



Looking at our common thinking errors ...

Here's a similar guide to the Unhelpful Thinking Habits.. You really can't consider these enough – always be aware of how you might be upsetting yourself needlessly! Can you see yourself here? Don't worry, we all do some of these some of the time... but if, for you, it's often – and causing you emotional upset and self-defeating/sabotaging behaviour – it's time for CBT!

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| <p>Demand thinking: 'Shoulds, Musts, and Ought To's' - This is maybe the most important thing most of us learn. It is when you tell yourself that you/others/the world should and must and ought to be the way you decide them to be. Otherwise everything is awful and terrible and unfair and you can't bear it, and/or won't stand for it. (How dare he behave that way? It's outrageous! I strongly disapprove so I'm going to punish him.. etc)</p> | <p>Fortune Telling and Mind Reading (Jumping to Conclusions) - Interpreting things in a negative manner even though there is no evidence to support your conclusion. This may involve fortune-telling, where you predict that things will turn out badly ("This interview is going to be a disaster, I'm going to make a total show of myself"). Or mind-reading, where, without checking out your facts, you conclude that you know what someone else is thinking about you ("She thinks I'm an idiot", "they don't like me" etc.)</p> |
| <p>All-or-Nothing" Thinking - Things are viewed in black-and-white categories, with no shades of grey in between. If a situation does not go perfectly, you view it as a total failure. All-or-nothing thinking is thinking in extremes. For example, "Unless I perform perfectly in this task, I am a failure", 'If it isn't going to be perfect I won't bother. etc. Perfectionism is very related to this .</p> | <p>Emotional Reasoning - You assume that because you feel bad, the situation must be negative. For example, "I'm really scared to get on a plane, so therefore it must be very dangerous to fly". Or: "I feel suspicious and jealous, and I trust my intuition so that must mean there's something to be suspicious of". Or: "I feel like a loser, therefore I am worthless"... Remember FEELINGS ARE NOT FACTS!</p> |
| <p>Over-generalisation - A single negative event, such as a romantic rejection or a career setback, is viewed as a recurrent pattern of defeat. Words such as "always" or "never" tend to crop up here, for example, if a person is rejected by his girlfriend he may think "It's ALWAYS the same. Women are ALWAYS dumping me! I will NEVER be in a loving relationship." And with work it might be 'I will never get another job again'. And so on...</p> | <p>Labelling - This is an extreme form of all-or-nothing thinking. Instead of saying "I made a mistake", you say "I'm a loser". You may label yourself a fool, a failure, hopeless. Labelling is irrational, as you are not 'what you do'. Labelling can be applied to other people as well, which unfairly generalizes about the other person in a derogatory way. E.g., "My boss is an idiot", "she's nasty'. These labels are just abstractions that make people feel bad about themselves or others.</p> |
| <p>Discounting the Positive - You reject positive experiences by insisting that they 'don't count'. For example, if you are congratulated on your presentation you may insist that 'anyone could have done that', or say to yourself that you should have done a much better job. Or you may think people don't like you, and dismiss those who show they do as not counting. Discounting the positives takes the joy out of life and makes you feel inadequate and unrewarded.</p> | <p>Personalisation and Blame - Personalisation happens when you hold yourself responsible for something that is not entirely under your control. When a father received a report card for his son which was critical of his progress, he told himself "This shows what a bad father I've been". People may also blame other people for their problems, for example "I have a horrible life because I have no support". Blame does not work because it prevents you from taking responsibility for your life.</p> |
| <p>Mental Filtering - this is where you view information through your own unique distorted 'lens' - not seeing things as they really are, but seeing them how you 'think' they are - and most likely coming to the wrong conclusions, and interpreting events/situations in a negative irrational/distorted way.</p> | <p>Entitlement - When a person assumes that they have 'the right' to have something or behave in a certain way, simply because they want to. For example, "If someone annoys me I'm entitled to lose my temper with them", or "If somebody is boring I'm entitled to ignore them". Feeling entitled ignores the rights of the other person.</p> |
| <p>"Awfulising", or Catastrophic Thinking - This is when people make out situations to be much worse than they actually are, and when they envision the absolute worst case scenario. For example, "I'm going to totally screw up this presentation. I'll make a total show of myself. Everybody will be laughing at me. I can't bear it. It's awful.</p> | <p>You get the picture? Continue on to the task.....</p> |

Key aims – try to **challenge your shoulds and must's and ought demands – on yourself, others and the world.** Don't use emotional reasoning. Don't 'judge' or 'label' – look for evidence. Don't put yourself down. Don't put others down to 'big yourself up'. Don't try to impose your beliefs on persons/groups. Avoid being 'negatively selfish' at the deliberate expense of others. Don't try to punish yourself or others because of 'bad behaviour' (in your view!). These choices hurt YOU! Aim (at least aim) for *unconditional acceptance of the self, others and the world.* And you will be MUCH happier and life will be more pleasureable for you and others in your life. Nobody is perfect - everybody is just trying to live and deserves compassion... including you!



Task: Identifying and understanding thinking errors – hypothetical or real:

Either roleplay or write down a short paragraph describing a scene where you recognise the following common thinking errors in action (hypothetical if you want), and compose a new healthier more rational thought that you might replace it with.

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| <p>Demand Thinking (Must, Should, Ought)</p> | <p>New thought:</p> |
| <p>Fortune Telling</p> | <p>New thought:</p> |
| <p>Awfulising</p> | <p>New thought:</p> |

