

# NEBRASKA LICENSEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A SERVICE OF BEST CARE EAP

## STINKIN' THINKIN' (Part I)

Stinkin' Thinkin' is a term used by David Burns, M.D, a psychiatrist and author of *The Feeling Good Handbook*, that is often used in the treatment of mood and alcohol/substance use disorders to refer to those that have reverted to old patterns of thinking while in recovery. Below is an excerpt taken from Dr. Burns' *The Feeling Good Handbook* of the first five negative thinking patterns that can jeopardize a healthcare professional's recovery. Look for Part II in September 2019.

- 1. All-or-nothing thinking** - You see things in black-or-white categories. If a situation falls short of perfect, you see it as a total failure. When a young woman on a diet ate a spoonful of ice cream, she told herself, "I've blown my diet completely." This thought upset her so much that she gobbled down an entire quart of ice cream.
- 2. Over generalization** - You see a single negative event, such as a romantic rejection or a career reversal, as a never-ending pattern of defeat by using words such as "always" or "never" when you think about it. A depressed salesman became terribly upset when he noticed bird dung on the window of his car. He told himself, "Just my luck! Birds are always crapping on my car!"
- 3. Mental Filter** - You pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively, so that your vision of reality becomes darkened, like the drop of ink that discolors a beaker of water. Example: You receive many positive comments about your presentation to a group of associates at work, but one of them says something mildly critical. You obsess about his reaction for days and ignore all the positive feedback.
- 4. Discounting the positive** - You reject positive experiences by insisting that they "don't count." If you do a good job, you may tell yourself that it wasn't good enough or that anyone could have done as well. Discounting the positives takes the joy out of life and makes you feel inadequate and unrewarded.
- 5. Jumping to conclusions** - You interpret things negatively when there are no facts to support your conclusion.

*Mind Reading* : Without checking it out, you arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you.

*Fortune-telling* : You predict that things will turn out badly. Before a test you may tell yourself, "I'm really going to blow it. What if I flunk?" If you're depressed you may tell yourself, "I'll never get better."

If you are a licensed health or health-related service professional wanting more information about sobriety and recovery, please contact the NE LAP at (800) 851-2336 or (402) 354-8055 or visit our web site at [www.lapne.org](http://www.lapne.org). If you would like to consult with the NE LAP, or schedule an assessment or an educational presentation, please ask for Michelle Hruska, NE LAP Coordinator, or Nicole Winkler, NE LAP Counselor.