

UNHELPFUL THINKING HABITS

Self-awareness is the key to identifying your unhelpful thinking habits. You will notice that they often occur just before and during distressing situations. Once you can notice them, then that can help you to challenge or distance yourself from those thoughts and see the situation in a different and more helpful way.

<p>ALL OR NOTHING / BLACK & WHITE - Absolutes/extreme rules or categories. <i>Things aren't either totally white or totally black - there are shades of grey. Where is this on the spectrum?</i> Find a more believable or balanced replacement.</p> 	<p>GENERALIZING - Drawing sweeping conclusions from limited information. (This impairs your ability to connect and understand others.) Making evaluations or judgements about events, ourselves, others, or the world, rather than describing what we actually see and have evidence for. Focus on the facts.</p> 
<p>CATASTROPHIZING - Expecting the worst to happen; when something bad does happen believing it is absolutely the worst thing that could occur. <i>Is the worst likely? Is thinking the worst helpful?</i> Practice mindfulness to stay in the present.</p> 	<p>LABELING & BLAMING - Name-calling, blaming others for your problems or taking NO RESPONSIBILITY for yourself. This is different from Personalization / Self-Blame where you take ALL RESPONSIBILITY. Extend others the grace you'd like to receive.</p> 
<p>COMPARE & DESPAIR - Seeing only the good and positive aspects in others and getting upset when comparing ourselves negatively against them. <i>What would be a more balanced and helpful way of looking at it?</i> Focus on yourself, your strengths, your good attributes, not in relation to anyone else.</p> 	<p>MEMORIES - Current situations and events can trigger upsetting memories, leading us to believe that the danger is here and now, rather than in the past, causing us distress right now. <i>This is just a reminder of the past. Even though this memory makes me feel upset, it's not actually happening again right now.</i> Practice mindfulness to stay in the present.</p> 
<p>DISCOUNTING & FILTERING - Paying attention to negative events, neglecting positive experiences. This is when we notice only what the filter/lens allows or wants us to notice, and we dismiss anything that doesn't 'fit'. We call these people pessimists. Do a self-check-in or ask a loved one: "Am I only noticing the bad?" If so, find something more balance or realistic notice as a replacement.</p> 	<p>MIND-READING - Believing someone has an opinion of us without checking it out with that person. <i>Am I assuming I know what others are thinking? What's the evidence? Those are my own thoughts, not theirs. Is there another, more balanced way of looking at it?</i> Ask the person, give them the benefit of the doubt, or distract yourself from making assumptions.</p> 
<p>EMOTIONAL REASONING - Basing judgements, decisions, and conclusions, exclusively on feelings (not facts). <i>Just because it feels bad, doesn't necessarily mean it is bad. My feelings are just a reaction to my thoughts - and thoughts are an automatic brain reflex.</i> Put your thoughts on trial with a Thought Record.</p> 	<p>PERSONALIZATION OR SELF-BLAME - Accepting or seeing yourself as the total cause of something bad happening. This is different from Labeling & Blaming where you take NO RESPONSIBILITY. Personalization takes ALL RESPONSIBILITY, but there are many factors. Take appropriate responsibility, not all responsibility!</p> 
<p>FORTUNE-TELLING - Predicting that things will turn out badly in the future. <i>How likely is it that that might really happen?</i> Practice mindfulness to stay in the present.</p> 	<p>SHOULD STATEMENTS - A set of strict guidelines against ourselves or others; causes/leads to a place of non-acceptance associated with guilt/resentment. (Perfectionism gone wild.) <i>Am I putting too much pressure on myself, or setting unrealistic / impossible expectations on myself or others?</i> Find a middle path.</p> 