

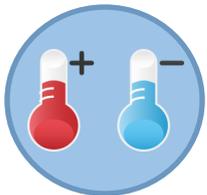
Unhelpful Thinking Patterns

Our brain is always trying to protect us, and as a result, our thoughts can become biased. For instance, if we are giving a presentation, we may have thoughts that we might embarrass ourselves. These thoughts might consequently prevent us from doing the presentation, making future presentations even harder, rather than testing our thoughts out and realising that the presentation, although scary, was manageable! Although they may seem reasonable at first, negative automatic thoughts are frequently biased. Psychologists refer to these negative automatic thoughts as unhelpful thinking patterns, as they tend to amplify negative emotions and make situations worse. Below are very common unhelpful thinking patterns.



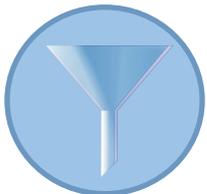
Personalisation

Attributing external events to ourselves and believing events are related to us. For instance, we may feel our friends do not like us if they meet for coffee without inviting us or if two strangers are having a conversation, we may think they are speaking about us.



Polarised Thinking

When we perceive situations, events, or ourselves as either awful or great, without considering all possibilities in between. This is also known as all-or-nothing thinking. Our thoughts and behaviours can also be extreme. For example, feeling like a *failure* for missing a meeting.



Mental Filtering

Selectively attending to negative aspects of a situation without considering the situation as a whole. For instance, we may focus on one person who gave us overly critical feedback and disregard positive feedback from others. We may also disqualify a positive by believing we got a job due to luck as opposed to our skills.



Emotional Reasoning

Taking a feeling as confirmation of a fact or believing that because there is a *'feeling'*, that something must be true. For example, feeling nervous during a presentation means the presentation *is* going terribly. Or feeling tired means there is something *wrong* as opposed to the natural fluctuations in mood.



Labelling

Using extreme words and judgement to label people, ourselves or situations, usually eliciting a negative feeling. For instance, if we forget something we might call ourselves *'stupid'* or *'hopeless'* out loud. Or we might call ourselves *'useless'* if we didn't meet a responsibility we had taken on.



Catastrophising

Jumping straight to a worst possible case scenario in our minds. For example, noticing a rash on our arm and *thinking* it may be a skin disease. Or running late for work and *believing* this means you will be fired from your job, and left unable to pay your rent or mortgage.



Jumping to Conclusions

Making judgements or conclusions about situations, ourselves or people without any evidence. Or we may 'mind read' and believe we know what other people are thinking without any evidence. For instance, while conversing, a friend is looking around and you jump to the conclusion this means they are uninterested in you and think you are boring.

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Overgeneralising

Taking one situation as evidence of a larger pattern and thinking all subsequent situations will be the same. Using words like 'always' and 'never'. For instance, if a job interview goes poorly, we may believe all future interviews are going to go poorly also because things *never* go right.



'Should', 'Must', 'Have to', and 'Ought to' Statements

Believing oneself, other people, or situations should be a certain way, your way. For instance, we may believe someone we know *should* have acted a certain way without accepting that they have their own values, thoughts, and emotions, and are in control of their own life.



Magnification and Minimisation

Exaggerating negative aspects of a situation, oneself or others and weakening positive aspects of a situation, oneself or others. Positive aspects are brushed over while negative aspects are focused on. For instance, we might feel our achievements at work are unimportant because of a negative comment from a boss.



What if's

Thinking in terms of 'What if' this happens to me or 'What if' I had done that, usually with negative bias. For example, thinking what if I'm off work ill and can't keep up with the bills. Or what if this cough is a serious disease and I die.



Hindsight Bias

Ruminating over and over that you *should have* done something differently after an outcome of something. Or that you *feel* you could have predicted an outcome only after it has occurred. Hindsight biases prevent us from moving on and make us feel worse than is fair to ourselves.



Self-blaming and Blaming Others

Blaming ourselves for events and situations that are not completely our responsibility. Or feeling responsible for the outcome of a situation that we had little control over. We may also blame others for situations we have created. Or diffuse our responsibility from a situation in which we played a role.



The Need to Always Be Right

Always needing to be right. Forcing our opinions on other people as if our opinions are facts. Going to great extents to defend an opinion and convince people of our own beliefs and not accepting that others are valid in their own thoughts, beliefs and emotions.



Fallacies of Reward, Fairness, and Control

Believing that because you treat people well, or work hard, you should be rewarded or treated fairly. Unfortunately, the world isn't fair. We may also feel that life is completely out of our control. Or that we are responsible for someone else. Or that someone should change because we know what's best for them.

Think of examples where you have fallen into some of these unhelpful thinking pattern at some point in your life. What could help you to identify these patterns? How would you feel if you didn't adopt these types of thinking?