

Types of Toxic Assumptions

- **Overestimating the Risks:** This “TA” is comparable to catastrophization, wherein an individual mentally inflates the risk of a bad outcome or ruminates about a potential outcome that is particularly disastrous. Youth struggling with anxiety and depression are especially prone to imaging the worst case scenario and ruminating about it, however unlikely. In sum, a person adopts the viewpoint, “*I know I will screw up,*” or “*I know this will end in disaster.*”
 - *Examples:* Ruminating about failing a grade and having to be held back, after receiving a low score on one test or assignment. Or assuming after a break up with a love interest, that they will be alone forever and never find love again.
- **Underestimating Yourself (or Others):** Assuming you cannot handle things when you really can.
 - *Examples:* Assuming you would be devastated and unable to cope if you failed a class, or faced a break up, or parental divorce, or rejection of some kind. In sum, the person says to themselves: “*I know I’m not good enough*” or “*I know I can’t handle this.*” Assuming that you will fail in a try out, or screw up in a performance, or face rejection in a job interview. Or failing to give another person the benefit of the doubt and automatically assuming they won’t support or help you. Or that another person deliberately said or did something with intent to hurt or offend you.
- **Assuming without Knowing:** Assuming you know what someone is thinking without checking. In sum, a person presumes the following: “*I know what you’re thinking.*”
 - *Examples:* “*I can tell he hates me,*” “*She’s going to break up with me,*” “*I don’t think they like me,*” “*I already know they will say ‘no.’*”
- **Global Judging:** A rigid style of perception, alternatively termed “black-white” or “all or nothing” thinking. Seeing things as either all bad or all good, which is a distortion because situations and people are usually a mix of bad and good. When words such as “Always,” “Never,” “All,” “Total,” or “Complete,” or “Everyone,” are used, it is likely that extreme and exaggerated and unrealistic, interpretations are occurring. In sum, a person says to themselves, “*I know I’m 100% right,*” or “*I know what I know.*”
 - *Examples:* “*You never help me!*” “*They always forget me!*” “*I never get asked out!*” Assuming someone is a “total jerk,” because he failed to say hello one morning.
- **Name Calling:** Using derogatory or pejorative labels to describe yourself or others. In sum, a person presumes that, “*I know what you’re about.*”
 - *Examples:* “*He’s a jerk [or a liar or a loser],*” “*I’m so stupid [or lazy or foolish].*”
- **Making About Me:** Adolescents tend to be very self-conscious and rejection sensitive. In our experience, it is extremely common, especially among teens with mood or anxiety disorders, for them to interpret random events as personal attacks. The person thinks to themselves, “*I know this is about me.*”
 - *Examples:* Assuming that the negative facial expression, unenthusiastic greeting, or lack of response to an email or text message is a personal rejection that has no other explanation or contributing factors, other than pertaining to them, personally.