



[www.CBTandFeelingGood.com](http://www.CBTandFeelingGood.com) - Dealing with 'MUSTY' thinking.

Is it always 'must' and 'should' and 'have to' with you? Do you have inflexible **RULES FOR LIVING?**

This is unhealthy **demand thinking**, and it could be the cause of a lot of upsetness and self sabotaging behaviour and poor communication skills. Let's take a look at what it is, and how you can break the habit and neutralise it with healthy realistic thinking so that you can feel better much more of the time....

There are three core demands that are the cause of most of our problems, we accept as rational – but they cause us to interpret and process events and situations in a silly way that only serves to make us upset and behave in self-defeating ways. Think of it as viewing life through a distorted fish-eye lens - the view is 'off'. We can work to switch to a clear undistorted lens and see things the way calmer happier people do - this means we'll have less emotional disturbances, and consequentially less behavioural problems - helping us to live a fuller happier life.

*The Ellis idea is that we have distorted thinking about:*

- **How I am:** e.g. I *must* be successful and respected and attractive all the time, or else I can't be happy
- **How you are:** e.g. You *should* be kind and respectful toward me all the time, or else you're a horrible rotten person.
- **How the world is:** e.g. Things *ought* to be comfortable and as I want them to be all the time, or else it's awful, I can't stand it, it's unbearable, it's not fair.

**Why 'must' and 'should' and 'ought'?** Is that realistic? Are you a special being that unusual universal laws apply to? Are you somebody who has the supreme power to control people, situations and events? is it written in stone or in the stars that things must be as you *demand* them to be?

If the answer to those questions is no (and trust me, it is) - then is it realistic to have these rules? **This kind of demand thinking is inflexible and unrealistic, "I want, therefore it follows that I must have!"**. It's unattainable. Stay thinking that way and you'll always be dissatisfied and generally unhappy! Sometimes it just is what it is and we have to roll with it.



"*What are you talking about? What's the alternative?*" Well, the Ellis theory is that actually life is random - sometimes unfair, sometimes difficult and frustrating... and that's just how it is. *Demanding* it to be another way is futile and causes us to become excessively upset and uncomfortable. **The solution is to replace demands with 'PREFERENCES'** - to restructure our demands - over and over and over again, until we have new hardwired thinking that respects and has **UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE** of reality, of ourselves and others and the world. Big job, but it can be done!

**Soften your silly rule book, and have a happy life that accepts what you can control, and what you cannot control. Be cool.**

## **Examples of how to replace the demands (rules for living) with alternative healthy statements:**

**How I am:** I would prefer to be successful and respected and attractive all of the time - but that's just a preference, it's not a demand, as demanding that would be silly. I'm a fallible human being.. I have ups and downs. Sometimes I don't like the way I look, sometimes things are difficult for me in relationships, and not all people respond to me with respect and consideration... this is normal, it's this way for everybody. I aspire to unconditionally accept myself. I'm a worthy person who is working on ways to live a better life. Waiting for a time my demands will be met to 'be happy' would be irrational - there are many things, small and large, to be happy about right now, and in the future.

**How you are:** I would prefer you to think everything I say and do is amazing, and for you to treat me reasonably, considerately and respectfully all of the time. But that's just a preference, as I know that people are governed by their own priorities, and that I can't control your thoughts and behaviours. You might very well have your own 'musts' and 'shoulds' demand thinking about others that I don't conform to, that's something I will just have to like or lump. I aspire to unconditionally accept you and your right to think and behave as you wish, even if I don't like it or agree with it.

**How the world is:** I would prefer it if things and conditions were absolutely as I want them to be all of the time - but that's just a preference. Much as I'd like it, I'm not the master of the world – and *stuff* happens... even if I find some situations difficult or frustrating, awfulising them and declaring *I can't stand it* and so on is pointless, and only serves to maximise my upset and discomfort and frustration. I can in fact 'stand it', even though I won't like it. I aspire to unconditionally accept the world and it's randomness.

**Get the picture? Start *thinking about your own thinking*... figure out if and in what instances you use **Musty demand thinking**, and aim to replace it with '**preferences**' instead... You will feel better, I promise!**

And don't forget to play around with the theory -noting that applying musts and shoulds to other peoples general behaviour is a recipe for discontent (your own and theirs!) and unhealthy interactions. It will give you EXPLODY HEAD.

Example: *you must not behave that way! I disapprove as I think that you should and ought to think and behave differently - so I'm going to punish you ...* and so on...

Maybe you think somebody is ugly or uncool or dull and that they shouldn't be that way? Maybe you think somebody is full of themselves and shouldn't be that way? Maybe you think somebody is selfish and shouldn't be that way? Because, um, you say so? Do these people irritate or enrage you? Hmm. Think on...



Important note: even if someone does do a bad thing, it doesn't make them 'bad' - we are all a work in progress and a sum of many parts. *People are not their behaviours, their behaviours are just something they do sometimes.* And if somebody does think little of you, you don't have to agree with them, and you don't have to start world war III. You could just roll your eyes. And, most importantly, often we are obsessing with plotting and upsettiness, while the object of our disapproval is oblivious, and is off living their lives happily. Buddha says that holding onto anger is like holding a burning hot coal with the intention of throwing it at somebody, but the person who gets burned is... you! Wouldn't it be nice to unconditionally accept people as we would wish ourselves to be accepted? You will be calmer, instead of being enraged and plotting and planning punishments? Yes? Start today! And remember... these are aspirations, nobody is expecting you to become Buddha overnight (or ever even), just do your best, and remember it's not only the right thing to do - this is about you feeling good, being calmer and happier.

**Demand thinking** is irrational - whereby we apply inflexible '**musts**' and '**shoulds** and '**oughts**' to ourselves, and others, and the world. Aim to turn these demands into preferences instead... and aspire to **unconditional acceptance of yourself and others and the world**

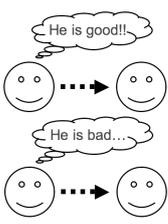
## The Albert Ellis 12 typical irrational beliefs and disputing statements

(review and think about these...)

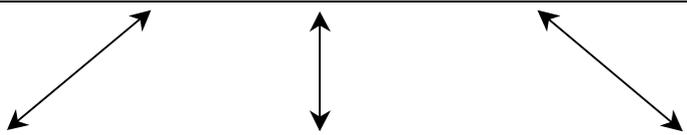
<p><b>1.</b> The idea that it is a dire necessity for adults to be loved by significant others for almost everything they do...</p>	<p>... instead of their concentrating on their own self-respect, on winning approval for practical purposes, and on loving rather than on being loved.</p>
<p><b>2.</b> The idea that certain acts are awful or wicked, and that people who perform such acts should be severely damned...</p>	<p>... instead of the idea that certain acts are self-defeating or antisocial, and that people who perform such acts are behaving stupidly, ignorantly, or neurotically, and would be better helped to change. People's poor behaviors do not make them rotten individuals.</p>
<p><b>3.</b> The idea that it is horrible when things are not the way we like them to be...</p>	<p>... instead of the idea that it is too bad, that we had better try to change or control bad conditions so that they become more satisfactory, and, if that is not possible, we had better temporarily accept and gracefully lump their existence.</p>
<p><b>4.</b> The idea that human misery is invariably externally caused and is forced on us by outside people and events...</p>	<p>... instead of the idea that neurosis is largely caused by the view that we take of unfortunate conditions.</p>
<p><b>5.</b> The idea that if something is or may be dangerous or fearsome we should be terribly upset and endlessly obsess about it...</p>	<p>... instead of the idea that one had better frankly face it and render it non-dangerous, and, when that is not possible, accept the inevitable.</p>
<p><b>6.</b> The idea that it is easier to avoid than to face life difficulties and self-responsibilities...</p>	<p>... instead of the idea that the so-called easy way is usually much harder in the long run.</p>
<p><b>7.</b> The idea that we absolutely need something other or stronger or greater than ourself on which to rely...</p>	<p>... instead of the idea that it is better to take the risks of thinking and acting less dependently.</p>
<p><b>8.</b> The idea that we should be thoroughly competent, intelligent, and achieving in all possible respects...</p>	<p>... instead of the idea that we would prefer to do well rather than always need to do well, and accept ourself as a quite imperfect creature, who has general human limitations and specific fallibilities.</p>
<p><b>9.</b> The idea that because something once strongly affected our life, it should indefinitely affect it...</p>	<p>... instead of the idea that we can learn from our past experiences but not be overly-attached to or prejudiced by them.</p>
<p><b>10.</b> The idea that we must have certain and perfect control over things...</p>	<p>... instead of the idea that the world is full of improbability and chance and that we can still enjoy life despite this.</p>
<p><b>11.</b> The idea that human happiness can be achieved by inertia and inaction...</p>	<p>... instead of the idea that we tend to be happiest when we are vitally absorbed in creative pursuits, or when we are devoting ourselves to people or projects outside ourselves.</p>
<p><b>12.</b> The idea that we have virtually no control over our emotions and that we cannot help feeling disturbed about things...</p>	<p>... instead of the idea that we have real control over our destructive emotions - if we choose to work at changing the “musturbatory” hypotheses which we often employ to create them.</p>

**The communication skills worksheet.**

**Situation (Who? Issue? What 'bad' thing are they doing? What is their behaviour?)**



**Thinking / Beliefs (how are you interpreting it? What are they doing wrong? What does it mean?)**



<b>Feelings:</b>	<b>Fight or Flight Symptoms:</b>	<b>Self-defeating behaviour:</b>

**Dispute: Where is the evidence? Is there evidence against? Are there other possibilities? Am I using one of my unhelpful thinking habits? Am I doing 'must' and should'? Would I think differently if everything was wonderful in my life? :**

**New healthy appropriate / evidence based alternative thinking, that keeps you cool & gets you where you want to go:**