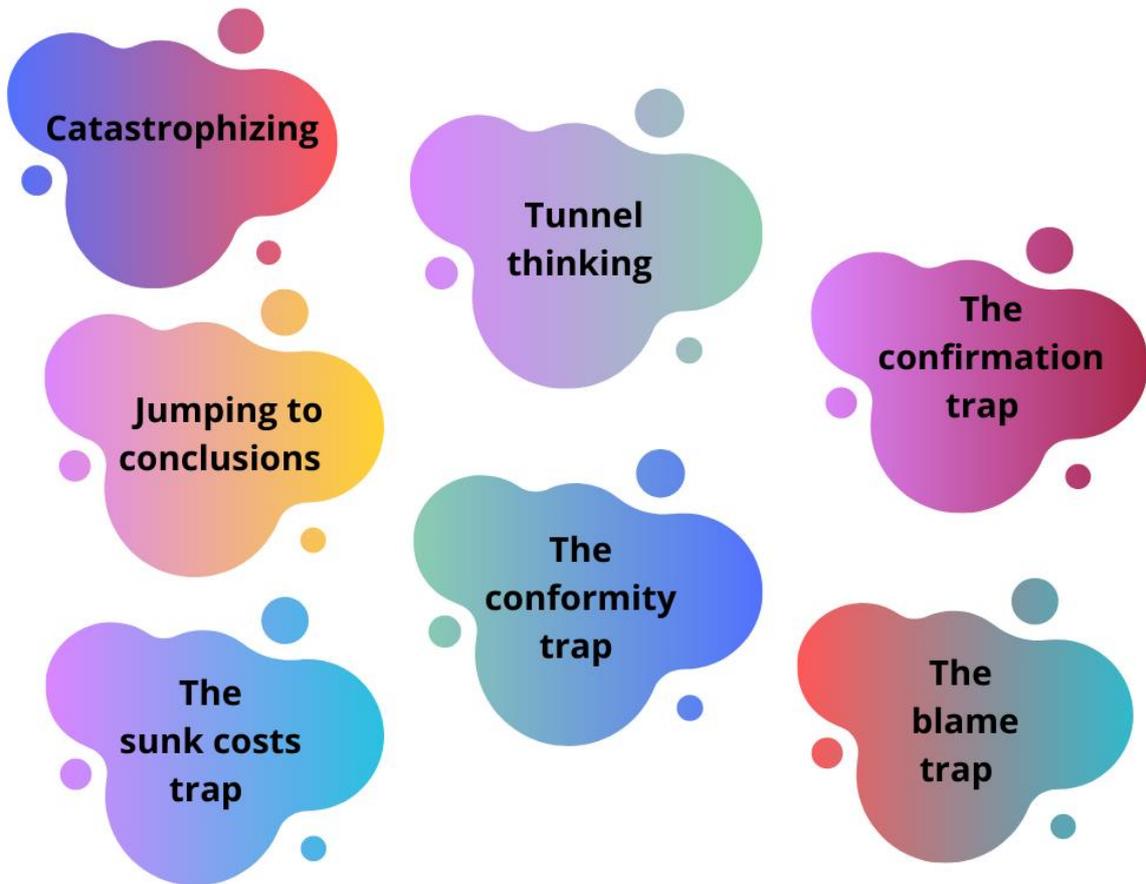


Mind Traps



1. **Catastrophizing:** tormenting yourself with disturbing thoughts about future possibilities and worst-case scenarios.

The more you worry and play the worse-case scenario over in your mind, the more you strengthen these neural pathways and make that way of thinking your default setting. You are allowing negative possibilities in the future to dominate what's happening in the present.

2. **Jumping to conclusions:** judging or deciding something before you have all the relevant information or have considered the evidence.

Remember your brain likes to make shortcuts, without you usually being aware of it. But when you jump to conclusions, you are relying on past information or experience to predict a future outcome.

3. Tunnel thinking: your mind excludes possibilities and options.

Tunnel thinking can be related to future dependent happiness and such a narrow focus can help you work towards a goal. It can, however, prevent you being mindful because you are over-focused on the future to the exclusion of what's happening, your surroundings and what you are feeling and experiencing right now. Focusing your happiness on something in the future means you miss out on happiness now.

Tunnel thinking can also work in reverse – focusing on the past. You're stuck in the past – the past is dominating your present.

4. The confirmation trap: seeking information that supports your existing way of thinking.

Drawing on past experience can help inform decisions, but this is not always helpful. The confirmation trap prevents you from being mindful because you may be misled by out of date information or ideas or unable to see things according to current information.

Be aware too, that the confirmation trap is also the basis for prejudice – pre-judging a situation or person based on a fixed opinion or feeling formed beforehand, without full reasoning or knowledge.

5. The conformity trap: falling in with other people's way of thinking

For most of us, questioning what we are told feels rude and intrusive and because we are discouraged from questioning what we are told, we suppress the instinct to question our own thinking.

To a greater or lesser extent, we simply accept the beliefs and ways of thinking of other people, even if this produces feelings and behaviours that are self-defeating, even destructive.

Certainly, going along with what everyone else thinks can make social relations run smoothly, but it's easy to become trapped into a single understanding of information; to only see things from one perspective.

6. The sunk costs trap: the time and effort you have already put into a situation and can never get back

Sunk costs can fool you into sticking with something you would be best off ending, so you continue to put more time, effort or money into someone or something even though it's plainly not doing you any good.

Sure, you mustn't give up too easily on your commitments, otherwise nothing would get achieved. But refusing to let go means you are allowing the past to dictate the present rather than reorganising that all that matters is what happens from now on.

- 7. The blame trap:** placing all responsibility for something that has gone wrong on someone or something else.

How often have you instantly looked for someone to blame for the unfortunate situation you find yourself in? There are no benefits to the blame trap. Once, something has already happened, there is often nothing you can do to alter it. But, because you are unable to accept what has happened, you are also unable to focus and manage what's happening right now. You are trapped in the blame game.