Employee Assistant Program Presents:

Thinking Traps

Objectives

To define cognitive thinking
To become aware of both your own and others’ negative thinking traps
Begin to see how both you and others fall into these thinking traps so easily and how they can lead to performance and behavior issues
How to reverse these thinking traps for yourself
Be able to help others reverse their thinking traps

Definition

Certain types or patterns of thoughts tend to trap us in anxiety. These are called Thinking Traps. — Source: Anxiety BC

Whatever thinking traps you tend to fall into, the first important step is to recognize your personal traps.
What are thinking traps?
- Jumping to conclusions
- Going to the worst case scenario
- When we make assumptions without evidence to back it up
- Confusing our thoughts with our actions

At the end of the day, we are our worst enemy...
- Thinking traps limit our potential
- Get in the way of us having a sense of mission
- Interfere with job satisfaction
- They effect various levels
  - Myself, my family, my community, the greater good
- We are not disturbed by the event, it’s how we view the event

The history
- Epictetus in 55 EC – first philosopher who said we can control our thoughts
  - The theory of reality and human nature
  - This work looks at the problem in human life – we suffer because we can’t distinguish between what is in our control and what is not
Types of thinking traps

- Catastrophizing (most common and most dangerous)
  - Causes our brain to work against us
  - It's a Yes/No question, but the answer is usually sometimes
- Discounting/Discrediting
  - Always, Should, Never and Must
- Unconscious Bias
- Personalizing – it’s all about me
- Externalizing – it’s everyone else’s fault but mine
- Denial

Questions to ask yourself

- Am I being realistic?
- How else can I view this situation?
  - Is it a fact or just my opinion?
  - Am I making assumptions?
- What is the worst that could happen?
- Am I allowing my past to color my thinking?
- Have I told or asked either:
  - Too many people
  - The wrong people
- Is this worth worrying about?
- What happens if I do nothing?

Exercise

- Delegation
- Giving employee feedback
Recap from exercise

Steps to dealing with thinking traps – making someone aware of distortive thinking:

▪ Be preventative
▪ Be able to identify
▪ Make the person aware of it

Analysis of thinking traps

Emotional Intelligence - how do you become self-aware?
What is getting in the way of us doing what we need to do?
What prevented you from doing the following:
▪ Sleeping well
▪ Eating well
Be Patient

If vs. when

“If this will happen….” should be turned into the statement “When this happens, I will…..”

▪ Be mentally proactive
▪ Authenticity
Importance of good communication

- Direct
- Spirited
- Systematic
- Considerate

Embracing change

What do we need to be more comfortable with change?

How do we go from "I can't do this" to "I can do this"

Let's practice

- Use real-life experiences

Case Study

An employee gives a presentation that is very engaging and informative. The employee comes to you after and says "I did such a poor job that was horrible. Everyone looked bored and uninterested."

You have already heard compliments from others who attended and you could tell people in the audience were engaged, but the employee can't and won't see that and truly believes they gave a poor presentation.

This thinking trap is an example of only paying attention to the bad and ignoring the good... it prevents and holds us back from drawing a more positive and balanced conclusion.

What can you do as a manager to get your employee out of this thinking trap?
Role Play

Moving Forward...Goals

Solutions come out of your thinking trap

Ways you can help others come out of their thinking traps

Best practices

Stop

Breathe

Listen to your inner voice

• Prepare and practice → the questions you ask yourself will help you change your inner voice

Reframe

Positive self talk: have a positive phrase or mantra you tell yourself

• "I think I can"
• "I know I will be ok"
• "I have to keep on keeping on"
• "I can do this"
• "I will do my best"

"If you think you can, or think you can't, you're right" - Henry Ford
How Your EAP Can Help – If you’d like to receive more support consider contacting your EAP

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Thank you!

Questions?