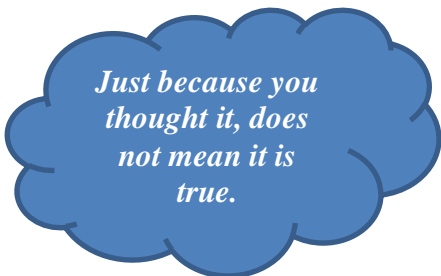


Combat those Distorted Thoughts with Cognitive Reframing Tools

**Cognitive Reframing:
Challenge & Change Your Thoughts**



*Just because you
thought it, does
not mean it is
true.*

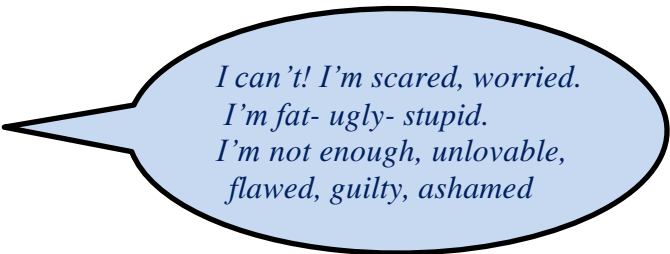
The power tool for coping with painful thoughts and emotions is called: **Cognitive reframing**. *Cognitive* refers to cognition, thinking, or **thoughts**. *Reframing* means **challenging** those untrue, exaggerated and habitual negative thoughts and **changing** them into more helpful and useful thoughts. Reframing refers to the process of changing how and what you think: like **an attitude adjustment**.

The best way to explain this *cognitive reframing tool* is quite simple: **You coach yourself through stress, emotional pain and life's difficulties with exactly the same wisdom and compassion that you use to coach your friends and loved ones**. Your coaching will use the stages of emotional healing: Acknowledge, Learn and Let go.

1. **Acknowledge the problems. You can only fix what you are aware of.** Let yourself become very aware of your distorted, exaggerated, pessimistic, negative, fearful, angry and uncomfortable thoughts. It helps to think of your brain as a computer. Your negative, painful, uncomfortable thoughts have a file in your computer of a brain. I refer to this file as your **wounded file**. Everyone has a wounded file.. it's a human thing. Emotional intelligence and coping skills like cognitive reframing allow us to heal the wounded file.

Your Wounded File

Your wounded file functions like a virus in your computer brain. Without coping strategies, this file can spread destructive coding that messes up your mood, sabotages relationships and undermines your success. The file is filled with self-doubt, guilt, fear, jealousy, insecurity, anger, trauma, feelings of unworthiness, self-loathing, self-destruction and shame.



*I can't! I'm scared, worried.
I'm fat- ugly- stupid.
I'm not enough, unlovable,
flawed, guilty, ashamed*

Question: *“I have been thinking these negative thoughts my whole life. How do I change my thoughts now, after all these years?”*

Answer: Struggling with change is normal, it's a human brain thing. Brains conserve energy by repeating familiar thoughts or behaviors. Just because something is easy or familiar, does not make it right. Just because you have thought something your whole life does not mean it is right

to believe it your whole life plus one more day. New thought and behavior patterns can be learned, practiced and with repetition, new habits become familiar.

Reframing requires new habits. New habits require your own internal belief in the changes you are about to make. **Change is successful when you believe changing is the right thing to do.** This change must be aligned with your values, your version of your best self.

Try this: Focus on the word in the box below. What's wrong? What's missing?

BEFOR

If you answered, “*the word in the box is missing the letter e,*” then you are correct. Now what if, in response to your correction, I say “*But that's how I spell it! I have never added an e. It's hard to start spelling it differently after all these years!*”

You might say, “*Well, I am sorry, but the fact is that “before” really does end in “e.” Just because you have misspelled it your whole life, does not change the fact that the correct spelling ends with an “e”.*”

Reframing your thoughts is like editing. If your whole life you thought it was okay to tell yourself that you are “*stupid, fat, ugly, lazy, or not good enough*”....that does not mean your thoughts were correct or healthy. Just because you “*always did it*” does not mean it is true or the right thing to do. Even if it is true, there may be a better way to communicate with yourself. Editing takes time. It is hard work. It is easier *not* to make corrections. Once you acknowledge that you need a correction, do you still feel comfortable repeating the error?

Before, when your thoughts were distorted, negative and pessimistic, you did not know better. The truth is, today you know better.

Today you understand that you have a right and a responsibility to edit or delete the negative thoughts and actions interfering with your goals, your dreams and your spirit. Your efforts to heal and grow contribute to your status as a role model. It is never too late to become a positive role model. No matter what happened *before*, today you have a new opportunity...if you decide to take it. I am not asking you to live in denial about your past or about what you used to think, do or say. But I do invite you to consider,

***“Positive Denial: I don't deny what happened.
I simply deny it's power over me today.”***

Marianne Williamson

2. Learn. Ready to challenge, edit, heal or delete your wounded file? Action speaks louder than words. Let's practice an exercise that walks you through the steps of acknowledging, then challenging and changing those negative thoughts such as guilt, fear, anger, jealousy, insecurity, regret and self-loathing. Take a few deep calming breaths. Remember to breathe as you practice this tool. Calm mind is a wise mind.

Cognitive reframing: Self-talk Ladder.

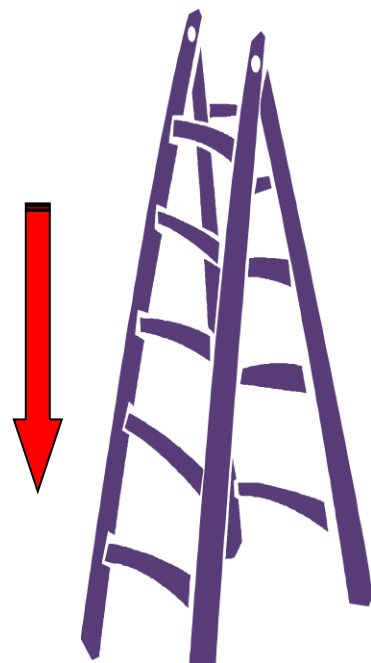
A tool for transforming your thoughts

Turn your attention inward. Imagine each of your thoughts as a rung on a ladder. Listen to each thought carefully. Notice how these thoughts impact your emotions. Some thoughts move up the ladder with comforting, reassuring and helpful points of view. Other thoughts, your more negative, distorted or self-defeating thoughts move down the ladder. Descending into a darker, unhelpful or trapped point of view.

Your negative thoughts pull you downward like the rungs on a ladder descending into your negative, distorted thoughts.

Acknowledge which thoughts below sound or feel familiar to you.

- “No one really understands.”*
- “I’m fat, ugly and stupid.”*
- “I’m too old and too tired.”*
- “I’m not attractive enough.”*
- “I will never be good enough.”*
- “I will never change”*
- “I’m afraid they wouldn’t like me.”*
- “No matter what I do, it is never enough.”*
- “I am always worried about what they think.”*
- “I can’t forgive or move on. I’m stuck.”*
- “Mistakes are unacceptable, I must be perfect.”*
- “I can’t trust anyone.”*
- “Why bother? What’s the point?”*
- “I am an imposter, a fake.”*
- “I’m a failure.”*
- “I hate my life.”*
- “I’m not worthy.”*
- “I feel guilty.”*
- “I hate myself.”*




Thoughts, like ladders, can move up and down. Your choice.

As you imagine your thoughts as rungs on a ladder, the positive thoughts lead up the ladder, away from your negative file. Positive thoughts bring hope, optimism and healing. Positive thoughts have a helpful intention. They help problem-solve and maintain dignity. You can choose to transform your negative thoughts into healing thoughts with *cognitive reframing*. **Speak to yourself with that same wise and compassionate voice that you use when advising, counseling and coaching your loved ones.** Use the steps below to coach yourself.


Learn: Challenge and reframe your negative thoughts:


1. **Is it true?** Challenge the thought. This may be a lie you have been telling yourself.
2. **What is your intention?** Does this thought have any positive function?
3. **Reframe:** Respond to your negative thought as you would when speaking to a friend or beloved. The success of your reframing will be evident in your improved mood, attitude, and outlook. **Successfully reframed thoughts allow you to live the advice you offer others.**

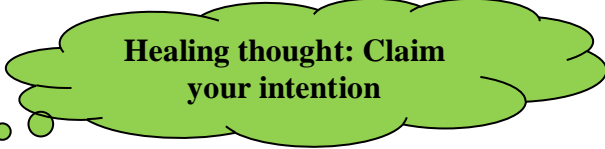


Negative thought

choice





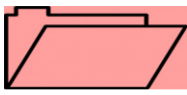


Healing thought: Claim your intention

Positive reframed thought

- *I'm fat, ugly, stupid*
- *I'm not good enough.*
- *I feel guilty.*
- *I am afraid they won't like me.*
- *I am alone.*
- *I must be perfect.*
- *I'm not worthy.*

- *So what?!. Even fat, ugly, stupid people deserve love. LOL! I know I am a good person....I will focus on my positive qualities.*
- *Good enough for who? For what? This isn't even logical; this is coming from a hurt place that I intend to heal.*
- *Guilt is the feeling good people have when they behave badly. I will learn from mistakes, then forgive myself and move on.*
- *I can't expect EVERYONE to like me. That's unrealistic and narcissistic. I will focus on self-respect not vanity or popularity. I will become the person I like.*
- *When I am alone, I'm with myself. I am in good company! Plus I need to be honest—I am not alone. I have _____ (fill in the blank with everyone who would be offended that you believe you are alone: neighbors, family friends, coworkers, cat, potted plant)*
- *As a child, I thought perfection would protect me. I am safe now. I don't need to be perfect, I choose to be human.*
- *My unworthy feeling is probably shame, but I decide my worth. When I talk to myself like a beloved, practice self-compassion then those feelings are healed, lifted up and I feel better.*



Your choice, your turn, your reframing worksheet

“Positive Denial: I don’t deny what happened.

I simply deny it’s power over me today.”

Marianne Williamson

Now it is your turn to use your self-talk ladder tool. Imagine your thoughts as rungs on a ladder. You may transform your negative thoughts into helpful thoughts with *cognitive reframing*. Your reframed thoughts lead up the ladder, away from your negative file. They help you maintain your dignity and become a positive role model. **Speak to yourself with that same wise and compassionate voice that you use when advising, counseling and coaching your loved ones.** Use the steps below to practice becoming your own self-coach.

Step 2. Learn: Once you have acknowledged your negative, stagnant and pessimistic thoughts, you have an opportunity to challenge and reframe them into the best version of you.

- 1. Reality check—is this true?** Challenge the thought. Fact-check. Thought distortions?
- 2. What is your intention?** Does this thought have any positive function? If not, reframe!
- 3. Reframe:** Respond to your negative thought as you would when coaching a friend. The success of your reframing will be evident in your improved mood, attitude and outlook. **Successfully reframed thoughts allow you to live your best life as the role model you wish to be.**

Negative thought

Positive reframed thought

Claim your positive intention
Live the advice you give others

