

Cognitive Distortions: The “Shoulds”

The “shoulds” refers to the habit of focusing on what you believe should be, rather than what is. It is a thought that puts pressure on yourself without acknowledging the growth you have made.

Example: “I should be able to handle this on my own.” or “This shouldn’t be happening to me at this age.”

The should can be disguised in different ways, like:

- “I have to...”
- “I cannot keep...”
- “I cannot stop...”
- “Why can’t I just...”
- “I will never... If I can’t...”

Instructions: Reflect on a situation in which you experienced *The Shoulds*.

What is the *should* thought?

What do you know now that challenges “The Should” thought in the situation?

What would you have told yourself to challenge “The Should” thought in the past?

If you were able to challenge ‘The Should’ thought in the moment, how would the outcome have been different?
