

Unhelpful Thinking Styles

All or nothing thinking



Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

If I'm not perfect I have failed

Either I do it right or not at all

Over-generalising

"everything is always rubbish"
"nothing good ever happens"

Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

Mental filter



Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes

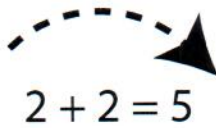
Disqualifying the positive



Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another

That doesn't count

Jumping to conclusions



There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:

- **Mind reading** (imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling** (predicting the future)

Magnification (catastrophising) & minimisation



Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

Emotional reasoning



Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.

I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot

should must

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration

Labelling



Assigning labels to ourselves or other people

I'm a loser
I'm completely useless
They're such an idiot

Personalisation

"this is my fault"

Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

Modifying Rules & Assumptions

What is the rule (or assumption) I live by that I would like to modify?

How does this rule (or assumption) affect me in my day to day life?

What are the origins of this rule (or assumption)?

Where did I learn it? What was going on in my earlier life that meant this may have been a helpful rule at the time?

What are the advantages of this rule (or assumption)?

What are the disadvantages of this rule (or assumption)?

Is there an alternative to my rule (or assumption) that would be more flexible?

This may take more words to express than the original rule. Is there a new rule (or assumption) that would allow you to get most of the advantages with fewer of the disadvantages? How can you put this new rule (or assumption) into practice?

Modifying Rules & Assumptions

What is the rule (or assumption) I live by that I would like to modify?

If I'm not the best or I'm a failure (assumption)

How does this rule (or assumption) affect me in my day to day life?

It means I try really hard at whatever I do. I set myself incredibly high standards which are tough to live up to. I'm always worried up slipping up and making mistakes.

What are the origins of this rule (or assumption)?

Where did I learn it? What was going on in my earlier life that meant this may have been a helpful rule at the time?

*My parents were very driven. Dad's motto was "second is just a fancy word for losing".
As a child I got lots of praise for succeeding.*

What are the advantages of this rule (or assumption)?

It means that I try hard and I have achieved a lot in my life

As a child I got my parents' approval

It keeps me motivated

What are the disadvantages of this rule (or assumption)?

I'm exhausted!

I'm always checking to make sure I'm not making mistakes

I can never let myself relax - I don't think it makes me a nice person

Is there an alternative to my rule (or assumption) that would be more flexible?

This may take more words to express than the original rule. Is there a new rule (or assumption) that would allow you to get most of the advantages with fewer of the disadvantages? How can you put this new rule (or assumption) into practice?

*Doing a good job is good enough in this life. Not being the best doesn't make me a failure.
Real life isn't a competition - there's no medal for being the best.
It's more important for me to have a balance in life and try to enjoy it than to beat myself about achieving all the time.*

Modifying Rules & Assumptions

What is the rule (or assumption) I live by that I would like to modify?

I must never ask for help (rule) or people will laugh at me (assumption)

How does this rule (or assumption) affect me in my day to day life?

I never ask for help. I have to be self sufficient at finding answers but I often feel frustrated that I can't do things, and beat myself up for being stupid

What are the origins of this rule (or assumption)?

Where did I learn it? What was going on in my earlier life that meant this may have been a helpful rule at the time?

One teacher in primary made me feel really stupid when I couldn't understand problems in his class. I remember being embarrassed in front of the whole class

What are the advantages of this rule (or assumption)?

I don't run the risk of being laughed at for not knowing an answer

What are the disadvantages of this rule (or assumption)?

I have to put in a lot of work to make sure I'm doing alright

It puts a lot of pressure on me to do things for myself

I got fired from a job for making too many mistakes - could I have avoided this?

Is there an alternative to my rule (or assumption) that would be more flexible?

This may take more words to express than the original rule. Is there a new rule (or assumption) that would allow you to get most of the advantages with fewer of the disadvantages? How can you put this new rule (or assumption) into practice?

It's ok to ask for help sometimes - learning from others is one of the best ways to learn. Being laughed at isn't the worst thing in the world - in some situations (with my close friends) we all laugh at each other and don't think any less of each other