

## Unhelpful Thinking Patterns

UNHELPFUL THINKING	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
<b>Always Being Right</b>	<p>Trying to prove that our opinions and actions are correct. Being wrong is unthinkable and we will go to any length to demonstrate our rightness.</p> <p>If we make being right more important than our relationships, we win arguments but lose the at life.</p>	<p>“I don’t care how badly arguing with me makes you feel, I’m going to win this argument no matter what because I’m right.”</p>
<b>Arbitrary Inference</b>	<p>Drawing a conclusion without sufficient evidence, or without any evidence at all.</p>	<p>You don’t immediately receive a text back from your spouse and conclude that s/he must be cheating.</p> <p>You don’t like someone’s face and presume they are a criminal.</p>
<b>Blaming</b>	<p>Blaming others: We hold other people responsible for our situation or pain without taking appropriate responsibility.</p> <p>Blaming ourselves: We blame ourselves for every problem without regard for the situation or the actions of others.</p>	<p>“If they guy didn’t want to be punched he shouldn’t have insulted me”.</p> <p>“If I hadn’t got in the car that day the truck would never have hit me”</p>
<b>Catastrophising</b>	<p>You believe the worst-case scenario will happen, leading to fear, anxiety, and dread. Catastrophes are bad but rarely actually occur.</p> <p>We use <i>what if</i> questions (e.g., “What if tragedy strikes?” “What if it happens to me?”).</p>	<p>Someone turns you down for a date. You are convinced you will lead a life of loneliness.</p> <p>“I have a sore throat; I’m sure that I have cancer.”</p>
<b>Compensatory Self Inflation</b>	<p>The belief that you need to inflate your achievements to be seen as successful because underneath you believe that you are inadequate as you are.</p> <p>Putting down others in order to feel better about ourselves.</p>	<p>Telling the media your Presidential inauguration ceremony crowds were the biggest of all time.</p> <p>“Ariana Huffington is unattractive, both inside and out. I fully understand why her former husband left her for a man – he made a good decision.” – D. Trump</p>

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<b>Control Fallacies</b>	<p>If we feel <i>externally controlled</i>, we see ourselves as helpless a victim of fate.</p> <p>The fallacy of <i>internal control</i> has us assuming responsibility for the pain and happiness of everyone around us.</p>	<p>For example, "I can't help it if the quality of the work is poor; my boss demanded I work overtime on it."</p> <p>For example, "Why aren't you happy? Is it because of something I did?"</p>
<b>Compare and Despair</b>	Compare yourself negatively to others	<p>"He is more successful than me".</p> <p>"She is prettier than I am".</p>
<b>Chain Reaction</b>	You continue down the chain, link by link, with how one bad thing will lead to another bad thing, ending in a larger bad outcome with regard to an overall goal. In reality there are many possibilities at each link, many which we don't even see.	<i>"If I fail this test I won't pass this class, then I will fail out of school, then I won't graduate, then I won't get a good job, then I will be unhappy in a dead-end job forever."</i>
<b>Delusion</b>	Holding a rigid, false belief despite overwhelming evidence	Believing you're fat when you're 45kg.
<b>Denial</b>	Refusal or difficulty accepting reality because it is too threatening.	"I can continue to smoke a pack a day – I'll be okay."
<b>Egocentricity</b>	Seeing situations only from our own perspective.	Not being able to see the other side of the argument. Not being able to understand why our partner finds our behaviour frustrating.
<b>Emotional Reasoning</b>	<p>"I feel it, therefore it must be true."</p> <p>We believe that what we feel must be true automatically. You assume that your unhealthy emotions reflect the way things really are.</p>	If we feel <i>embarrassed</i> , then we must be <i>embarrassing</i> . If we feel afraid of flying, then there must be a real risk of the plane crashing. If we feel enraged, then someone has wronged us.
<b>Entitlement</b>	Not applying the rules that we apply to others to ourselves.	Frowning on others' littering / tax evasion / selfish driving but overlooking our own.
<b>Fallacy of Change</b>	We expect that other people will change to suit us if we just pressure or cajole them enough. We need to change people because our hopes for happiness seem to depend entirely on them.	"My fiancée drinks too much, but I'll bring him around once we're married."

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<p><b>Fallacy of Fairness</b></p> <p>including</p> <p><b>Heaven's Reward Fallacy</b></p>	<p>If we think that life should be fair, we measure everything on a 'fairness ledger', becoming resentful when things don't quite work out; we will often feel unfairly done by, asking "Why me?"</p> <p>We expect our sacrifice and self-denial to pay off, as if someone is keeping score. We feel bitter when the reward doesn't come.</p>	<p>"Why was I born with this... (disease, condition, parent, etc)?"</p> <p>"Why did my mother have to die when there are obese smokers who are still alive?!"</p> <p>"I've looked after people all my life and all I get in return is this disease!"</p>
<p><b>Fantasy / Reality confusion</b></p>	<p>We confuse our fantasy or dream with reality.</p>	<p>A child continues to be terrified after waking from a nightmare.</p> <p>A man fantasises that a woman is attracted to him and believes this is the case despite her saying she isn't.</p>
<p><b>Filtering</b></p>	<p>We take one detail (usually negative) and magnify it while filtering out all positive aspects of a situation. We may pick out a single, unpleasant detail and dwell on it exclusively, leading to an unbalanced view.</p>	<p>"I hate school because my music teacher is so mean".</p> <p>"How was your week in Fiji?"</p> <p>"It was a disaster! It rained for three days straight!"</p>
<p><b>Magnifying and Minimising</b></p> <p>(a kind of Filtering)</p>	<p>You exaggerate the importance of certain things (such as your mistakes or other's successes) and minimize other things (such as your own desirable qualities or other's imperfections).</p>	<p>"My nose is so weird looking that no one will ever like me."</p> <p>"Rachel is perfect – I'm sure she'd never speak to a loser like me"</p>
<p><b>Fortune Telling</b></p>	<p>You anticipate that things will turn out badly and feel convinced that your prediction is a fact.</p>	<p>e.g. You turn down a party invitation, convinced that you meet anyone to talk with.</p> <p>"Even if I get the job I'll probably get fired."</p>
<p><b>Global Labelling</b></p>	<p>We generalise one or two qualities into a negative global judgment. These are extreme forms of generalising and are also referred to as "labelling" and "mislabelling." Instead of describing an error in context of a specific situation, a person will attach an unhealthy label to themselves.</p>	<p>"I'm an idiot!" (versus "I made a mistake; everyone makes mistakes").</p> <p>"Life sucks!"</p>
<p><b>Head in the Sand</b></p>	<p>Avoiding thinking or action regarding an obvious reality that demands action.</p>	<p>Spending money when heavily in debt.</p> <p>Ignoring required actions to manage climate change</p>

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<b>Jumping to (negative) Conclusions</b>	<p>You anticipate that things will turn out badly and are convinced that this prediction is already an established fact.</p> <p>Additionally, this affects how you act, perhaps leading to a 'self-fulfilling prophecy'.</p>	<p>"I know I'm not going to get this job."</p> <p>This 'certainty' leads to anxiety, poor preparation, and a half-hearted performance in the interview.</p>
<b>Mind Reading</b>	<p>You conclude that someone is thinking negatively about you, or thinking in a certain way, and don't bother to check this out.</p>	<p>A party guest is looking elsewhere as you are talking to her. You assume she is bored and wants to get away from you, so you leave. (Another friend later tells you that the party guest was hoping to exchange phone numbers with you, liked you very much and wonders why you left so abruptly).</p>
<b>Overgeneralisation</b>	<p>We come to a general conclusion based on a single incident or piece of evidence. If something bad happens once, we expect it to happen over and over again. A person may see a single, unpleasant event as a never-ending pattern of defeat.</p>	<p>"I didn't get that job because of that interview. I'm terrible at interviews. I'll never get a decent job."</p>
<b>Personalisation.</b>	<p>Taking things personally that may not be personal.</p> <p>A person sees themselves as the cause of some unhealthy external event that they were not responsible for.</p>	<p>"Rachel only asked James to the dance because I like James" (disregarding that Rachel has her own feelings and attractions).</p> <p>"I had an argument with Brian before he left for work. If I hadn't made him angry he wouldn't have crashed" (disregarding Brian's contribution to the argument and Brian's responsibility for safe driving).</p>
<b>Polarised Thinking</b>	<p>Things are either "black-or-white" – there are no shades of grey, no middle ground. We place people or situations in "either/or" categories, not allowing for the complexity of most people and situations.</p>	<p>We have to be perfect or we're a total failure, eg. My eyes are close together = I'm ugly.</p>

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<b>Perfectionism</b>	A form of Polarised Thinking; there is either perfection or failure.	Your school report is five A's and a B+. Your parents ask you what you did wrong.  You are kicking yourself for forgetting to mention one point in your speech.
<b>Rationalisation</b>	Making convenient excuses. We deal with emotional conflict or stress by concealing the true motivations for our thoughts, behaviour, or feelings through reassuring or self-serving but incorrect explanations.	I couldn't get you a birthday card because my mother was sick.  I can't go to the gym this week – the washing machine is broken.
<b>Self-serving bias</b>	A pattern of attributing positive events to our own person but negative events to situational factors. Conversely, attributing others' behaviour to their personality and ignoring situational factors.	"I smashed it in Q1, 2, and 3 but in Q4 market sentiment went down".  "I don't care if she's homeless with three kids – she's a thief."
<b>Should's, Must's, Ought's</b>	We have a list of rules about how people should behave.  The emotional consequence of self-directed should's and must's is guilt. When a person directs <i>should statements</i> toward others, they often feel anger, frustration and resentment.	"I really should exercise. I shouldn't be so lazy." (= guilt)  "Drivers have to wave if I let them in" (otherwise I get into a rage).
<b>Maladaptive Thought</b>	Any belief you have that is not useful to you in a given situation. Maladaptive thoughts are excessive in nature and are not substantiated by external evidence.	"Ghosts can harm me." (leading to fear and avoidance of certain places)  "I never crash no matter how fast I ride my bike." (leading to uncalculated risks, some of which will be greater than the rider's skill)