

Skill #3

***Ways
of
Thinking***

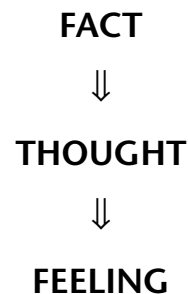
“The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by changing their minds.”

— William James

what kind of thinking? ... not necessarily positive, but necessarily not negative ...

Emotional and Thinking Ways of Coping

It is widely accepted that we function emotionally in the following way:



Most of life consist of facts over which we have little or no control. Being born with a certain colour of hair, having an accident, being transferred in your job, and getting certain diseases such as cancer are all facts that we can't control. Any fact creates a thought within us, spontaneously and seemingly without any effort on our part. From that thought comes a feeling.

Here is an example to make this concept clear.

FACT: A friend passes by you on the street and doesn't speak to you.

THOUGHT: She/he is upset at me for something.

FEELING: Anger or Frustration.

Note that the feeling came directly from the thought and not from the fact. We have little or no control over most of the facts in our lives but we have total control over the thoughts. The more you feel you have control in a situation, the less stress and anxiety you feel. You always can have some impact and some degree of choice.

Practice:

Practice identifying the facts, thoughts, and feelings in your mind from time to time. Sort out one from the other. By simply identifying and labelling the facts, thoughts and feelings you can begin to change the thoughts which will change your feelings.

Questions to ask yourself are:

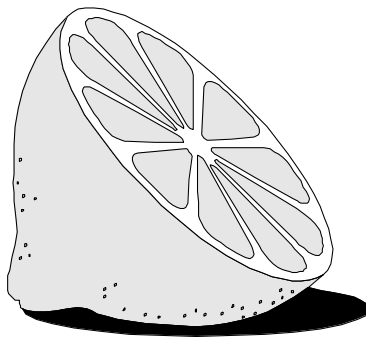
- 1) Is this a fact? Can it be changed? Do I have control over it? What thought results from this fact in my mind?
- 2) Is this a thought? If so, is it a helpful or unhelpful one to me? Can I change it?
- 3) Is this a feeling? If so, what thought did it come from? Is this a pleasant or unpleasant feeling? Do I want to change it?

Thus, a sense of personal control comes from our thoughts. This is a simple statement and it is extraordinarily powerful. It says that we have control over what and how we choose to think. The notion of choice is clear. For many of us from time to time, it is easier and less painful to believe that we have no control over our thoughts than to admit that we can take responsibility for them.

So the next step is to see if we can change our thoughts, even though we frequently do not believe that it is possible!

We do this by first understanding and accepting that although the brain is an intelligent organ, it also is very naive. It responds to whatever messages we give it whether they are true or not ! Here is an example to prove that point called, "THE LEMON EXERCISE."

Changing thoughts is also called "reframing."



Lemon Exercise: How We Can Trick The Brain

“Close your eyes and imagine yourself in your kitchen. Find a lemon; notice the colour of it. Feel its weight in your hand, feel its size, shape and pebbly texture. Bring it to the table. Put it on a wooden cutting board, take a sharp knife and cut the lemon in half. Smell the sharpness. Now bring it up to your mouth and take a bite. What do you notice? There is no lemon but we can still feel its taste in our mouth. We can and often do trick our brain to react to things that are perceptions, by the deliberate use of thoughts.”

Now refer back to the fact of the person who passed you by on the street without speaking. What different thoughts might you have about that fact? What feelings would then arise?

Here is a second example to try: “THE TRAFFIC JAM.”

Imagine yourself caught in a major traffic jam that will probably make you late for work. You could choose to think: “This is terrible. I’m going to be so late — my boss will be angry.” You could concentrate on frequent lane changes trying to beat the traffic and you will end up feeling increasingly distressed, anxious and angry.

You could rather choose to think of the situation as beyond your control and decide to use the enforced time to plan your day, organize your thoughts for work, enjoy the music on the radio, allowing you to feel calm, relaxed and in control.

You have a choice! You can control the way you feel by controlling the way you think.

It is important to remember...

Every Feeling Has a Thought Behind It.

Distorted Thinking

Researchers have categorized the negative thoughts (that are not helpful to us) we have about the facts in our lives and have labelled them distorted thinking. The value in labelling them is that we are then able to first, identify them and second, change them more easily into appropriate, logical and positive thoughts.

Here is a list of illogical and distorted ways of thinking that we commonly use to our disadvantage:

- All or nothing.
- Generalizations.
- Disqualifying the positive.
- Emotional reasoning.
- Using “should” too often.
- Personalizing events.

A. Examples of Distorted Thinking, with the facts, thoughts and feelings that follow.

DISTORTED THINKING	FACT	THOUGHT	FEELING
I think in terms of "All-or-Nothing."	You fail an exam.	I'm a failure.	Sad
I over-generalize.	Your doctor rushes you out of his office.	All doctors care about is the number of patients.	Anger
I disqualify the positive.	A friend brings flowers.	She felt she had to.	Demeaned
I use emotional reasoning.	I'm asked to make treatment options/choices.	I'm dumb, so I can't make any right choices.	Anxious
I use the word "should" a lot.	My daughter wants me to babysit her son.	I should babysit but I made other plans.	Guilty
I personalize.	Your teenager failed his exams.	It's my fault.	Depressed

B. Examples of Logical and Rational Thinking and the feelings that follow.

DISTORTED THINKING	FACT	MODIFIED THOUGHT	MODIFIED FEELING
I think in terms of "All-or-Nothing."	You fail an exam. eg.	I'll study harder.	Hopeful
I over-generalize.	Your doctor rushes you out of his office. eg.	I'll choose another doctor.	Personal control
I disqualify the positive.	A friend brings flowers. eg.	She chose to do it, regardless.	Appreciative
I use emotional reasoning.	I'm asked to make treatment options/choices. eg.	I'll get help from someone. Getting information is a smart thing.	Competent
I use the word "should" a lot.	My daughter wants me to babysit her son. eg.	I'll offer to babysit another day when I'm free.	Relieved
I personalize.	Your teenager failed his exams. eg.	He didn't study or ask for help. I'll help, but I'm not responsible.	Blameless

Self-talk

Self-talk is another way to help modify our thoughts. Here are examples of self-talk statements for you to use. Pick a few to practice.

A. Preparation for Stress

I've succeeded with this before.

What exactly do I have to do?

I know I can do each one of these tasks.

It's easier once I get started.

I'll jump in and be alright.

Tomorrow I'll be through it.

I won't let negative thoughts creep in.

or _____.

B. Facing a Challenge

I will take it step by step, I won't rush.

I can do this, I'm doing it now.

I can only do my best.

Any tension I feel is a signal to use my coping exercises.

I can get help if I need it.

If I don't think about fear, I won't be afraid.

If I get tense, I'll take a deep breath and relax.

It's OK to make mistakes.

or _____.

What IS a positive attitude?

It's not necessarily positive, but necessarily not negative!

It is a sense of connectedness to something bigger than the self.

It is a sense of control over how we handle the events in our lives.

It is an ability to visualize a life with hope.

C. Coping with Fear

Relax now !

Just breathe deeply.

There's an end to it.

Keep my mind on right now, on the task at hand.

I can keep this within limits I can handle.

I can always call _____.

I am only afraid because I decided to be. I can
decide not to be.

I've survived this and worse before.

Being active will lessen my fear.

or: _____.

D. Self Congratulations

I did it!

I did alright.

I did well.

Next time I won't have to worry so much.

I am able to relax away anxiety.

I've got to tell _____ about this.

It's possible not to be scared...

All I have to do is stop thinking I'm scared.

or: _____.

E. Affirmations

Everyday in every way I grow stronger and stronger.

I enter this day with a peaceful heart.

or: _____.

It is important that you accept that you may not, and indeed do not have to believe in the thoughts that you substitute for the negative ones. Remember the lemon!

Now quickly read the following:

O P P O R T U N I T Y
I S N O W H E R E

What did you read? How else can you read it?

The next 2 pages provide you with a guide to practicing the facts-thoughts-feelings way of coping.

Exercise: Practice Identifying and Modifying Thoughts

	THOUGHTS	FEELINGS	ALTERNATIVES	
			MODIFYING THOUGHTS	MODIFIED FEELINGS
<p><i>Describe the situation:</i></p> <p>Where ?</p> <p>When ?</p> <p>Who is involved?</p>	<p><i>Describe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your self-statements • Any thoughts or images that went through your mind • Concerns • Worries • Beliefs/Rules • Memories • Doubts • Meanings 	<p><i>Identify:</i></p> <p>Physiological sensations</p> <p>Emotional sensations (feelings)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a list of 3 other interpretations and examine each of them • Challenge your first impression • Self-talk: talk to yourself as if you were your best friend • How can you see this situation differently? • So what? • What resources can I use? • Always? No exceptions? • Must? Should? • I need to verify my hypothesis • Am I realistic? • What about nuances? • Bird's eye view vs worm's eye view 	

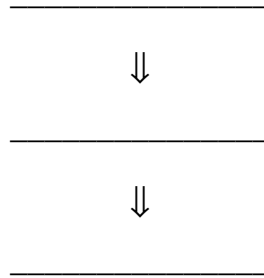
Cognitive Reframing Worksheet

FACT	THOUGHT	FEELING	MODIFIED THOUGHT	MODIFIED FEELING
Told by doctor that I must have more chemotherapy than expected.	The chemotherapy is not working. (hopelessness)	Sad 85 %	Some people require more chemotherapy than others and my body is responding positively.	Sad 30 %

S U M M A R Y

Skill # 3 Ways of Thinking

1. Facts, thoughts and feelings fit together like this:



2. The feeling comes from the _____, and not from the _____.
3. We may not have control over the _____ but we do over the _____.
4. The _____ exercise shows that we don't have to believe a thought to have it work.
5. How many times do we have to practice to learn a new skill? _____ to _____ times.

My notes: