

unhelpful thinking styles

overgeneralisation

When a person experiences an unhelpful emotion (eg, depression or anxiety), it is usually preceded by a number of unhelpful self-statements and thoughts. Often there is a pattern to such thoughts and we call these, "unhelpful thinking styles". One of the things we have noticed is that people use unhelpful thinking styles as an automatic habit. It is something that happens out of our awareness. However, when a person consistently and constantly uses some of these styles of thinking, they can often cause themselves a great deal of emotional distress. One of these thinking styles is called "overgeneralisation".

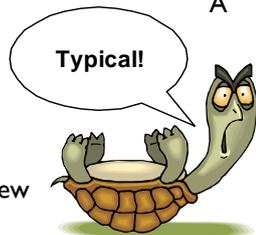
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The key element in this unhelpful thinking style is to take one instance in the here and now, and to impose this on all future situations.

Perhaps you've said to yourself in the past "This is just so typical!" telling yourself that this is "how things always are", or "everyone's like that", or "things never turn out well for me", when, in fact, there are only a few examples to go by. Making broad, generalised and global conclusions on the basis of only a little evidence can leave us thinking that things are really uncontrollable, inevitable and out of our hands.

A sense of helplessness often accompanies such overgeneralisations.

If you think about personal relationships, you might notice a few



overgeneralisations. Have you ever said, or heard, something like, "You never do anything romantic for me", or "I always have to take out the garbage", or "Everyone keeps having a go at me", or "Every night I come home, those kids have always left a mess!"

Notice that these unhelpful thinking styles often include words like, "all", "never", "always" and "every", when, in most cases, the "always" and "never" are not as solid as we might think they are. How do you think someone would feel if they used this thinking style? They may feel frustrated, discouraged, depressed, or annoyed, amongst other things.

Can you think of a situation where you have used this thinking style?

Briefly describe the situation.	What were the thoughts that went through your mind?	What feelings did you experience consequent to your thinking?