

Reframe Your Thinking

Have you ever noticed that one person sees the glass half full and another sees the same glass half empty?

People tend to look at life events very differently. The way that we look at things has a strong impact on our mood. Sometimes we spend so much time thinking bad thoughts that we begin to believe things that are not true, or we stress ourselves out by focusing on the negative parts of our day.

Think back to how you thought, felt or talked today. Were most of your feelings or thoughts negative? Did you get mad at yourself when things did not go right? Reframing your thoughts might be helpful- reframing will help you reduce stress and feel better.

The examples below are some common ways that people tend to think negatively- and options for being more positive about the same situation.

1) All-or-None Thinking

You, like everyone, have strengths and weaknesses as well as worth. Even if you didn't reach your goal today, celebrate something you did well.

Negative talk (hurtful): I messed up at work- I'm terrible at my job.

Positive talk (helpful): I made a few mistakes today at work but I also completed a project very well.

2) Assuming too much

Do you find yourself saying things like "I always mess that up" or "I could never do that?" Ask yourself why you feel that way and try to focus on the things you can do well.

Negative talk (hurtful): I could never run a 5k.

Positive talk (helpful): I'm not sure how far I can run, but I will try to run a little further today.

3) Mental Filter

Many people tend to focus on the few "bad" things that happen to them in a day instead of the many "good" things that happen that same day. Think of something that went well today.

Negative talk (hurtful): Going to work will ruin my entire day.

Positive talk (helpful): Working with my coworker seems to make my day go quickly.

4) Ignoring the Positives

When you do something well, celebrate it! Often, in our busy schedule, we forget the many things that we do well. You might catch yourself doing this when you say, "Yeah, but..."

Negative talk (hurtful): Yeah, but the house still is not very clean.

Positive talk (helpful): Thanks for noticing my efforts! I did vacuum and dust today.



5) Jumping to Conclusions

Many of us do this all of the time, and we don't always know we have done it. Try not to assume that a certain event will happen a certain way- keep an open mind and wait and see what happens.

Negative talk (hurtful): I won't make any friends at my new job / school.

Positive talk (helpful): Maybe it isn't so; I won't know until I go to work / school.

6) Mountains out of Mole Hills

Do you find yourself thinking "it couldn't get any worse" or "this is the worst day?" You may be thinking too much about some events that went wrong and you may be ignoring things that go right.

Negative talk (hurtful): This is the worst day. It certainly couldn't get much worse.

Positive talk (helpful): That part of my day was not fun but I did enjoy chatting with Sally at lunch.

7) Emotional Thinking

Have you ever been told that you are thinking with your heart instead of your head? Remember that emotions are signals, not statements of fact. Meet and accept the feelings, but know that feelings change.

Negative talk (hurtful): This is very horrible. How am I to handle this mess?

Positive talk (helpful): Things really could be much worse and I can bear this, even if I don't like the problem.

8) "Should Statements"

We often think our way is the best way. Remember to consider other people's thoughts and opinions also and try to use "could" instead of "should."

Negative talk (hurtful): You should organize the room this way.

Positive talk (helpful): Have you thought about organizing the room this way?

9) Labeling

Remind yourself that no one is always anything (dumb, rude, inept, etc.) and we all have strengths and weaknesses. Ask yourself why someone's faults should bother you.

Negative talk (hurtful): She always talks about herself and is not considerate of others.

Positive talk (helpful): Why am I letting her actions bother me? I have no control over her.

10) Personalizing

It's easy to say but hard to do- don't take it personally. Some things may be out of your control and you may stress about things that you cannot change. Look for reasons that events may have happened that are not your fault.

Negative talk (hurtful): What's wrong with me, I should have scored higher?

Positive talk (helpful): The test was hard, I didn't prepare adequately.

Resources:

[American Heart Association- Reframe your Thoughts](#)

[Psychology Today- "Positive Reframing" as Optimistic Thinking](#)

[University of the Sunshine Coast- Reframing Your Thinking](#)

If **you** or someone
you know is
in **emotional distress**
or **suicidal crisis**,

call

1-800-273-TALK (8255)
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline