



## Dealing with Unhelpful Thoughts

Managing your emotions starts by paying attention to what you are saying in your head. Many thoughts often FEEL true, but really they are not. For instance, consider this thought:

***“If I can’t get my four-year-old to behave in the restaurant, everyone will think I’m a terrible parent.”***

Is this thought really true? Consider how you will feel if that thought is in your head while you are waiting for your order to be delivered. How will you start feeling? How will you react to your child’s behavior with this thought lurking around in your brain? It’s much more likely you will get angry and let your emotions rule how you deal with your child if you’re thinking in your head that everyone is judging you to be a poor parent. The trick is to recognize unhelpful thoughts, and then to find more helpful, realistic thoughts to replace them.

Below are different pairs of thoughts. See if you can identify the unhelpful thoughts that just make you feel worse, and the replacement thoughts that lead to better emotional control and helpful problem solving.

	Helpful	Unhelpful
1. He’s a terrible child.		
2. He’s really having a bad day.		
3. She will never get into college if she doesn’t do her homework.		
4. I wonder if she needs some help with her homework.		
5. I’d like my child to do what I say, but sometimes kids break the rules.		
6. My child should always do what I say.		
7. He doesn’t want to play with me so he must be mad at me.		
8. He might need some time alone right now.		
9. My four-year-old sure is being a toot today – might be time to leave.		
10. Everyone thinks I’m a terrible parent because my four-year-old is acting up.		

Answer Key: Helpful thoughts: 2, 4, 5, 8, 9 Unhelpful thoughts: 1, 3, 6, 7, 10