

UNHEALTHY THINKING STYLES

DISQUALIFYING THE POSITIVE

Disqualifying the positive happens when individuals ignore, dismiss or discount their positive attributes and experiences.

Example: "I got an A on the test but I was lucky, it was an easy exam."

Taking this view ignores the effort and skills of the person when in fact the exam seemed easy because they were well prepared.

CATASTROPHISING

Catastrophising is the tendency to assume the worst-case scenario is the most likely to occur or thinking a situation is worse than it really is. Catastrophising is an easy trap to fall into and can very easily cloud our judgement, making it difficult for us to realise we're even doing it in the first place.

Example: "If I don't recover quickly from this procedure, I will never get better and I will be disabled my entire life."

OVERGENERALISING

Overgeneralisation is the act of making a broad assumption based upon a singular experience. Overgeneralisation is a very common cognitive distortion to experience in relation to things like exams and jobs.

Example: John is trying to bake bread but after a couple of attempts they still can't get their dough to rise properly, they conclude bread making is too hard and so they give up, believing it will always be this hard.

EMOTIONAL REASONING

Emotional Reasoning is a thought pattern that can develop in which our feelings lead us to conclude something must be true even though there's absolutely no evidence that you've done anything wrong and others have assured you of this.

Example: A student says to themselves, "I feel stupid, therefore I must be dumb," even though their grades were as good as (or better than) others.

ALL OR NOTHING THINKING

All-or-nothing thinking, also known as Black and White thinking, refers to thinking in extremes. You are either successful or unsuccessful; your performance was totally good or totally bad; if you are not perfect then you are a disaster. There is no room for anything in-between or shades of grey.

Example: "If I don't pass this test I'll have no career." "My friends cancelled our plans together, they must hate me."

LABELLING

Labelling is when we generalise and judge either ourselves or someone else through a single word or phrase. Most labels we give are inherently negative and reductive.

Example: "My co-worker is always late, she's completely irresponsible." "I failed my test. I'm a loser."

PERSONALISATION

Personalisation is a distortion whereby a person often feels responsible for other people's happiness or failure, even blaming themselves for events outside of their control and believing that things are connected to them even though they have nothing to do with the situation.

Example: Two colleagues are chatting in the staff room on break; one colleague suddenly gets angry and walks out of the room. The other colleague might start to believe that they said or did something wrong, and that their colleague's anger is somehow her fault.

SHOULD & MUSTS

'Should' and 'Must' statements are what we sometimes use on ourselves when we are already feeling low or we are in a negative mind space. Instead of being encouraging or inspiring, these statements tend to be unhelpful, and weigh us down even further placing undue pressure on us.

Example: "I must not speak up because it will just cause arguments..." "I should have got that right the first time..."

MENTAL FILTER

When someone chooses to remember only one aspect of a situation, usually the bad parts; the negative parts are when they are engaged in mental filtering.

Example: "I only got a B instead of an A on my last test. It's not good enough..." "We were having a really good time at the BBQ, everyone was enjoying themselves but then there was a shower which ruined the whole day, it was a disaster."

MIND READING

Mind Reading (also known as Jumping to Conclusions or Fortune Telling) occurs when we assume we know what someone else is thinking or feeling without actually confirming it with them; acting on an assumption that turns out to be incorrect or where you become so convinced that something is true that you don't even bother to check it out.

Example: A friend walks by you on the street because they didn't notice you. You conclude, "they're ignoring me so they must not like me anymore."

MAGNIFICATION & MINIMISATION

Magnification and Minimisation refer to when we focus on our negatives and gloss over our positives. If we're alone, we may not even acknowledge the positive. If we're in a group, we may tend to focus far more on our friends' contributions as opposed to our own.

Example: "I played a wrong note and it completely ruined the song for everyone. I don't know how to play anything at all."

"I only did a paragraph or two of the work, my friend did the most because they presented our findings."