

Unhelpful Thinking Styles

All-or-Nothing Thinking: Seeing things as belonging to extreme categories rather than as falling along a spectrum. If something isn't entirely good, it's treated as 100% bad.

- "People are either winners or losers!"
- "If I am not the best I have failed."
- "If you don't do everything I expect of you, then you are not my friend."

Always-and-Never Thinking: Interpreting a single negative event as the latest in a never-ending series OR stating that a positive event will never happen.

- "I don't know why I should bother studying, I always fail."
- "I never get invited anywhere."
- "Whenever I get on a line in the supermarket it always turns out to be the slowest."

Focusing on the Negative: Judging the whole situation negatively based on only few negative features.

- "I had a horrible day at work. My boss told me I had to redo a task."
- "The date went fine I guess, but I didn't like the cologne he was wearing."
- "My car got scratched. I hate driving it now."

Disqualifying the Positive: Unfairly rejecting a piece of evidence that contradicts a negative assumption.

- "She only loves me because I treat her well."
- "Of course my family cares about me. They have to!"
- "I only got a good grade in that class because it was easy."

Mindreading: Concluding that we know what someone else is thinking, as if we had the ability to read his or her mind.

- "I could tell that she didn't want to see me again."
- "Everyone at work must be thinking I am the weakest link."
- "I'm not going to ask him to hang out, he would probably think I'm boring."

Fortune Telling: Deciding you know what will happen in the future when you do not have enough information to make such a prediction.

- "This situation is never going to change."
- "My wife is definitely going to leave me" (when there is no evidence that she will).
- "No one is ever going to appreciate what I do for this company!"

Personalization: Taking the blame for negative events that were outside of your control.

- "It's all my fault!"
- "It's just my luck that this is happening to us!"
- "Even though the other driver hit my car in the back, I can't help feeling guilty that this happened."

Labeling: Calling yourself (or others) a cruel, diminishing name. These names often carry the implication that one is 100% bad, has no human dignity, and will always fail in their future attempts."

- "I am such an idiot/loser/moron/jerk."
- "Maybe we could compromise if you weren't being such a selfish creep."

Emotional Reasoning: Drawing a conclusion based, not on factual information, but on an emotion.

- "I'm so nervous. I just know something is going to go wrong!"
- "I've been angry all day. Now you are starting with me?" (When the other person was not).

Catastrophizing: Treating unpleasant events or disappointing situations as if they were truly a disaster in which everything possible has gone wrong.

- "This is the worst day ever!" (When you have a mild headache)
- "I am never talking to her again!" (When you are having a disagreement that will soon be resolved).

I-Can't-Stand-It's: Announcing that you do not have the mental capacity/patience/strength to tolerate a frustrating situation. • "That's it. That is the last straw. I just can't take it anymore."

- "Goddammit! I just can't do this!"

Should's and Must's: Asserting that you (or someone else) is obligated to do something according to some arbitrary rule.

- "Everyone should speak to me respectfully!"
- "I must always do what is expected of me."
- "People shouldn't dress like that in public!"