

## **What Kind of Thinker Are You?**

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Cognitive therapists recognize particular thought patterns that individuals commonly engage in when feeling depressed, angry, anxious, or hopeless. These thoughts are often referred to as “Auto-thoughts” or “Cognitive Distortions”.

Typically, these auto-thoughts fall into the following categories:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Example</b>
Black or White / Dichotomous Thinking	“This is the <i>worst</i> thing that could possibly happen!” “I am a <i>total failure</i> because of this!” “ <i>Everybody</i> hates me.” “I’ll <i>never</i> be any good.”
Catastrophizing	“I’m going to flunk out of school, never get a job, and become homeless and miserable.” “My spouse is going to cheat on me and leave me broken and alone.” “I won’t be able to stand it if I mess up.”
Thinking in “Shoulds”	“He <i>shouldn’t</i> act like this.” “This <i>shouldn’t</i> have happened to me.” “My life <i>is supposed</i> to be different.”
Emotional Rationalization	“I <i>feel</i> like something bad is going to happen. Therefore, it must be so.” “I <i>feel</i> depressed and angry, so something must be wrong.”
The Mind-Reader	“She hates me. She thinks she’s better than me.” “I know you think I’m just overly dramatic.” “People think I’m ugly and they treat me badly because of it.”
Negative Filtering	You hyperfocus on negative events in your life and place a high importance on them. While, on the other hand, you tend to discount or ignore positive experiences.
Personalizing	“This is all my fault.” “He / she is laughing at me.” “If I’d stopped him, he would still be alive today.”
Global Reasoning	“This must be the way <i>all</i> marriages are.” “ <i>All</i> men/women are unfaithful.”
Learned Helplessness / Hopelessness	“There is nothing I can do. I’m not strong / smart / brave / young enough.” “I might as well give-up because I’ve already tried everything and it hasn’t worked.”

Of course, people tend to combine these categories into more complex thoughts. Here are some examples:

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Example</b>
Shoulds, Black or White, Globalization	“I’m a total loser. I can’t believe my life turned out this way! It’s supposed to be different! This isn’t fair. This always happens to me, everything falls apart in my life.”
Learned Helplessness, Personalizing, Negative Filtering	“It’s hopeless. There’s nothing more I can do. I’ve destroyed any hope of salvaging the relationship. The last few months have been good, but who cares? Look at all the problems I still have in my life.”
Mind Reading, Emotional Rationalization, Catastrophizing	“I’m terrified to give this presentation at work. Something must be really wrong for me to feel like this. I know everyone thinks I’m stupid. This is going to be the worst presentation ever. I’m going to be mortified!”

**Do any of these auto-thoughts sound familiar to you? Have you engaged in these types of thoughts in the past? Are you engaging in them now? Take a moment and list out your own auto-thoughts. First, write down your specific thoughts. Next, identify which category, or categories, your thoughts belong to.**

<b>Your Specific Thought</b>	<b>Auto-thought Category</b>
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____

**Use extra paper if you need more space.**

**Hopefully, you now have a better understanding of what kind of thinker you are. The next step is to understand the *patterns* of your thoughts**

**and learn skills to replace these thoughts with more accurate, rational, and positive thoughts.**

**Visit [www.BartonCBT.com](http://www.BartonCBT.com) and utilize the “Thought-Log” activity.**

#### References

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