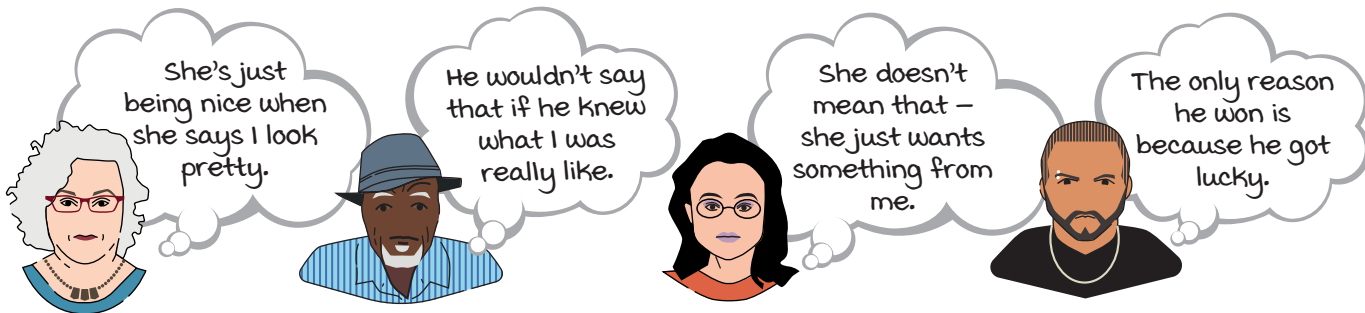
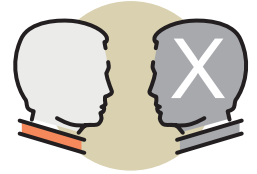


Whenever we feel strong emotions – such as fear, sadness, shame, or hopelessness – we’ve often just had an *automatic thought*. These thoughts can happen so quickly and effortlessly that we’re not even aware we’ve had them. It can take practice to notice them as they arise. Automatic thoughts often feel convincing, but they are not always 100% accurate.

They are often *exaggerated, biased, distorted, or unrealistic*. There are different types of biases, which psychologists call *cognitive distortions* or *unhelpful thinking styles*. We all think in exaggerated ways sometimes, but it can become a problem if your thoughts are distorted very often or very strongly.

**Disqualifying others** is a style of thinking where you discount the things other people say or do. For instance, you might dismiss or disagree with the positive things others say about you. If you think like this, you might find compliments and praise uncomfortable – it just doesn’t ‘feel right’. Alternatively, you might disqualify or devalue positive things about others. You’re more likely to do this when you feel envious or competitive. Either way, disqualifying the other can give you inaccurate impression of yourself and other people, and lead to distress.



Disqualifying others is common across a wide range of problems:

- Body dysmorphic disorder
- Childhood trauma
- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Narcissism
- Paranoia
- PTSD
- Psychosis
- Relationship problems
- Social anxiety

## Overcoming disqualifying others

### Noticing and labeling

The first step in overcoming disqualifying others is catching it. Practice self-monitoring so that you get better at noticing these thoughts as they arise. When you notice one, say something to yourself like:

- “I’m discounting someone again.”
- “There’s another disqualifying thought.”



### Weigh up the pros and cons

Make a list of advantages and disadvantages of disqualifying the positives. Ask yourself:

- What problems does disqualifying other people say cause me?
- How would things improve if I accepted the positive things they say or do?
- What will happen if I continue to do this? Will things get better or worse for me?



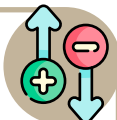
### Embrace the positives

Notice and accept the positive things people say or do. If you dismiss positive feedback:

- Write down the nice things people say about you.
- Practice saying ‘thank you’ when someone compliments you.

If you tend to discount the positives in other people:

- Accept that everyone has unique strengths and abilities.
- Practice giving people genuine compliments on their talents.



### Evaluate your thinking

Remember that there are lots of ways of judging any situation. Practice putting your thoughts in perspective by asking yourself these questions:

- “What would I say to a friend who was thinking in this way?”
- “What’s the evidence that this thought is true?”
- “What’s unhelpful about thinking this way?”
- “What’s a more helpful way of thinking about this?”

