Toward Positive Thinking

Positive thoughts are upbeat and hopeful. They can 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?

Toward Positive Thinking

- 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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