Family Activity: Thinking Traps

Background
Thinking traps, also called cognitive distortions, are unhelpful, negative thought patterns that can lead us to believe things that aren't necessarily true. It's human nature to fall into these traps (adults included!) from time to time, but it's also true that social media and tech can amplify these thinking traps.

Activity
The first step to getting out of a thinking trap is to learn about their names. While there are *many*, you're about to watch a video with five of the biggest ones.

Step 1: Watch the Video "How Your Brain Tricks You into Negative Thinking"
Your child watched this video in class, and now you'll have a chance to watch it together.
(If you don't have access to the link, go to YouTube and search for "Above the Noise How Your Brain Tricks You.")

Step 2: Reflect
Refer to **Page 2** for a summary of the five thinking traps covered in the video.

Family chat:
- *Can you think of a time when you (the adult) have fallen into one of these traps? Share with your child.*
- *Which traps do you both fall into most often?*
- *Does social media (or texting) make it easy to fall into any thinking traps?*

Step 3: Family Movie (or TV) Night!
As Myles points out in the video, it's helpful to watch TV shows or movies and identify when characters are falling into these traps. Recognizing these patterns in other people's lives can make it easier to recognize them in ours!

> *Tip: Watching movies and TV with kids, also known as co-viewing, has a range of positive effects. It can help them learn new skills, boost empathy, and spark meaningful conversations.*

Some media suggestions:
- *Seinfeld* (George Costanza is regularly **mind-reading** and **fortune-telling**)
- *Never Have I Ever* (Devi is constantly experiencing **shoulds** and the **negative filter**)
- *Harry Potter* (Harry is often caught **personalizing**)

Thinking Traps

Thinking traps are negative thought patterns—often involving exaggerations or irrational beliefs—and they can lead us to believe things that aren't necessarily true. Here are some examples that come up related to technology and social media:

The Thought	The Trap
"All my friends have better lives than me."	**All-or-Nothing Thinking** When you make big generalizations. (Words: *all*, *always*, *never*, *none*, *everyone*, *nobody*, etc.)
"I should respond to friends' messages immediately."	**Shoulds** When you think about what you "should" (or shouldn't) do or be like. (Words: *should* or *shouldn't*.)
"I can't stop thinking about that one negative comment."	**Negative Filter** When you focus only on the negatives.
"My posts didn't get that many likes. I'm a failure."	**Labeling** When you use negative labels for yourself. (Words: "*I'm a...*" followed by a negative word.)
"My friend didn't reply to my text. She is clearly mad at me."	**Mind Reading** When you assume you know what someone else is thinking or feeling.

Thinking Traps