of errors with their definition and examples. Put a check mark beside the ones that are particularly relevant for you. You will notice the errors overlap because they all deal with different aspects of overestimating threat and underestimating your coping ability and safety when feeling anxious.

Thinking error	Definition	Examples
Catastrophizing (overestimating threat and danger)	Focusing on the worst possible outcome in an anxious situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thinking that chest tightness is sign of a heart attack.</li> <li>Assuming friends think your comment is stupid.</li> <li>Thinking you'll be fired for making a mistake in your report.</li> </ul>
Jumping to conclusions	Expecting that a dreaded outcome is extremely likely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expecting that you will fail the exam when unsure of a question.</li> <li>Predicting that your mind will go blank during the speech.</li> <li>Predicting that you will be extremely anxious if you make the trip.</li> </ul>
Tunnel vision	Focusing only on possible threat-relevant information while ignoring evidence of safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noticing that a person looks bored while you are speaking in a meeting.</li> <li>Focusing exclusively on anxiety symptoms while in the grocery store.</li> <li>Worrying about a medical test and only thinking it could be positive for cancer.</li> </ul>
Nearsightedness	Tendency to assume that threat is imminent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Socially anxious person thinking every morning she prepares for work that today she could say something embarrassing.</li> <li>Worry-prone individual being convinced he will be fired any day.</li> <li>Person with fear of vomiting being concerned she is about to become sick to her stomach because she has an "unsettled feeling."</li> </ul>
Emotional reasoning	Assuming that the more intense the anxiety, the greater the actual threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Flying must be dangerous because I feel so anxious when I fly."</li> <li>Person with panic assuming the likelihood of "losing control" is greater when feeling intense anxiety.</li> <li>Worry-prone individual being even more convinced something bad will happen because she feels anxious.</li> </ul>
All-or-nothing thinking	Viewing threat and safety in rigid, absolute terms as either present or absent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Person with panic disorder always thinking of having a full-blown panic attack if she feels any anxiety.</li> <li>Person with social anxiety being convinced his work colleagues will think he is incompetent if he speaks up.</li> <li>A worrier thinking she will never find a job after being laid off from work.</li> </ul>

Note. Reprinted with permission from *Cognitive Therapy of Anxiety Disorders* by David A. Clark and Aaron T. Beck (p. 169). Copyright 2010 by The Guilford Press.