

# Thinking Patterns or Errors of Chinese Singaporeans



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# Sources of Paper

- Feedback on CBT and Chinese clients from MHPs—presented at the 1st Asian CBT Conference
- Personal experience in CBT with clients
- Survey with class in Positive Psychology

# Sources of Paper

- Basing on *Automatic (Negative) Thoughts* by Aaron T. Beck
- and *Common False Beliefs* by Adele B. Lynn
- Combining and Modifying the said Thoughts and Beliefs
- Proposed new definitions and labels

# Singapore in Brief

- an Asian state
- a complex metropolis embracing a mix of Eastern and Westernized values, attitudes and lifestyles
- Chinese Singaporeans make up over 75% of the 4.5 million population of Singapore

# Aaron T. Beck's List of (-ve) Automatic Thoughts

<b>Label</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
All-or-nothing thinking	(Also called black-and-white, polarized, or dichotomous thinking): You view a situation in only two categories instead of on a continuum. Example: "If I'm not a total success, I'm a failure."
Catastrophizing	(Also called fortune telling): You predict the future negatively without considering other, more likely outcomes. Example: "I'll be so upset, I won't be able to function at all."
Disqualifying or discounting the positive	You unreasonably tell yourself that positive experiences, deeds, or qualities do not count. Example: "I did that project well, but that doesn't mean I'm competent; I just got lucky."
Emotional reasoning	You think something must be true because you "feel" (actually believe) it so strongly, ignoring or discounting evidence to the contrary. Example: "I know I do a lot of things okay at work, but I still feel like I'm a failure."
Labelling	You put a fixed, global label on yourself or others without considering that the evidence might more reasonably lead to a less disastrous conclusion. Example: "I'm a loser. He's no good."
Magnification/minimization	When you evaluate yourself, another person, or situation, you unreasonably magnify the negative and/or minimize the positive. Example: "Getting a mediocre evaluation proves how inadequate I am. Getting high marks doesn't mean I'm smart."
Mental filter	(Also called selective abstraction): you pay undue attention to one negative detail instead of seeing the whole picture. Example: "Because I got one low rating on my evaluation [which also contained several high ratings] it means I'm doing a lousy job."

# Aaron T. Beck's List of (-ve) Automatic Thoughts

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Mind reading	You believe you know what others are thinking, failing to consider other, more likely possibilities. Example: "He's thinking that I don't know the first thing about this project."
Over-generalization	You make a sweeping negative conclusion that goes far beyond the current situation. Example: "[Because I felt uncomfortable at the meeting] I don't have what it takes to make friends."
Personalization	You believe others are behaving negatively because of you, without considering more plausible explanations for their behavior. Example: "The repairman was curt to me because I did something wrong."
"Should" and "must" statements	(Also called imperatives): you have a precise, fixed idea of how you or others should behave and you overestimate how bad it is that these expectations are not met. Example: "It's terrible that I made a mistake. I should always do my best."
Tunnel vision	You only see the negative aspects of a situation. Example: "My son's teacher can't do anything right. He's critical and insensitive and lousy at teaching."

# Common False Beliefs for the Business World by Adele B. Lynn

<b>Label</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Need approval	Everyone I work with must approve me at all times; which is impossible and may be viewed as indecisive. Example: "I don't want you to be upset with me."
Making mistakes	I must prove thoroughly competent, adequate and achieving at all times; which means difficult to take advice or ask for help. Example: "We have this running smoothly, so why change it?"
Changing others	I have an obligation to change others who act unfairly or obnoxiously; frustration will hijack to the point of insulting others. Example: "I told you about this before."
Catastrophize	When I get frustrated, treated unfairly, or rejected, I have to view things as awful, terrible, horrible and catastrophic. Example: "Oh no, what am I going to do?"
Others cause misery	My emotional misery comes from external pressures that I have little ability to change. Example: "Why me?"
Worry, fret and fear	If something seems dangerous or fearsome, I must preoccupy myself with it, and make myself anxious with it. Example: "I'm so concerned about..."

# Common False Beliefs for the Business World by Adele B. Lynn

<b>Label</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Avoidance	It is easier to avoid facing difficulties and self-responsibilities than to do something about them; which means feeling helpless. Example: “Well, I’ll just wait and see....”
The Past	My past remains all important and, because something once strongly influenced my life, it has to keep determining my feelings and behaviour today. Example: “I don’t know. I tried it once and it didn’t work.”
Unrealistic expectations	People and things should turn out better than they do, and I must fix them. There is a line between responsibility to help and responsibility to fix. Example: “I don’t care. What do you want?”
Competition	My worth can be measure by competitive situation. Needs to be the best. Difficult to share and counter to the culture of teamwork. Example: “I have to score better than him.”
Source of problems	The people and conditions in my life are the source of my problems. No reason to take responsibility for our problems. Example: “If he would just stop doing...my life would be better.”
Negativity	Certain occurrences or events are negative by nature. Can’t see something positive in an event or situation. Example: “No one will ever come out of this.”



# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

- Not meant to hurt anyone's feelings
- Not meant to be exhaustive
- Apply to many but not all
- Would hopefully contribute to CBT and therapy
- Need MHPs and researchers to verify them in their work; and provide feedback for improvement

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Life

- *Much of life is outside my control*
- Matching Labels: Emotional Reasoning; Magnification/minimization; Sources of Problems
- Proposed New Label: **Matter of Fate**

## Examples:

- “Life is such. It’s my luck.”
- “Oh, I’m the most unlucky person in life.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Life

- *Children will grow up and outgrow problems*
- Matching Label: Unrealistic Expectations
- Proposed New Label: **Unrealistic Expectations (redefined)**

## Examples:

- “My job is to bring up my kid(s); the school’s role is to discipline them.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Life

- *Education is the ticket to career and life, happiness and prosperity*
- Matching Labels: All-or-Nothing; Emotional Reasoning; Should & Must; Competition
- Proposed New Label: **Unrealistic Expectations (redefined)**

## Examples:

- “Education come first, play or sports or rest come later.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Life

- *Older folks are always like this. They are beyond change*
- Matching Labels: Labelling; Others cause Misery
- New Label: **Beyond Change**

## Examples:

- “The older folks never shed their spots. Always grumpy, nagging, nothing to do, while their time away at void decks, etc.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Life

- *Family problems stay within the home*
- Matching Labels: Personalisation; Others cause Misery; Avoidance
- New Label: **Keeping Secrets**

## Examples:

- “Never say or spread your family problems outside the home. That’ll be bad for reputation of the family.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Environment

- *Lack of awareness of surrounding. Self-centred thinking/viewpoint*
- Matching Label: Mind Reading; Tunnel Vision; Unrealistic Expectations
- New Label: **Self-centredness**

## Examples:

- “Yes, you can get it from that shop.”
- “Oh yes, it good for you.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Environment

- *Expensive stuff is good. Anything discounted or free is good. Take first and complain later*
- Matching Labels: All-or-Nothing; Should & Must; Mental Filter
- New Label: **All-or-Nothing (redefined)**

## Examples:

- “Don’t have never mind, if I have it, it is fine.”
- “Better to have it than lose it or let others have it.”



# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Environment

- *Avoid difficult situations*
- Matching Labels: Tunnel Vision; Avoidance; Others cause Misery; Negativity
- New Label: **Face-saving**

## Examples:

- “It’s all because of them, why do they do such things, so reckless.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Health and Illness

- *Western illness Western medicine; Eastern illness Eastern medicine*
- Matching Labels: Should & Must; The Past
- New Label: **The Past**

## Examples:

- “My parents believed in Chinese medicine for its gentle effect and its ability to eradicate the roots of the disease. I was more inclined to use Western medicine for its immediate effect in treating signs and symptoms.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Health and Illness

- *Quick fix is the preferred treatment mode for any illness*
- Matching Label: Emotional Reasoning; Personalisation; Should & Must
- New Label: **Pragmatic**

### Examples:

- “Can I get well with just this session?”
- “How much?”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Health and Illness

- *Somatisation of illness*
- Matching Label: Worry, Fret and Fear
- New Label: **Face-saving**

### Examples:

- “Oh, I’ve got this backache. Must have overworked myself.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Health and Illness

- *Traditional healing system is still good*
- Matching Label: Should & Must; The Past
- New Label: **The Past**

## Examples:

- “The shaman or bomoh can help relieve my problems if the doctor cannot.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Health and Illness

- *Mental illness is stigmatized and equated with craziness*
- Matching Labels: All-or-Nothing; Emotional Reasoning; Labelling; Overgeneralization; Avoidance; Negativity
- New Label: **All-or-Nothing**

### Examples:

- “Don’t go near someone with this illness. Mental illness could be contagious.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Health and Illness

- *The sick usually plays up the sick role*
- Matching Labels: Disqualifying or Discounting the Positive; Over-generalization; Need approval; Unrealistic Expectations; Catastrophize
- New Label: **My Turn**

### Examples:

- “I’ve been looking after all of you, now that I’m sick, it’s your turn to look after me.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Health and Illness

- *Chinese coping skills are problem- or emotion-focused*
- Matching Label: Emotional Reasoning; Mental Filter; Should & Must; Source of Problems
- New Label: **Pragmatic**

Examples:

- “Go for the problem or the solution.”



# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Religion/Spirituality

- *Many Chinese Singaporeans are brought up under Confucianism, Taoism, or Buddhism. However, a good many are now Christian converts*
- Matching Label: Emotional Reasoning; Over-generalization; Personalisation; Changing Others; The Past; Unrealistic Expectations
- New Label: **Matter of Faith**

## Examples:

- “My faith is in Christianity or Buddhism or Taoism; therefore, I’ll do/not do this and that because of my faith/religion/belief.

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Relationships

- *Authority is always right*
- Matching Labels: Labelling; Mental Filter; Overgeneralization; Mental Filter
- New Label: **The Authority**

## Examples:

- “Because they are trained or in charge, they must know how and have answers to my problems.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Relationships

- *Have to compare with others—from objects to pay to children to houses to jobs*
- Be competent or cannot lose to others.
- Matching Label: Mind Reading; Personalisation; Competition
- New Label: Competition (existing)

## Examples:

- “I must show them I can do it. I cannot let myself down.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Relationships

- *Need to tell others what to do*
- Matching Label: Changing Others
- New Label: **Changing Others (existing)**

## Examples:

- “These people don’t know what they are missing. They have not learnt this.”
- “They are not aware of this, I must tell/teach them.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Relationships

- *Need to please others*
- Matching Label: Needing Approval; Making mistakes
- New Label: Needing Approval (existing)

## Examples:

- “I must not let them be unhappy with me.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Relationships

- *The capable/rich and better off should automatically help the less well off*
- Matching Label: Should & Must; Unrealistic Expectations
- New Label: **The Authority**

## Examples:

- “You are capable and rich, therefore you must help me.”

# Chinese Singaporean Thinking

## Attitude/Belief towards Relationships

- *Filial piety—relating to face, entails loyalty, devotion, respect and obedience to one's parents, especially the father, and the family's name*
- Matching Label: Emotional Reasoning; Should & Must; Needing Approval; Avoidance; The Past
- New Label: **Filial Piety**

## Examples:

- “It is my duty to look after my parents and/or grandparents. They come before anything else.”

# Thinking Patterns and Errors of Chinese Singaporean Thinking

Thank you for your attention.

Questions?



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