



Unhelpful Thinking Types

Whilst there are 10 unhelpful types here they all have the following in common:

- They are excessively negative.
- They all come automatically; after an event, before an event or even while remembering something.
- These Thinking Types do not leave room for any other possibility, you will be convinced that you are 100% right.
- The longer this kind of thinking goes on for the more extreme it can get and often the worse you will feel.
- Unhelpful thinking is driven by extreme emotions, stemming from the lower order part of the brain, it is a form of irrational analysis and as such the kind of things that we tell ourselves when we have these Thinking Types are without evidence and falsely held.

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking: You see things in black-or-white categories. If a situation falls short of what you consider to be perfect, you see it as a total failure. For example, when a person on a diet ate a spoonful of ice cream, they told themselves, "I've ruined my diet completely, I'm hopeless." This thought upset them so much that they decided to splurge on fried chicken. (It is okay to not have things go perfectly, accept it, don't try to prove to yourself that the irrational thought is true)

2. Over Generalisation: You see a single negative event, such as a romantic rejection or a career reversal, as a never-ending pattern of defeat by using words such as "always" or "never" when you think about it. A depressed singleton became upset when they did not get a text back straight away from a person they contacted. They told themselves, "Of course they don't like me, why would they, no one has ever been interested in me." (Be mindful of when you are using negative generalisations about yourself)

3. Mental Filter: You pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively, so that your vision of all reality becomes darkened, like the drop of ink that discolours a beaker of water. An example: You receive many positive comments about your presentation to a group of associates at work, but one of them says something mildly critical. You obsess about his reaction for days and ignore all the positive feedback.



4. Discounting the Positive: You reject positive experiences by insisting they "don't count." If you do a good job, you may tell yourself that it wasn't good enough or that anyone could have done as well. Discounting the positive takes the joy out of life and makes you feel inadequate and unrewarded. You are damned if you do and damned if you don't.

5. Jumping to Conclusions: You interpret things negatively when there are no facts to support your conclusion.

5.1 Mind Reading: Without any real proof you conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you. You think you know exactly what is going on in their heads.

5.2 Fortune-telling: You predict that things will turn out badly. Before a test, you may tell yourself, "I'm going to mess this up. What if I fail?" If you're depressed you may tell yourself, "I'll never get better at this."

6. Magnification/Catastrophising: You exaggerate the importance of your problems and shortcomings and consider every task to be a greater challenge than what it is or you consider every risk or danger to be greater. An example is a someone who is waiting for their partner to come home and thinking: if they are much later it means they are definitely having an affair or that they have definitely been involved in a car accident. (This is probably the most common unhelpful thinking type)

7. Emotional Reasoning: You assume that your negative emotions absolutely reflect the way things really are: "I feel terrified about going on aeroplanes, therefore it must be very dangerous to fly." Or "I feel guilty. I must be a horrible person." Or "I feel angry. This proves I'm being treated unfairly." Or "I feel so inferior. This means I'm not good enough." Or "I feel hopeless. I must really be hopeless." (Your emotions are certainly not factual guides to what is happening in reality)

8. "Should statements": You tell yourself that things should always be the way you hope or expect them to be. After playing a difficult piece on the piano, a gifted pianist told herself, "I shouldn't have made so many mistakes." This made her feel so disgusted that she quit practising for several days. "Musts," "oughts" and "have tos" are similar. "Should statements" that are directed against yourself lead to guilt and frustration. Should statements that are directed against other people or the world in general lead to anger and frustration: "They shouldn't be so stubborn and argumentative." Many people try to motivate themselves with should and shouldn'ts, as if they were rogues who had to be punished before they could be expected to do anything.



(Should statements not only cause us to feel lousy, they can ruin our relationships and rarely work, as the more you impose these rules on yourself or others the more likely you or they will rebel)

9. Labelling: Labelling is an extreme form of all-or-nothing thinking. Instead of saying “I made a mistake,” you attach a negative label to yourself: “I’m a loser.” You might also label yourself “a fool” or “a failure” or “stupid.” Labelling is quite irrational because you are not the same as what you do. Human beings exist, but “fools,” “losers,” and “idiots” do not. These labels are just useless abstractions that lead to anger, anxiety, frustration, and low self-esteem. (when you criticise yourself or others, find the behaviour that you would like to improve instead of putting your whole self or someone else down)

10. Personalisation and Blame: Personalisation occurs when you hold yourself personally responsible for an event that isn’t entirely under your control. When a parent received a note that their child was having difficulties at school, they told themselves, “This shows what a bad parent I am,” instead of trying to pinpoint the cause of the problem so that they could be helpful to their child.

In cases of domestic abuse sufferers may often tell themselves: “If only I were better at..., then they wouldn’t have lashed out at me.” Personalisation leads to guilt, shame, and feelings of inadequacy.

