**Positive thoughts** are upbeat and hopeful. Theycan increase feelings of happiness and cheerfulness, like:

* “I’ll get through this. I’ve been through hard times before.”
* “It will sure be interesting - Something new for me.”
* “I just have to be myself and do my best. It will be fine.”

**Neutral thoughts** are better than negative ones, like:

* “I’ll be glad when it’s over. It will be easier next time.”
* “It went better than it could have - At least I learned something.”

**Negative thoughts** are gloomy, depressing thoughts. They can make people feel sad and hopeless.

* By making anxiety worse, they can lead to panic attacks.
* By expecting bad things to happen, things are more likely to go wrong.

People can change a negative, pessimistic, downbeat view from “the glass half empty” to an optimistic, hopeful view of “the glass half full.”

* Even though you will still have problems, a healthier attitude makes it easier to solve those problems.

**How can you make your thinking more positive?**

* + Use “thought stopping” for repetitive thinking
  + Work on problem solving
  + Change distorted or irrational thinking
  + Use coping statements

**Repetitive thinking** is an unhealthy cycle of anxiety, or self-blame while thinking, dwelling, repeating, ruminating, worrying, “stewing,” or dreading*.*

* **It does no good** to think about the same thing over and over when there is nothing that can be done about it.
* **Ask yourself a simple question**, “Is there anything I can do to fix it or make it better?”
* If the answer is yes, then **do what needs to be done.**
* If it can’t be done right away, **write it down** on a piece of paper, or on a “To Do” list, to be sure to remember.

**What if you can’t do anything to make things better?**

* Sometimes you can’t make things better, no matter how long you lay awake thinking about it. “**Let it go**,” at least until morning.
* If you have no control of the problem, or if there is nothing you can do, try a “thought stopping technique”.
* Tell the negative thoughts to **stop** coming into your head.
* “**Push them out**” when the negative, repeating, or racing thoughts come back.
* **Replace them** with realistic, healthier thoughts, and **positive thinking.**

**You Can Stop Negative Thinking**

* Remind yourself, “Negative thoughts are not healthy or helpful. I need to try to be more positive.”
* Replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts – Try focusing on some pleasant memories of your favorite place.
* Remember the sights, smells, sounds, sensations and emotions when you were in that place.
* Or, you could pray or meditate.
* By stopping negative thinking, people can decrease depression and anxiety.

**Changing Automatic Negative Thoughts**

* Changing your thinking habits takes a willing decision.
* Think of pathways in your brain as “roads”.
* Automatic negative thoughts speed down “highways” that lead to more and more negative thinking, anxiety, and depressed mood.
* **Create new pathways** by slowly changing negative thoughts into more positive ones.
* Chemicals in the brain can actually be changed by new thinking habits, like using neutral or positive thinking.

**Is Thought Stopping Effective?**

* Some research says it can be helpful, but some studies say it doesn’t help because unwanted thoughts come back if the problem isn’t solved.
* **Don’t** use thought stopping for long-term problems or for suicidal thoughts - You need professional help right away if you are in a crisis.
* Your efforts to stop negative thinking may not always be enough, but they can be helpful until you get more help to solve your problem.

**Replace Faulty (Irrational) Thoughts**

* If you see negative, irrational, faulty, or *“stinking thinking,”* you have a chance to change it.
* Talk to your doctor about cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), an effective treatment for many mental illnesses.
  + Helps change your thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes, to more rational and realistic ones
  + Helps you help yourself face challenges calmly
  + Focuses efforts on goals and actions that are likely to have good results

**Use Coping Statements**

* “I wish I had done things better, but I’m not perfect.”
* “I can’t expect to never make mistakes. In fact, no one else is perfect, either.”
* “It’s going to be alright. It is natural to be nervous sometimes.”
* “I am going to stay calm and think more positively.”

Be ready to **replace your negative thoughts with healthier, more positive thinking.** It may seem hard at first, but it will become easier with practice

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