


**SMART Tool**  
**THE ABCs**

<b>A</b>	<b>Activating event</b> (What happened? What was I thinking? What was the situation that triggered my response?)
<b>B</b>	<b>Beliefs</b> (The way I think or what I believe about the situation)
<b>C</b>	<b>Consequences</b> (The way I end up feeling and behaving)

**For example:**

<b>A</b>	Activating event: Being offered a drink at a party.
<b>B</b>	Belief: 'I can't really cope with socialising if I don't have a drink' or 'This party will be boring if I don't drink'.
<b>C</b>	Consequences: Having one drink leads to another, which leads to another, which leads to getting intoxicated. This results in waking up the next morning feeling depressed and hungover and having another drink in order to feel better.

**In this example, it's not simply being offered the drink that leads to having one; it's the thought of being anxious or bored without a drink.**

**A more helpful belief can lead to a different outcome. For example:**

<b>A</b>	Being offered a drink at a party.
<b>B</b>	'I've been going so well, and I know that I can't just have one. I can cope without drinking and can also enjoy myself without drinking.'
<b>C</b>	Politely refusing the drink, having a water instead, going home feeling good about not giving in and acknowledging progress.

**By challenging the beliefs that lead to an unwanted behaviour, we can start to reframe beliefs and thoughts to create more balanced thinking, which then leads to more positive consequences.**


**SMART Tool**

# DISPUTING (D) UNHELPFUL THINKING

**Disputing is a process of challenging the way we think about situations. Disputing, or evidence testing, is about trying to look at thoughts more accurately. Disputing unhelpful thinking can help us make more informed decisions about thoughts instead of just acting on them. Remember, thoughts are not facts!**

*The following questions can help us challenge unhelpful thinking:*

Do I have any experiences that show that this thought is not completely true all of the time?  
 Is there any other way of viewing this situation?  
 Is it rational? Does it make sense when I look at it with a clear head?  
 If I were giving advice to someone I care about who was thinking like this, what might I say?  
 Are there any strengths or positives in me or the situation that I might be ignoring?

**Example: Someone thinks: 'I could just have one drink.'**

**Q: Do I have any experiences that show that this thought is not completely true?**

A: The last time I tried this I ended up drinking the whole bottle.

**Q: When was the last time I had 'just one drink'?**

A: I haven't been able to have just one drink for many years.

**Q: Is there any other way of viewing this situation?**

A: There is a very good chance that I could jeopardise my recovery.

**Q: Is it rational? Is this what I really want?**

A: Not really. I'm using it as an excuse to give in to an urge.

**Q: If I were giving advice to someone I care about who was thinking this, what might I say?**

A: You know it's not realistic to have 'just one.' Don't blow it now – you've been doing so well!

**Q: Are there any strengths or positives in me or the situation that I might be ignoring?**

A: Even though I feel like a drink, not giving in to this urge will be better in the long run and I will feel good about myself.

**Balanced thinking leads to (E) Effective new beliefs.**



# IDENTIFYING UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

Psychologists have identified a number of typical unhelpful thinking styles. Familiarising yourself with them can help you recognise them quickly so you can challenge them and reframe them as more helpful or balanced thoughts.

<b>1. Mental filter</b>	<p>This type of thinking is characterised by ‘tunnel vision’ – looking at only one element of a situation (usually negative) to the exclusion of everything else.</p> <p><i>Example: Having a disagreement about where to park the car has ‘ruined the whole evening.’</i></p>
<b>2. Jumping to conclusions/ mind reading</b>	<p>This style of thinking involves drawing conclusions without considering all of the available evidence.</p> <p><i>Example: ‘My boss wants to speak to me so I must be getting sacked.’</i></p>
<b>3. Taking it personally</b>	<p>Taking it personally involves ignoring other factors that may have contributed to an outcome.</p> <p><i>Example: ‘It’s my fault that we had a bad meal because I chose the restaurant.’</i></p>
<b>4. Catastrophising</b>	<p>This mindset involves imagining the worst possible scenario unfolding and seeing situations as terrible, awful, dreadful and horrible.</p> <p><i>Example: ‘My chest hurts... I must be having a heart attack.’</i></p>
<b>5. Black and white thinking</b>	<p>Also known as ‘all or nothing’ thinking, this approach leaves no room for a middle ground.</p> <p><i>Example: ‘I didn’t get the top mark, so I’m a failure.’</i></p>
<b>6. ‘Shoulds’ and ‘musts’</b>	<p>Thoughts that begin with ‘I/You/They/People should...’ or ‘I/You/They/People must...’ tend to be rigid and inflexible. They put unreasonable demands on others and create unrealistic expectations.</p> <p><i>Example: ‘I must never be upset with my partner’ or ‘She should know better.’</i></p>
<b>7. Over-generalising</b>	<p>This thinking style takes one instance and imposes it on multiple situations. It often includes words such as ‘always,’ ‘never,’ ‘every’ and ‘all.’</p> <p><i>Example: ‘Things never work out for me,’ or ‘I always do the wrong thing.’</i></p>
<b>8. Labelling</b>	<p>This style involves making big statements about ourselves or others on the basis of our behaviour in specific situations.</p> <p><i>Example: ‘I missed the bus... I’m a total idiot.’</i></p>