

Also known as “cognitive distortions”, “unhelpful thinking patterns” or “self-destructive beliefs”. **The way you think** about things has a significant impact on **the way you feel** about yourself, your life and the world. Noticing these thought patterns is the first step towards seeing things slightly differently, in a more balanced, fair and self-compassionate way, which can in turn improve how you feel. Do you recognise any of these?

Over-generalising

Based on one isolated incident, people with this thinking pattern assume all other events will follow a similar pattern in the future. Basically, one bad thing makes you believe everything is/will be bad.

For example:

- You struggle with one particular subject at school, so you think “I’m stupid and I’m not good at anything. I always fail”.

All or Nothing Thinking

Seeing things as black or white – there’s no ‘in between’.

For example:

- “My partner broke up with me – no one will ever love me again.”
- “If I can’t be perfect there’s no point in trying at all.”

Must and should statements

People often live by fixed rules for themselves about what they “should” do and how they “should” feel, and judge themselves harshly if they don’t meet them.

For example:

- “I should always look as perfect as possible”
- “I must never make mistakes or be seen as weak”

Emotional reasoning

Treating emotions as if they’re facts, without thinking about the possibility that the feelings might be just feelings.

For example:

- “I feel alone, that means nobody cares about me.”
- “I feel anxious, that means I’m in danger”

Labelling

People who are low or anxious often label themselves in negative ways. These labels make you feel worse about yourself, even when they may not be based on facts.

For example:

- “I’m ugly”
- “I’m weird / crazy”
- “I’m stupid”
- “I’m a failure”

Mental Filter

Ignoring the positive aspects of life or situations, and instead focus on the negative.

For example:

- Your teacher gives you good feedback, but you’re certain that they don’t really mean it. You also might focus on and worry about the one thing they said could be improved.

Personalisation

People who think this way believe that everything is to do with them, and it’s usually negative – they blame themselves for no logical reason.

For example:

- “My friend is in a bad mood today – I must have upset them.” In reality, you haven’t done anything wrong, they’re upset about something else
- “It’s my fault my parents always argue”

Jumping to conclusions

Jumping to a negative conclusion about something without all the facts - often to “the worst-case scenario”, when you don’t actually know if it’s true.

For example:

- Mind Reading – “Everyone is thinking about how awkward and weird I look”
- Fortune Telling – “Even if I try I will just fail anyway”. “There’s no point doing that - it won’t help”.