

Internalized

White Supremacy Culture

adapted from [TherapistAid.com](https://therapistaid.com)
and Dr. Tema Okun

Common "Thinking Errors"

Jumping to Conclusions

Interpreting the meaning of a situation without complete information.

They haven't responded to my text. They're probably mad at me.

Catastrophizing

Seeing only the worst possible outcomes in any situation.

I'm already late for this appointment, so now my whole day is completely ruined.

Overgeneralizing

Making broad interpretations from little or no evidence.

I stumbled over my words in that interview. I'm always so awkward.

Personalization

Assuming that one is responsible for events that are outside of one's control.

*I can fix my partner's mental health crisis by trying to be *even more* supportive to them.*

All-or-Nothing Thinking

Thinking in absolutes and setting unachievably high standards.

I have to attend every one of my child's extracurricular events, or else I'm a terrible parent.

Magical Thinking

Believing that individual acts have influence in unrelated situations.

I'm a good person; bad things shouldn't happen to me.

Taking Feelings as Facts

Assuming that one's emotions reflect the way things actually are.

They made me feel like a bad friend. I must be a bad friend.

Ignoring the Good

Discounting the positives in a situation to over-focus on the negative.

Of all the feedback I got on my project, I can only think about that one negative comment.

Everyone experiences thinking errors sometimes.

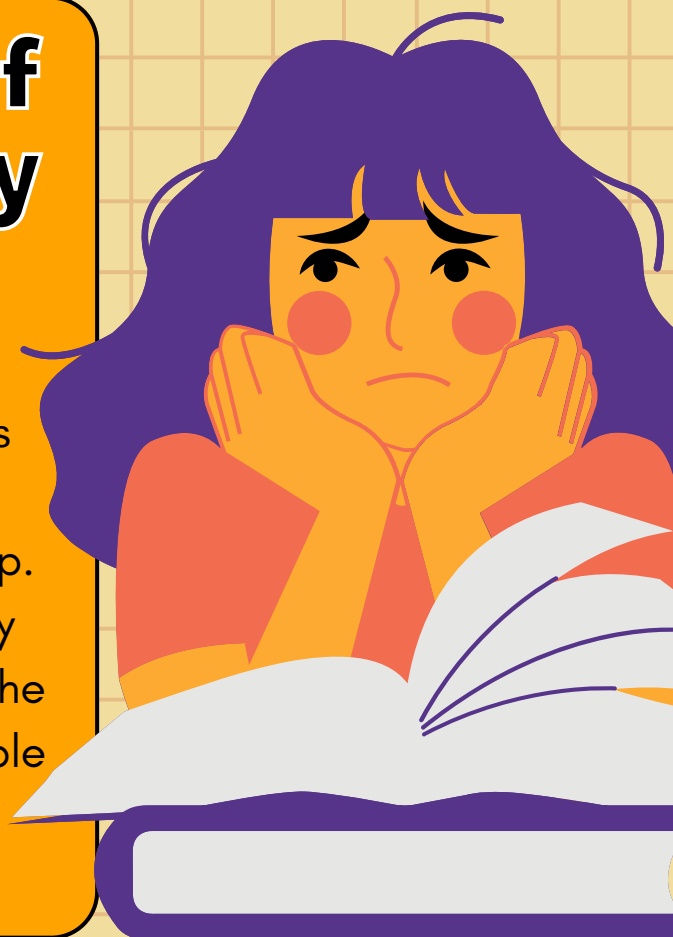
These specific ways of thinking are especially harmful because they reflect internalized white supremacist values, which hurt us all.



Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture

"The characteristics listed below are damaging because they are used as norms and standards without being proactively named or chosen by the group. Because we all live in a white supremacy culture, these characteristics show up in the attitudes and behaviors of all of us – people of color and white people."

Dr. Tema Okun, 2001



Perfectionism

Making a mistake is confused with being a mistake.

Sense of Urgency

Sacrificing time and space for thoughtful, inclusive, and long-term decision-making.

Defensiveness

Responding to new or challenging ideas in ways that make it very difficult to raise these ideas.

Only One Right Way

Believing that when people do not adapt or change to the accepted way of doing things, then something is wrong with them.

Either/Or Thinking

Oversimplifying choices or circumstances into false binaries.

Fear of Open Conflict

Confusing raising difficult issues with being impolite, rude, or out of line.

Individualism

Believing that in order for something to be done right, you have to do it yourself.

Objectivity

Believing that emotions are inherently destructive, irrational, and should not play a role in decision-making.

Right to Comfort

Falsely assuming that those with power have the right to constant mental, emotional, and physical comfort.

Ways to Unlearn White Supremacy and Avoid Thinking Errors:

Take time to make sure that you honour your work and efforts, especially things that are not easily quantifiable (ie. self-compassion and resiliency).

Learn from past experiences about how long things take and set realistic goals.

Give yourself credit for being able to handle more than you think.

Name your fear of losing power as a problem to be worked-through.

Work on noticing when people do things differently and how those different approaches might improve yours.

Practice acknowledging how things can be both/and.

Ask for support when you need it.

Understand that change is inevitable and challenges to your ways of thinking can be both healthy and productive.

Acknowledge your emotions and practice coping through their highest intensity in order to understand what need or boundary they are alerting you to.

Practice welcoming discomfort in life, as the root of all growth and learning.

