Notice unhelpful thoughts

Sometimes when we are sad or worried we have thoughts that are not helpful. These thoughts make use feel worse.

This is a list of some types of unhelpful thoughts to watch for. Try to notice if you have these thoughts. If you do you can work to change them to more positive thoughts.

"All or nothing" thinking

What it is: When you only see things as good or bad or right or wrong. You don't see anything in between. You might think to yourself, "If I'm not perfect, I have failed." or "If I didn't get everything right, then everything is wrong."

What you can do: Remember that nobody is perfect. It's okay to make mistakes sometimes.

Jumping to conclusions

What it is: When you think you know something when you don't have all the facts. You might think that you know what someone is thinking. Or you might think that you know something bad will happen in the future.

What you can do: We don't know what will happen in the future. And we don't have all of the facts we need to figure it out. This is okay. Remind yourself that things may go well in the future.

Labeling

What it is: This is when you label yourself or someone else and think this label is always true. You may think, "I'm a loser" or "I'm stupid" when this is not true.

What you can do: Remind yourself that labels are often wrong. They also don't define a person. Move past labels that make you feel bad by thinking about all of the great things you could say about yourself."

Thinking your feelings are the truth

What it is: When you think that how you feel must be the truth. You might think, "I feel embarrassed so I must be stupid."

What you can do: Remind yourself that this is not true. Often the bad things we feel about ourselves are very different from reality.

Seeing the bad but not the good

What it is: When you see the bad parts of something but not the good parts. You may notice when you fail but not when you succeed.

What you can do: Notice when you succeed. Focus on the good things more than the bad things.

Over generalizing

What it is: This is when you think that something that happened once will always happen or be true in the future. If something bad happened once, you might think "nothing good ever happens."

What you can do: Remember that good things and bad things happen to everyone. Just because something bad happened to you doesn't mean it will happen again.

Making things bigger or smaller than they really are

What it is: You may think that good things about other people are bigger than they really are. Or you may thing that good things about you are smaller than they really are.

What you can do: Remember that everyone has good traits and bad traits.

Should/must

What it is: When you put pressure on yourself that isn't fair. You may think that you "should" or "must" do something. This can make you feel guilty or feel like you failed.

What you can do: Instead of using words like "should" or "must", think about the reasons why something may or may not be helpful to do.

Blaming yourself or others

What it is: When you blame yourself for things that go wrong, even when it's not your fault. Or, you may blame other people for things that are not their fault.

What you can do: Remember that sometimes things happen and there is little we can do to control them. When something is your fault, remember that you can take responsibility and learn from it.