

Unhelpful thinking styles



We all use unhelpful thinking styles from time to time.

Sometimes one thought may reflect more than one of the thinking styles.

Have a look and circle the ones you suit most often.

Type of thinking style	Explanation	Example
1. All or Nothing	Thinking in extreme terms with no middle ground. Sometimes also known as black and white thinking	- <i>I need to do something perfectly or it's a complete waste of time</i> - <i>Everybody hates me</i>
2. Overgeneralising	Evidence is drawn from one experience or from a small set of experiences to reach an unwarranted conclusion with far reaching implications	- <i>Bad things are always happening to me</i> - <i>People never listen to me</i>
3. Mental filtering	Paying attention to the negative interpretation of a situation and not the other potential interpretations	- <i>This week has been terrible, I can't think of anything good that's happened</i>
4. Discounting the positive	Positive or even neutral information is ignored, disqualified or viewed as an exception to the rule	- <i>Anyone can do that</i> - <i>People are only nice to me because they feel sorry for me</i>
5. Jumping to conclusions	Negative and pessimistic predictions about the future	- <i>I'll never get over this</i> - <i>I will never feel different</i>
6. Catastrophising	'Worst case' thoughts and images enter your mind, exaggeration the consequences of what might happen	- <i>If I go on the tube, I'll have a panic attack and collapse</i> - <i>If I tell her how I feel, she'll leave me and I'll be left alone</i>
7. Emotional reasoning	Assuming that negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things are in reality	- <i>I feel it, therefore it must be true</i> - <i>I'm very scared, so the situation must be dangerous</i>
8. Mind reading	Assuming that we know others thoughts, intentions or motives	- <i>He doesn't like me</i> - <i>They think I'm stupid</i>
9. Demands	Rigid rules you place on yourself, or others which may not help you to accept and adapt to what's actually happened	- <i>I should do X Y Z</i> - <i>I must never make mistakes</i> - <i>They should do X Y Z</i>
10. Labelling	Specific shortcomings or failures are identified with the individual character	- <i>Because I failed the exam, I'm a failure</i> - <i>He's a total idiot for saying that</i>
11. Personalising	Giving yourself too much responsibility for a negative event, when it may have little or nothing to do with you	- <i>If people don't enjoy themselves at my party, its my fault</i> - <i>He's being quiet because I'm boring</i>
12. Low Tolerance	Telling yourself that a difficult experience or a painful feeling is unbearable or intolerable	- <i>I can't stand it</i> - <i>I cant carry on</i>