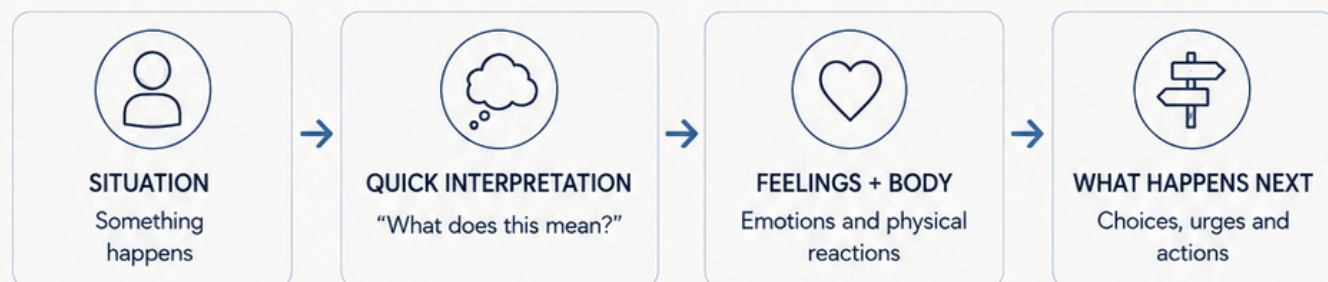


Unhelpful Thinking Styles

NOTICING THINKING HABITS THAT CAN MAKE DIFFICULT MOMENTS FEEL EVEN HARDER

Our minds make quick interpretations to help us respond. When we are under pressure, these interpretations can become narrower, harsher or more certain than the available evidence. These patterns are common and are not a sign of failure. The goal is not to force positive thinking, but to notice the pattern and make room for a more complete and useful view.

HOW THINKING CAN SHAPE A MOMENT



Unhelpful thinking styles can narrow the interpretation – especially when we are stressed, low, anxious, angry, ashamed or tired.

COMMON UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES



Working With a Thought

CATCH IT. CHECK IT. CHOOSE A MORE COMPLETE RESPONSE

Some difficult thoughts reflect real problems or risks. Checking a thought does not mean dismissing the situation or talking yourself out of your feelings. It means slowing down long enough to separate what you know from what your mind is predicting, assuming or leaving out.



WORKED EXAMPLE

	SITUATION	I noticed an error after sending an email.
	AUTOMATIC THOUGHT	"I am completely incompetent. Everyone will lose confidence in me."
	WHAT I NOTICED	All-or-nothing thinking, labelling, catastrophising and mind reading. Shame 80%; anxiety 70%.
	BALANCED RESPONSE	"I made an error and can correct it. One mistake does not define my competence. I can repair what needs repairing and continue."

TRY IT Use short phrases. You are looking for a workable perspective, not a perfect answer.

	1. SITUATION What happened? Where and when?	
	2. AUTOMATIC THOUGHT OR IMAGE What went through my mind?	
	3. STYLE(S) + FEELINGS Which styles fit? What did I feel, and how strongly (0–100%)?	
	4. CHECK THE EVIDENCE What supports the thought? What does not fit, or is missing?	
	5. A MORE BALANCED VIEW What else may be true? What would I say to someone I care about?	
	6. NEXT HELPFUL ACTION What small action would support me or address the situation?	



TAKEAWAY The aim is not to argue with every thought. It is to notice when a familiar thinking habit is narrowing the picture, then choose a view that better fits the available evidence and helps you respond effectively.

Adapted from Beck's cognitive therapy model and Burns' cognitive distortions.

References: Beck, A. T., Rush, A. J., Shaw, B. F., & Emery, G. (1979). *Cognitive therapy of depression*. Guilford Press.

Burns, D. D. (1980). *Feeling good: The new mood therapy*. William Morrow.