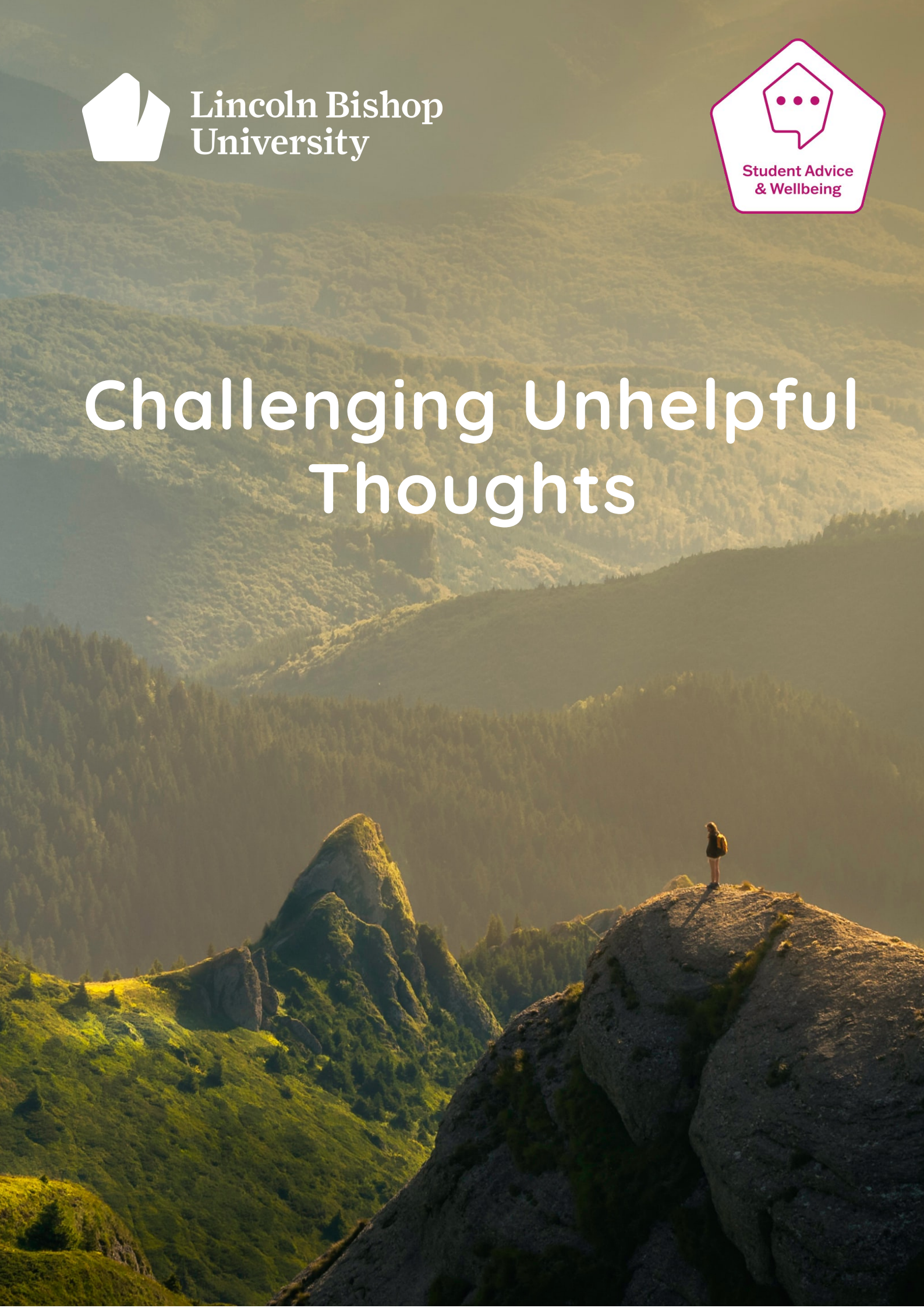




Lincoln Bishop
University



Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts



'Unhelpful' Thinking Styles

Unhelpful thinking styles often occur just before, or during distressing situations.

It is quite common for people to fall into a pattern of 'unhelpful' or negative thinking, and when this happens, it is likely that a person's level of distress will increase.

To prevent the escalation of distressing emotions, it is helpful to identify, notice and challenge the 'unhelpful' thinking styles that you are using.

Within this booklet, you will find a list of some 'unhelpful' thinking styles and possible challenges- read through these and make note of any styles that you relate to.

When you notice yourself using these specific thinking styles, use the challenges.

When to access further support

If you are frequently using unhelpful thinking styles, and this is impacting your overall mental health, you should consider speaking to your GP.

If negative and unhelpful thoughts cause significant distress and you think you are in crisis/ need urgent support call the Single Point of Access number: **0303 123 4000** or NHS **111** (option 2 for mental health).



Styles & Challenges

Mental Filter-



This is when we only notice what the 'filter' allows or wants us to see. This can sometimes feel like we are wearing blinkers or 'gloomy specs'—we only focus on the negative things and dismiss anything that may be positive because it doesn't 'fit' through the mental filter.



Challenge this thinking style: "Am I filtering out the positives?", "Am I only noticing the bad stuff?", "What would be more realistic?"

Mind Reading-

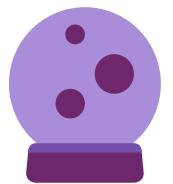
This is when we assume we know what other people are thinking about us, and our assumptions are usually negative.



Challenge this thinking style: "These are my thoughts not theirs", "Am I assuming I know what they are thinking?", "What evidence do I have?"

Prediction-

Believing we 'know' what is going to happen in the future.



Challenge this thinking style: "Am I thinking that I can predict the future?", "How likely is it that that might really happen?"



Catastrophising-

Imagining and believing that the worst possible thing will happen.



Challenge this thinking style: "What's most likely to happen?", "Thinking that the worst possible thing will happen isn't helpful right now".

Critical Self-

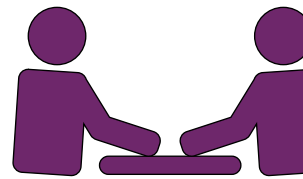
Putting ourselves down, self-criticism and blaming ourselves for events/ circumstances that are not (totally) our responsibility.



Challenge this thinking style: "Would most people that know me say that about me?", "is this something that I am totally responsible for?"

Compare & Despair-

Only seeing the good and positives in other people and getting upset when comparing ourselves negatively against them.



Challenge this thinking style: "Am I doing that compare and despair thing?", "What would be a more helpful way to look at this?"



Emotional reasoning-

I feel bad so it must be bad! I feel anxious so I must be in danger!



Challenge this thinking style: "Just because I feel bad, it doesn't necessarily mean that it is bad", "my emotions are just reactions to my thoughts, and thoughts are automatic brain reflexes"



Mountains and Molehills-

Exaggerating the risk of danger, or the negatives. Minimising the odds of how things are most likely to turn out or minimising the positives.

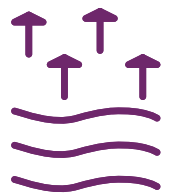


Challenge this thinking style: "Am I exaggerating the bad stuff?", "What's the bigger picture?", "How would someone else see it?".



Shoulds and Musts-

Thinking or saying 'I should' (or shouldn't) and 'I must' puts pressure on ourselves, and sets up unrealistic expectations.



Challenge this thinking style: "What would be more realistic?", "Am I putting more pressure on myself and setting up expectations of myself that are almost impossible?"



Memories-

Current situations and events can trigger upsetting memories, leading us to believe that the danger is here now, rather than in the past. This causes us distress in the present.



Challenge this thinking style: "This is just a reminder of the past", "that was then, this is now", "Although this memory makes me feel upset, it's not actually happening right now"



TIPS

You may find it helpful to have the challenges for your most frequently used 'unhelpful' thinking styles written on a cue card.

When you notice that you are using an 'unhelpful' thinking style, you can use the cue card as a prompt to challenge this thought.

Speaking to Student Advice



If you need any further support from Student Advice, please get in touch:



studentadvice@lincolnbishop.ac.uk



01522 583 600

Scan the QR to book an appointment >





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