Mind Traps: Common mental patterns or ‘ruts’ that tend to exacerbate stress + pain.

(Resource: Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Workbook by Bob Stahl + Elisha Goldstein)

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1. **NEGATIVE SELF TALK**
   - Effects
     - Anxiety + depressed moods
     - Critical + judgmental
   - Ex: "He’s a super cool guy, but, I don’t know if he’s that cute."
   - Solution
     - Replace "but," with "and" to give equal weight to both
     - Train the mind to recognize & register the good in people, things, events

2. **EMPHASIZING THE NEGATIVE + DISCOUNTING THE POSITIVE**
   - Effects
     - Intense self-criticism leading to fear + procrastination
     - Shame + insecurity
     - Ex: "I’ll never get this right. I can’t do this. No one will ever want to be with me."
   - Solution
     - Learn to treat thoughts like mental events, rather than facts.
     - Metta: Loving Kindness Meditation
     - Affirmations + Good Parent Messages (IBP)

3. **SHOULD’S**
   - Effects
     - Guilt + stress when you don’t live up to your expectations
     - Anger + resentment when others don’t live up to your expectations. Leads to righteousness.
     - Endlessly comparing yourself to other people’s ‘highlight reel’
   - Solution
     - Moving from ‘judgment’ to ‘understanding’
     - Karuna: Compassion Meditation. Practicing non-judgment.
     - Forgiveness Meditation

4. **CATASTROPHIZING**
   - Effects
     - Righteous, rigid, perfectionist, narcissistic, pompous, stress from being constantly ‘on guard’
     - An attempt to feel ‘better than’ others (HIGH EGO) which sets them up to fail.
     - Pride + defensiveness undermines relationships, makes it hard to admit fault + resolve conflicts
   - Solution
     - Humility, practice seeing things from another’s perspective
     - The 3rd Agreement: “Not Taking Things Personally”

5. **MIND READING**
   - Effects
     - Convincing yourself you know what other people are thinking without actual evidence
     - Can spin into negative self-talk, anxiety + depression
     - Poison relationships when we ‘project’ onto others + assume
     - Ex. "We didn’t call me today. He’s a player / knew he wasn’t interested!"
   - Solution
     - "Maybe so. Maybe not." practice
     - The 3rd Agreement: “Not Taking Things Personally”

6. **THE ETERNAL EXPERT**
   - Effects
     - Righteous + rigid, perfectionist, narcissistic, pompous, stress from being constantly ‘on guard’
     - Pride + defensiveness undermines relationships, makes it hard to admit fault + resolve conflicts
   - Solution
     - Humility, practice seeing things from another’s perspective
     - So-Hum Meditation: “I am that”

7. **BLAMING**
   - Effects
     - Holding others’ responsible for our own pain. Holding ourselves responsible for others’ pain
     - Blame, resentment + guilt, codependence
     - Control which leads to anxiety + stress
   - Solution
     - Taking responsibility for everything in our lives.
     - Agency Mantras (IBP)
     - Serenity Prayer. Releasing control.
     - Forgiveness Meditation

Mindfulness Meditation: Seeing things ‘as they are’. Present moment awareness.