Unhelpful thinking styles

Common habits of mind that make things look worse than they are.

Everyone's mind takes shortcuts, especially under stress. These habits are normal. Once you can spot one, you can decide whether to go along with it.

All-or-nothing thinking

Seeing things as total success or total failure, with nothing in between. "I missed one session at the gym, so the whole week is ruined."

Catastrophising

Jumping to the worst possible outcome and treating it as likely. "This headache is probably something serious."

Mind reading

Assuming you know what others think, usually something bad about you. "They went quiet. They think I am boring."

Fortune telling

Predicting that things will go badly before they have happened. "There is no point applying. I will not get it."

Mental filter

Noticing the one thing that went wrong and filtering out everything that went well.

Discounting the positive

Explaining away good things. "They only said that to be nice."

Emotional reasoning

Taking a feeling as proof. "I feel like a fraud, so I must be one."

"Should" and "must"

Holding yourself or others to rigid rules. "I should be able to cope with this on my own."

Labelling

Summing up a whole person in one harsh word. "I am useless." "He is a waste of space."

Taking it personally

Blaming yourself for things that were not all down to you. "The meeting went flat. It was my fault."

Try this

Over the next week, see if you can catch one of these each day. You do not need to argue with it. Just name it: "That is mind reading again."

My notes and questions

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This handout supports your therapy. It does not replace professional advice.