UNHELPFUL THINKING HABITS

Over the years, we tend to get into unhelpful thinking habits such as those described below. We might favour some over others, and there might be some that seem far too familiar. Once you can identify your unhelpful thinking styles, you can start to notice them – they very often occur just before and during distressing situations. Once you can notice them, then that can help you to challenge or distance yourself from those thoughts, and see the situation in a different and more helpful way.

All or Nothing thinking - Believing that something or someone can be only good or bad, right or wrong, rather than anything in-between or 'shades of grey'. *Things aren't either totally white or totally black – there are shades of grey. Where is this on the spectrum?*

Over Generalising - Applying the experience of on situation to 'all the time'. Not getting one particular job becomes "I'll never get a job"

Disqualifying the positive – You only focus on the negative and disregard the positive. Ie. Someone compliments your outfit – *You reply* "What this old thing?" instead of saying "Thank you".

Shoulds, Oughts and Musts - Thinking or saying 'I should' (or shouldn't) and 'I must' puts pressure on ourselves, and sets up unrealistic expectations.
Am I putting more pressure on myself, setting up expectations of myself that are almost impossible? What would be more realistic?

Mind-Reading - Assuming we know what others are thinking (usually about us).
Am I assuming I know what others are thinking? What's the evidence? Those are my own thoughts, not theirs. Is there another, more balanced way of looking at it?

Catastrophising - Imagining and believing that the worst possible thing will happen

OK, thinking that the worst possible thing will definitely happen isn't really helpful right now. What's most likely to happen?

Personalising – Taking personal responsibility for something that is not your fault. If a partner is in a bad mood you think "I must have done something wrong". *Is this really my fault? Can I look at this another way?*

Judgements - Making evaluations or judgements about events, ourselves, others, or the world, rather than describing what we see and have evidence for. *I'm making an evaluation about the situation or person. It's how I make sense of the world, but that doesn't mean my judgements are right or helpful. Is there another perspective?*

Prediction - Believing we know what's going to happen in the future.

Am I thinking that I can predict the future? How likely is it that that might really happen?