

## **Working With Unhelpful Thoughts**

Unhelpful thoughts are the quick meanings you attach to what happens during the day. A small change in eating, a feeling of hunger, or a shift in routine can trigger an automatic reaction in the mind. That reaction feels like a final truth, but it is an interpretation. These interpretations dictate what happens next and quietly strengthen the binge eating cycle.

These thoughts strike right before your behaviour shifts. A small deviation becomes a justification to give up on the day. Hunger is ignored. A planned meal is skipped. Over time, responding to these thoughts as facts keeps the cycle alive. After identifying that thoughts influence behaviour, the next step is knowing exactly which thoughts appear and how they sabotage your decisions.

Certain types of thoughts are predictable. They are brief, automatic, and designed to reduce your flexibility. Noticing them clearly is the first step in interrupting the pattern.

### **Common Patterns**

#### **The Total Failure Trap**

Seeing a small change as a total collapse of your progress.

#### **The Hunger Myth**

Treating physical hunger as something that should be controlled or ignored until it becomes unmanageable.

#### **The Safety Label**

Labelling certain foods as off limits or unsafe, which only increases the intensity of the urge later.

#### **The Character Judgment**

Judging your entire self worth based on a single eating episode.

#### **The Loss of Control**

Assuming that once a deviation happens, a total loss of control is unavoidable.

These thoughts do not force your behaviour, but they strongly influence it.

### **How Thoughts Change Behaviour**

When a small change is seen as a failure, the rest of the day feels pointless. Structure is dropped. Eating becomes reactive rather than planned.

- When hunger is ignored, long gaps between meals increase the urge to overeat later.
- When a food is treated as off limits, it feels more intense once it is eaten.
- When one episode is used to judge the whole self, shame makes it harder to return to a routine.
- These shifts seem minor in the moment, but they build the momentum of the cycle.

Unhelpful thoughts pass quickly. They are often missed because attention moves straight to the behaviour. Slowing the process down makes the pattern visible.

After an eating episode or a change in plan, look at the facts:

- What actually happened? (Just the facts)
- What did I tell myself about it?
- What did I do next?
- What happened later?

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We are non-clinical and do not offer medical, psychological, or therapeutic treatment.

Our programs are designed to share lived experience, practical strategies, and community connection, not to replace professional care.

## Working With Unhelpful Thoughts

### Personal Reflection

After identifying common thought patterns, the next step is to examine them more closely. Use the questions below to reflect on recent experiences.

### Recent Situation

- What happened
- What changed from the original plan
- Was hunger, stress, or routine involved

### Automatic Thought

- What did I tell myself in that moment
- Did the thought feel factual or urgent
- Did it include words like always, never, ruined, failed, or tomorrow

### Impact on Behaviour

- What did I do next
- Did I restrict, delay, abandon structure, or escalate
- Did I continue with my planned routine

### Emotional Shift

- What feeling increased after the thought
- Did shame, urgency, frustration, or anxiety change my decision making

### Outcome

- What happened later in the day
- Did pressure build
- Did the situation resolve or intensify

### Alternative Interpretation

- Is there another way to view the original situation
- If this happened again, what could I tell myself instead
- What response would support structure rather than increase pressure

### Pattern Recognition

- Is this a recurring thought
- Does it usually lead to the same behavioural shift
- At what point could I interrupt the sequence earlier

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## Personal Reflection

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## Date \_\_\_\_\_

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