

## Unhelpful Thinking Styles

Throughout life, we develop a variety of different styles of thinking. Often these styles of thinking are unhelpful and are closely linked with negative emotions and times of distress in our lives.

The following are some of the most common unhelpful thinking styles. You may identify with some, or all. Working to change our unhelpful thinking styles takes time but is possible with the right approach and therapeutic support.

- **The Should's & Musts** – These words are considered quite critical in terms of the guilt, shame and pressure which often go hand in hand with using these expressions or imposing these terms upon ourselves. This use of language often brings distress, frustration and sadness/anxiety when we or others do not meet the expectations of our should's or musts.
- **Jumping To Conclusions** – This may often play out in the form of misinterpreting what we deem to be evidence and coming to a conclusion without having facts or information of a rational nature. Jumping to conclusions may often involve imagining or assuming that we know what other people are thinking or feeling like we hold the ability to predict the future.
- **Mental Filter** – I always describe this one to clients with the following analogy: Imagine when you are on Instagram for example. You start out with the photo you took, it's the original, it's the true essence of the way it was set out to be and evidence would suggest this is the true version of the picture. Then with the many options available, we place a filter upon the photo and now the photo is seen through a very different lens and we only see the picture one way, potentially ignoring the reality. Our mental filter when influenced by our negative thoughts may cause us for example to only notice our failures and not see our successes due to the negative filter or lens through which we are viewing our situation or circumstance.
- **Disqualification Of the Positive** – This thinking style involves discounting or ignoring the good things that have happened and/or are happening and ultimately thinking "well those things don't count". This thinking style would result in a hyperawareness and emphasis upon what is negative.
- **All Or Nothing Thinking** – Otherwise known as "black and white thinking" this thinking style causes people to focus on either success or failure, essentially believing that there are only two options. Examples might be: "Either I do it right or I don't do it at all" or "If its not perfect then I don't want it/it's a failure"