

Unhelpful Thinking Styles

Thinking styles are automatic or habitual way of thinking. When an unhelpful thinking style is used consistently over a long time it can be the source of personal distress and relational problems.

Identify the top three unhelpful thinking styles that you identify with most strongly.

Catching yourself thinking in these ways is the first step towards making a change.

- Catastrophising:** this thinking pattern consists of always tending to imagine the most catastrophic outcome occurring. E.g. 'I will lose my job, my family and end up lonely and old'.
- Over estimation:** this thinking pattern involves overestimating the likelihood of certain negative outcomes occurring. E.g. 'There is a very high chance I will lose my mind'.
- Overgeneralisation:** this thinking pattern involves the person thinking very generally and failing to consider specific evidence. E.g. 'Everything always goes wrong for me'.
- Dichotomous thinking:** this is all-or-nothing thinking, with no in-between. Life is usually in the grey area, a little good a little bad. However, this thinking sees only the extreme ends of the scale. E.g. 'I didn't get my assignment in on time, I'm a failure'.
- Mind reading:** believing you know exactly the content of other people's minds. E.g. 'I can tell she doesn't like me'. (you assume people are thinking negatively of you when there is no definite evidence).
- Personalisation:** blaming oneself for every little thing that could go wrong. E.g. 'My son got a bad report because I'm a bad mother'.
- Predictive thinking:** thinking you can see into the future and know for a fact what is going to happen (crystal-ball).
- Jumping to conclusions** when the evidence is lacking or even contradictory.
- Exaggerating or minimizing** a situation (blowing things way out of proportion or shrinking their importance inappropriately).
- Disregarding** important aspects of a situation.
- Oversimplifying** things as good-bad or right-wrong.
- Emotional reasoning** (you have a feeling and assume there must be a reason). E.g. 'I will never recover from this depression'.