

How do I know if a thought is helpful or unhelpful?

Our thoughts are informed by our values, beliefs and attitudes. They have evolved to help us to respond to our environment in a way that keeps us safe, helps us perform various tasks and make appropriate decisions.

At times our thoughts can become unhelpful when our values, attitudes and beliefs influence our interpretation of situations, events and interactions so that our thinking isn't reflective of the facts and evidence.

Unhelpful thoughts can be identified through the following characteristics:

- *Automatic* – readily come to mind without effort or consideration
- *Habitual/pattern* – happening often
- *Triggering ongoing emotional distress* (e.g. sadness, worry, anger)
- *Lacking objective evidence when challenged*
- *Not resulting in us changing our actions or behaviour* – which could prevent us from alleviating the stress.

It is therefore important that you are actively aware of your thoughts and recognise when they are becoming unhelpful. Familiarise yourself with the following common thinking habits which may help you recognise unhelpful thinking:

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS: Making assumptions or predictions about outcomes

PERSONALISATION: Attributing blame to yourself for everything that goes wrong. Not considering other factors or parties at play

CATASTROPHISING: Otherwise known as 'jumping to the worst case scenario', characterised by blowing things out of proportion

BLACK & WHITE THINKING: Only seeing the extremes of a situation with little consideration or visibility to the shades of grey. Events are either 'good' or 'bad' and people are either 'terrific' or 'terrible'.

PESSIMISTIC THINKING: Only attending to the negative information and projecting this negative view towards past and future outcomes

'SHOULD' OR 'MUST': Using these terms may result in a fixed way of thinking which leads little room for alternate options or outcomes. This may result in unreasonable demands or pressure.

OVERGENERALISING: Taking one instance as a representation of all situations, current or future. Recognisable when using words such as "all" "never" "always" "every".

EMOTIONAL REASONING: Basing your opinion on your feelings from a situation, person or event, not other evidence. "I feel....therefore..."

We would like to thank Centre for Corporate Health (cfch.com.au) for their assistance in the compilation of this factsheet.

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The Corporate Mental Health Alliance (CMHAA) is a group of Australian businesses dedicated to providing mentally healthy workplaces for their people.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:

Website: cmhaa.org.au

LinkedIn: [Corporate Mental Health Alliance Australia](https://www.linkedin.com/company/corporate-mental-health-alliance-australia)



This resource was produced with the support of Commonwealth Bank

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