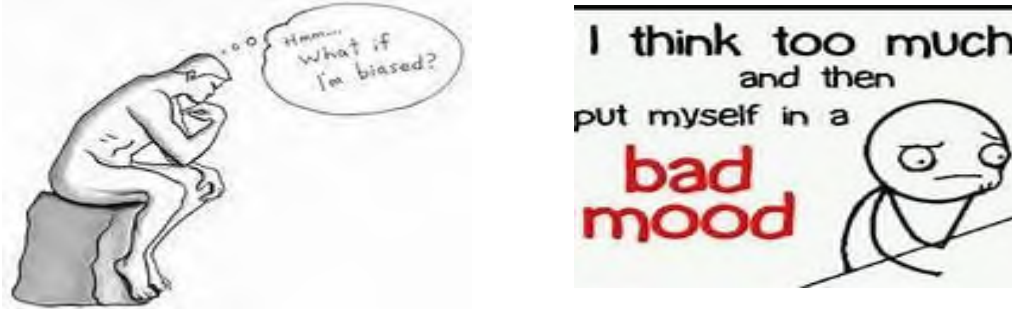


Plan: To explore, discuss and illustrate using a most recent event episode or situation.


NEGATIVE AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS/THINKING (NATS), ASSUMPTIONS AND BELIEFS OR COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS





The way we think about things is important in determining how we feel. Further, there are times when our thoughts, assumptions or beliefs are unhelpfully negative. All of us have the ability to create our own negative moods. We often feel that it's a negative event, something that happens outside of our control usually, that causes depression or anxiety. But it's what we tell ourselves about that event that is often the biggest contributor to feeling bad, or in making a bad situation even worse. Recognising ANTs, assumptions or beliefs is the first step in learning to change them (see changing your automatic unhelpful thoughts, assumptions and beliefs worksheets). Below are some examples of distorted thinking, but sometimes it is okay for a thought to fit into more than one of the categories below.



The good news is that **these unhelpful thoughts can be changed by** learning techniques to free yourself of these patterns and feel better. A very helpful technique is called **Thought Record Technique for Unhelpful Thinking Styles**. **Get a copy at:** (<http://healthcity.org.uk/en/clinical-resources/>)


[A] COMMON THINKING STYLE OR BELIEF			
	Unhelpful Thinking Style or Belief	Shorthand	Examples
1		Mini-max	"It would be terrible if I failed." "I'm going to make a fool of myself and people will laugh at me". "What if I haven't turned the iron off and the house burns




	<p>Magnification/Magnifying or the Binocular trick: You believe that what has happened or will happen will be so awful and unbearable that you won't be able to stand it.</p>  <p>a) Catastrophizing/catastrophisation is overestimating the chances of disaster. "Expecting something unbearable or intolerable to happen. We exaggerate the importance of negative events. Taking an event, you are concerned about and blowing it out of proportion to the point of becoming fearful. When you exaggerate the significance of the negative aspects, either give them more importance than is realistic or predict negative outcomes that are extreme.</p> <p>b) Maximisation is the same processing bias as Selective abstraction that focuses on a small negative detail and not seeing the whole picture. Maximisation takes it a stage further – the consequences of the negative aspects are seen as catastrophic.</p> <p>c) Shrinking or Minimising/ Minimisation is inappropriately shrinking to make something less important or downplay the importance of positive events. Negative bits loom large and positive bits seem lost in the distance.</p> <p>In depressed individuals, it is often the positive characteristics of other people that are exaggerated and the negatives that are understated (and then when thinking of oneself, this is reversed). When we think catastrophically, we are unable to see any other outcome other than the worse one, however unlikely this result may turn out to be.</p>		<p>down". "If I don't perform well, I'll get the sack". Believing that if you fail a quiz then the teacher will completely lose respect for you, that you will not graduate from college, that you will therefore never get a well-paying job, and will ultimately end up unhappy and dissatisfied with life'. You send out the wrong letter to a client at work, and this turns into "I will now lose my job, and then I won't be able to pay my bills, and then I will lose my house."</p> <p>The meal was terrible because the soup had too much salt in it. It was a complete disaster, they will never talk to me again</p>
	Unhelpful Thinking Style or Belief	Shorthand	Examples



2	 <p>Labelling, Global judgements or Awfulizing: “You assign global negative traits to yourself and others. Attaching a label to yourself after a negative experience”. Labelling is an extreme form of 'all or nothing' thinking and overgeneralization. Rather than describing a specific behaviour, an individual instead assigns a negative and highly emotive label to themselves or others that leaves no room for change. You label or judge a <i>specific</i> situation or person in an extreme way.</p> <p><i>A global judgement or negative label (is different from overgeneralisation) is typically applied to a specific person or event – your judgement is likely to be powerful and negative because of focusing on a particular aspect to the exclusion of all else. It may be the result of other thinking errors – e.g. selective abstraction leading to a global judgment.</i></p>	Bad labels	<p>“I’m undesirable,” or “He’s a rotten person.” “Feeling awkward at a party leads to the conclusion: “I’m an awkward person.” <i>You make a mistake on a form you filled out and it's sent back to you in the post. So, you decide “I'm such a loser” or “I'm so stupid” rather than thinking “I made a mistake as I had a busy day when I was filling this out”. “I’m stupid, a loser, useless or idiot’. XY our builder is completely incompetent.</i></p>
3	 <p>Negative filtering (Selective Abstraction), mental filter, discounting/ disqualifying positives or magnification/minimisation or Reverse alchemy: When we focus exclusively on the most negative and upsetting features of a situation, filtering out all of the more positive aspects. “Only paying attention to certain types of evidence”. When we continually discount and dismiss the positive experiences we encounter, by deciding they are unimportant or 'don't count'. For some reasons or the other, we ignore the good things we or other people have done or have happened. When a person makes a judgment based on some information but disregards other information.</p>	<p>Small detail</p> <p>Gold lead</p>	<p>“Supporting my friend when her mother died still doesn’t make up for that time, I got angry at her last year”. “Noticing our failures and not our successes”. “That doesn’t count”.</p> <p>You undertake a presentation at work which is complimented and praised by ninety-five percent of the team - but you dwell and focus on the five percent of feedback</p>




<p>You focus almost exclusively on the negatives and seldom notice the positives. Concentrating on the negatives while ignoring the positives.</p> <p>Ignoring important information that contradicts your (negative) view of the situation. You claim that the positive things you or others do are trivial. A tendency to exaggerate the importance of negative information or experiences, while trivialising or reducing the significance of positive information or experiences. You dismiss positive experiences by insisting they “don’t count” for some reason or other. In this way you can maintain a negative belief that is contradicted by your everyday experiences. Something positive is turned into a negative. A person or situation is judged on the basis of a small negative detail without reference to the whole.</p> <p>Selective abstraction (is different from Maximisation) is about focusing on a small negative detail and not seeing the whole picture.</p> <p><i>Examples: ‘Someone attends a party and afterward focuses on the one awkward look directed her way and ignores the hours of smiles’. “Look at all of the people who don’t like me.” “I know he [my boss] said most of my submission was great but he also said there were a number of mistakes that had to be corrected...he must think I’m really hopeless”. “That’s what she is supposed to do—so it doesn’t count when she’s nice to me,” or “Those successes were easy, so they don’t matter.”. “He noticed I spilled something on my shirt. I know he said he will go out with me again, but I bet he doesn’t call”. I decorated the room but that bit in the corner has gone wrong. Is this really the most important part of the job? Are you looking at the whole picture?</i></p>		<p>that you could have done a slightly better job. This leaves you convinced you didn't do well enough and not only don't you recognize and enjoy the praise being offered but you decide not to participate in future events.</p> <p>A friend compliments you on a dinner you made, but you decide that “they are just saying that to be nice” or “they are trying to get something out of me”.</p> <p>He only said something nice because he wants me to do him a favour. She would not be so kind to me if she knew what I was really like.</p>
Unhelpful Thinking Style or Belief	Shorthand	Examples



<p>4</p>	 <p>Overgeneralizing or overgeneralization: You perceive a global pattern of negatives on the basis of a single incident. "Seeing a pattern based upon a single event or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw". Coming to a general conclusion based on a single event or one piece of evidence. Making a broad rule based on a few limited occurrences. If something bad happens once, you expect it to happen again and again. Such thoughts often include the words "always" and "never". Thinking in an over-generalizing way means we will often see a single unpleasant incident or event as evidence of everything being awful and negative, and a sign that now everything will go wrong. A single example or situation is seen as the norm. Characterised by the use of absolutes such as <i>always, never, nobody, everybody</i>.</p> <p><i>Over-generalisation (is different from global judgement) is deriving a rule to describe all types of situations or people on the basis of limited experience</i> <i>– all builders are incompetent; all seaside resorts are awful.</i></p>	<p>Absolutely</p>	<p>"This generally happens to me. I seem to fail at a lot of things". <i>"I forgot to finish that project on time. I never do things right"</i>. "Believing that if one public speaking event went badly that all of them will". If you fail to get a job you interview for, you decide you are never going to get a job. Or you might go on one unsuccessful date and that is it, you decide you are never going to find a partner. "Every is always rubbish. Nothing good ever happens".</p>
<p>5</p>	 <p>All or Nothing Thinking (Dichotomous Reasoning) or Black and White Thinking: You view events or people in all-or-nothing terms. When we see things purely in 'black or white'.</p>	<p>Two boxes</p>	<p>Believing that people are either excellent in social situations or terrible, without recognizing the large gray area in-between". If you get eighty per cent on a test, you feel like a failure that you didn't get a perfect score.</p>



	<p>Thinking in black and white terms (e.g., things are right or wrong, good or bad). A tendency to view things at the extremes with no middle ground. Categorizing things into one of two extremes. These types of thoughts are characterised by terms such as or 'every', 'always', or 'never'. Everything is seen as good or bad or a success or failure. It is generally the negative perspective that is endorsed, discounting all the shades of grey that lie in between the two focused on choices. Situations and people are judged in terms of <i>either. Or</i>. Everything has to fit in only one of two <i>boxes</i>.</p> <p><i>Examples: "I get rejected by everyone," or "It was a complete waste of time." "I made so many mistakes. If I can't do it perfectly, I might as well not bother". "I won't be able to get all of this done, so I may as well not start it". "This job is so bad...there's nothing good about it at all"."</i></p>		<p>"If I'm not perfect, I've failed. Either I do it right or not at all". <i>People are</i>. Good or bad; beautiful or ugly; trustworthy or untrustworthy <i>Things I do are</i>...successful or a failure; perfect or disastrous; right or wrong.</p>
6	 <p>Moral imperatives, Should Statements, Shoulds or Oughts: We accept without questioning all the <i>musts, shoulds and oughts</i> that underlie daily life. You try to motivate yourself with shoulds and shouldn'ts, as if you had to be whipped and punished before you could be expected to do anything. "Musts" and "oughts" are also offenders. Use of critical words such as 'should, must, or ought can make us feel guilt and feel that we failed or if we use those words on other people, we make them feel frustrated. The emotional consequence is guilt. When you direct should statement toward others, you feel anger, frustration, and resentment. You interpret events in terms of how things should be, rather than simply focusing on what is. Using "should", "ought", or "must" statements can set up unrealistic expectations of yourself and others. It involves operating by rigid rules and not allowing for flexibility.</p> <p>Individuals thinking in 'shoulds', 'oughts; or 'musts' have an ironclad view of how they and others 'should'</p>	Do's & Don'ts	<p>I must stay in control. You should do as I say. "I should do well. If I don't, then I'm a failure.". "I shouldn't get angry", "People should be nice to me all the time". You don't like playing tennis but take lessons as you feel you 'should', and that you 'shouldn't' make so many mistakes on the court, and that your coach 'ought to' be stricter on you. You also feel that you 'must' please him by trying harder.</p>




	and 'ought' to be. These rigid views or rules can generate feels of anger, frustration, resentment, disappointment and guilt if not followed.		
7	 <p>Blaming: You focus on the other person as the source of your negative feelings, and you refuse to take responsibility for changing yourself.</p>		<i>"She's to blame for the way I feel now," or "My parents caused all my problems."</i>
8	 <p>Arbitrary inference or Jumping to Conclusions: Making a judgment with no supporting information. An individual who 'jumps to conclusions' will often make a negative interpretation or prediction even though there is no evidence to support their conclusion. You judge a situation on the basis of random bits of evidence. This includes mind-reading (knowing what other people are thinking) and fortune-telling (being able to predict the future). It is like guess work.</p> <p>This type of thinking is often made when thinking about how others feel towards us. It can show up as either:</p>  <p>'Mind reading' (assuming or imagining we know the thoughts and intentions of others or what other people are thinking). You assume that you know what people think without having sufficient evidence of their thoughts. Making assumptions about other people's</p>	Guess work	<i>'Believing that someone does not like you without any actual information to support that belief'. You are at a party and you don't like what you are wearing and you decide 'everyone is laughing at me' (mind reading). Or you are going to take your driver's test and 'know' that you are going to fail (fortune-telling). He crossed the road to avoid me. She thinks I look ridiculous.</i>



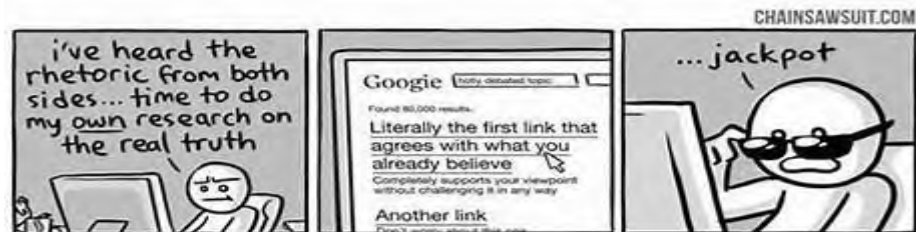
	<p>thoughts, feelings and behaviours without checking the evidence. “He thinks I’m an idiot.” “John’s talking to Molly so he must like her more than me”. “I could tell he thought I was stupid in the interview”.</p>  <p>'Fortune-telling error' (anticipating the worse and taking it as fact) or predicting the future. You predict the future negatively: Things will get worse, or there is danger ahead. Anticipating an outcome and assuming your prediction is an established fact. These negative expectations can be self-fulfilling: predicting what we would do on the basis of past behaviour may prevent the possibility of change. “I won’t get that job.”. “I’ve always been like this; I’ll never be able to change”. “It’s not going to work out so there’s not much point even trying”. “This relationship is sure to fail”.</p>		
9	 <p>Personalizing or Personalization: When a person attributes an external event to himself or to other people when there is actually no causal relationship. You attribute an unfair amount of the blame to yourself for negative events, and you fail to see that certain events are also caused by others. Taking responsibility for something that’s not your fault. Thinking that what people say or do is some kind of reaction to you, or is in some way related to you. A person engaging in personalization will automatically assume responsibility and blame for negative events that are not under their control. This is also called 'the mother of guilt' because of the feelings of guilt, shame, and inadequacy it leads to. Blaming other people for something that was your fault. There are two ways of</p>	Me, my, I	<p>“If a checkout clerk is rude to you and you believe that you must have done something to cause it, when you may not have done anything at all”. “This is my fault or this is your fault”.</p> <p>You feel it's all your fault that your dog injured his foot even though you weren't at home when it happened but were out shopping. Your thoughts might be 'if only I</p>



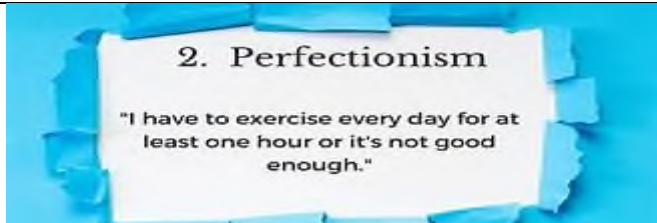
	<p>understanding this. There is a tendency to take the blame for things that you cannot be responsible for, and /or the tendency to believe that everything is directed at you.</p> <p><i>Examples: "The friendship ended because I failed." "John's in a terrible mood. It must have been something I did", "It's obvious she doesn't like me, otherwise she would've said hello". "She's more successful than I am," or "Others did better than I did on the test."</i></p>		<p>didn't go out' or even 'maybe when I came home, I accidentally stepped on the dog and hurt him' even though this is entirely unrealistic.</p>
10	 <p>Unfair comparisons: You interpret events in terms of standards that are unrealistic—for example, you focus primarily on others who do better than you and find yourself inferior in the comparison.</p>		
11	  <p>Regret orientation: You focus on the idea that you could have done better in the past, rather on what you can do better now.</p>		<p><i>"I could have had a better job if I had tried," or "I shouldn't have said that."</i></p>




12	 <p>What if? You keep asking a series of questions about “what if” something happens, and you fail to be satisfied with any of the answers.</p>		<p>“Yeah, but what if I get anxious?” or “What if I can’t catch my breath?”</p>
13	 <p>Emotional reasoning: Here we mistake our feelings for facts. You let your feelings guide your interpretation of reality. Mistaking feelings for facts. Negative things you feel about yourself are held to be true because they feel true. You assume that because you feel a negative emotion therefore it reflects the way things really are. Assuming that because you feel a certain way, so what you are thinking is true. When we assume feelings reflect fact, regardless of the evidence. The idea here is “I feel it, therefore it must be true”. Such thinking can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies whereby our thoughts can end up eliciting the very behaviour we predicted, just because we changed our behaviour in accordance with that thought.</p> <p><i>Examples: “I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot”. “I feel it; therefore, it must be true.” “I feel like a failure, therefore I am a failure”.</i></p>	<p>Heart over head</p>	<p>“I feel hopeless, therefore my situation must be hopeless”. “I feel depressed; therefore, my family or relationship is not working out”. If you think “I feel ugly and stupid, so then I must actually be ugly and stupid” you might then stop buying yourself new clothes and start doing poorly at the course you are taking at university, even though you look fine and were doing very well at school. “I feel ugly, therefore I must be ugly”.</p>




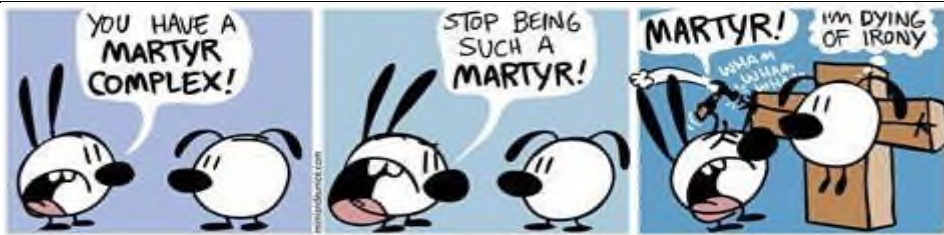
14	 <p>Inability to disconfirm: You reject any evidence or arguments that might contradict your negative thoughts.</p>		<p><i>When you have the thought “I’m unlovable,” you reject as irrelevant any evidence that people like you. Consequently, your thought cannot be refuted. “That’s not the real issue. There are deeper problems. There are other factors.”</i></p>
15	 <p>Judgment focus: You view yourself, others, and events in terms of evaluations as good–bad or superior–inferior, rather than simply describing, accepting, or understanding. You are continually measuring yourself and others according to fake or unreal standards, and finding that you and others fall short. You are focused on the judgments of others as well as your own judgments of yourself.</p>		<p><i>“I didn’t perform well in college,” or “If I take up tennis, I won’t do well,” or “Look how successful she is. I’m not successful.”</i></p>
<p align="center">[B] THINKING ERRORS IN OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)</p> <p>Below is some distorted thinking or thinking errors and beliefs that drive and maintain obsessions and compulsions in people with OCD.</p>			
	Unhelpful Thinking Style or Belief	Shorthand	Examples


1	 <p>Intolerance of Uncertainty: You feel as if you <i>must</i> have a 100% guarantee of safety or absolute certainty. Any hint of doubt, ambiguity, or the possibility of negative outcome (however small) is unacceptable. This is the core distortion of OCD.</p>		<p><i>"I can't relax until I am 100% certain of everything and know everything will be OK."</i></p>
2	 <p>Overestimation of Threat or Overestimating Risk and Danger: You exaggerate the probability that a negative outcome will occur; or you exaggerate the seriousness of any negative consequences.</p>		<p>"If I take even a slight risk, I will come to great harm."</p>
3	 <p>Overestimation of Responsibility or Over responsibility for Others: You believe that because you think about harmful consequences, you are therefore responsible for preventing harm from coming to yourself or others. Failure to prevent (or failure to try to prevent) harm is the same thing as causing harm.</p>		<p>"I must always guard against making mistakes that even remotely harm an innocent person."</p>

4	<div></div> <p>Significance of Thoughts or Over importance of Thought: You believe that your negative obsessional thoughts are overly important or very meaningful.</p>		<p>"If I think about a terrible event occurring, it is much more likely to happen." <i>"The idea that there is something seriously wrong with your brain because you have senseless thoughts."</i></p>
5	<div></div> <p>Moral Thought-Action Fusion: You believe that your unwanted thoughts are morally equivalent to performing a terrible action. Therefore, you think you are an awful, immoral, or disgraceful person for thinking these thoughts.</p>		
6	<div></div> <p>Likelihood Thought-Action Fusion: You believe that thinking certain thoughts increases the chance that something terrible will happen.</p>		<p>"If I think about death, someone will die."</p>
7			

	 <p>A cartoon showing two scientists in white coats. The one on the left asks, "Did you read my paper on confirmation bias?" The one on the right replies, "Yes, but it only proved what I already knew." In the background, a chalkboard has mathematical formulas: $g(x) \leq F(x) \leq h(x)$, $\lim_{x \rightarrow a} g(x) = L = \lim_{x \rightarrow a} h(x)$, and $g(x) = L$.</p>		
8	 <p>A logo featuring a cartoon skunk with its tail curled, standing above the text "Stinking Thinking".</p>		
9	 <p>A card with a blue background and torn edges. It has the heading "2. Perfectionism" and the text: "I have to exercise every day for at least one hour or it's not good enough."</p>		<p><i>"I've got to do everything perfectly."</i></p>

	<p>The “Just Right” Error (Perfectionism): You feel that things must be “just right” or perfect in order to be comfortable. A related belief is the feeling that things need to be “evened out” or symmetrical or else you will always feel uncomfortable.</p>		
10	 <p>Emotional reasoning: You assume that danger is present based simply on the fact that you are feeling anxious.</p>		
11	 <p>Black-and-White or All-or Nothing Thinking.</p>		<p><i>"If I'm not completely safe, then I'm in overwhelming danger."</i></p>
12	 <p>Magical Thinking.</p>		<p><i>"If I think bad thoughts, bad things will happen."</i></p>

13	 <p>Thought-Action Fusion (similar to Magical Thinking).</p>		<p><i>"If I have a bad, even horrible thought about harming someone, it feels just as if I've actually done it or that it is highly likely to happen in the future."</i></p>
14	 <p>Hyper morality.</p>		<p><i>"I'll be punished for every mistake."</i></p>
15	 <p>Exclusivity Error.</p>		<p><i>"Bad things are much more likely to happen to me than to other people."</i></p>
16	 <p>Martyr Complex</p>		<p><i>"Suffering and sacrificing my life by doing endless rituals is a small price to pay to protect those I love. Since no harm has come to them, I must be doing something right."</i></p>

17	 <p>"What If" Thinking.</p>		<p>"In the future, what if I...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "do it wrong?" "make a mistake?" "get AIDS?" "am responsible for causing harm to someone?"
<p>THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THESE UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS CAN BE CHANGED BY LEARNING TECHNIQUES TO FREE YOURSELF OF THESE PATTERNS AND FEEL BETTER. A VERY HELPFUL TECHNIQUE IS CALLED THOUGHT RECORD TECHNIQUE FOR UNHELPFUL THINKING, IMAGES AND BELIEFS. Get a copy at: (http://healthcity.org.uk/en/clinical-resources/)</p>			