



Challenging Negative Thinking

It happens to the best of us. There you are, happily going about your life when suddenly, a thought pops into your head – “What if I am making a big mistake?”. And then it leads to more negative thoughts like “I have no idea what I’m doing. Why did I say that? I am such a fool! Why did I agree to that!” and so on. Sometimes we replay conversations to analyze how foolish we might have sounded or what someone really meant.

Automatic negative thoughts influence our emotions and distort our perception of reality in a negative way. These thoughts are difficult to recognize because they are fleeting and habitual. They can make us feel agitated and anxious. They are counter-productive and can harm our relationships or even cause psychological damage. When you develop a negative frame of mind, we go into a negative spiral influencing the way we see ourselves, the situations you encounter, and our expectations from the future. Unfortunately, you can’t break out of this pessimistic mind frame of mind with a ‘Just think positive!’. Instead, the trick is to replace negative thoughts with more balanced thoughts.

Here are 4 ways in which we can do this easily:

Change the story you tell yourself : For each negative thought, write down something positive. For example, “My boss hates me. She gave me this difficult report to complete” could be replaced with “My boss must have a lot of faith in me to give me so much responsibility.”

Socialize with positive people : Notice how some people who always look at the bright side deal with challenges. Consider how they react to situations. Even if you have to pretend, try to adopt their optimism and persistence in the face of difficulty. Surround yourself with such optimistic people.

Focus on the facts, not perceptions : A challenge with negative self-talk is that what you think or say to yourself might seem true. You might assume that your thoughts are facts, when in reality they are based on your perceptions. Hence, distinguish between facts and perceptions. Look for evidence in your thoughts and don’t get swayed by emotions.

Focus on alternative explanations : When in difficult situations, it’s easy to get stuck in on one solution. It is important to consider other ways of looking at the same situation. Ask yourself what else could the situation mean. If you were being positive, how would you perceive the situation?

Take control of your thoughts and watch your life fill up with positivity!

With best wishes,
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