



# 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>