

Cognitive Reframing Mood Disorders: Self-Talk Ladder Tool.

A tool for managing mood disordered thoughts.

Mood disorders, by definition, refer to illnesses of the brain. Your painful emotions are a symptom of these illnesses. Your logic mind will try to make sense of your symptoms by making up stories— those stories become mood-disordered self-talk, distorted thoughts.

Mood disorder illnesses such as depression, anxiety, trauma, and obsessive-compulsive disorder, distort thoughts by exaggerating them and twisting them into an alternate reality that separates those struggling with mood disorders from their loved ones and colleagues. Children raised by caregivers suffering from mood disorders may grow up believing that the distorted thoughts are true, for no other reason than a family member told them so. **Healing mood disorders begins with acknowledging the thought distortions, then learning to challenge them with a reality check to separate the feelings from facts, family dysfunction from future destiny.**

Acknowledge distorted, negative and unhelpful thoughts by labeling them and experiencing how your body physically responds to them.

Learn to reframe mood disordered thoughts and cope with the physical symptoms associated with them.

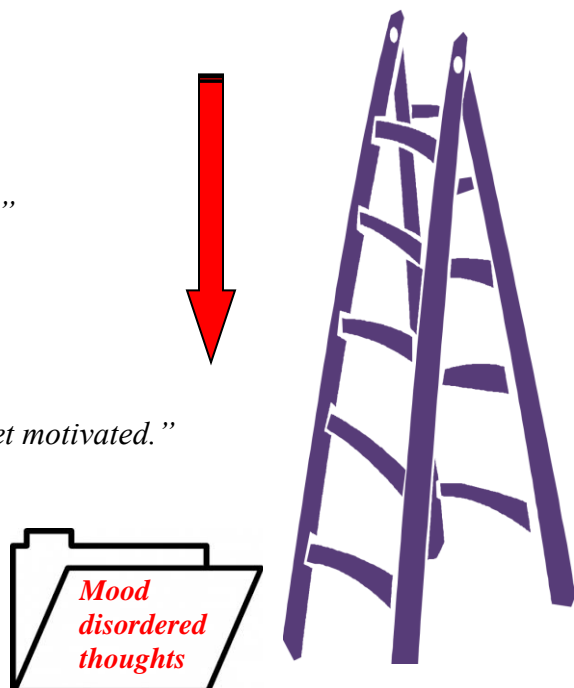
Let Go of the need to avoid, fear, internalize, defend or believe the distorted thoughts.

Use the Self-Talk Ladder Tool, also located in the *Telka's Basic Tools* section of this website to reframe mood disordered thinking. Observe each thought carefully. Your mood disordered thoughts move down the ladder, increasing negative emotions, fueling your mood disorder. Notice how these thoughts impact your depression, anxiety, health, and behavior.

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

Depression, anxiety, and other mood illnesses may sound like any of these:

- "I'm afraid I will feel this way forever."*
- "I'm overwhelmed and exhausted."*
- "I'm losing it!"*
- "Everything is irritating me."*
- "Everyone else handles life better than me."*
- "I will never be good enough."*
- "No one really understands my pain."*
- "These worries never go away."*
- "I just don't care about anything, I can't get motivated."*
- "Something is wrong with me."*
- "Something terrible is going to happen."*
- "I can't trust anyone."*
- "Why bother? What's the point?"*



Mood disorders interfere with your ability to reframe thoughts easily.

As you imagine your thoughts as rungs on a ladder, it now becomes clear to you that the depressed and anxious thoughts feed a negative mood state. **To combat the mood disorder, you must recognize when your illness is speaking to you through your self-talk.**

Take time now to watch the depression and anxiety videos located in the Video Tools page in my website. Once you understand the brain’s role in mood disorders, practice **positive denial** by *cognitive reframing* your self-talk.

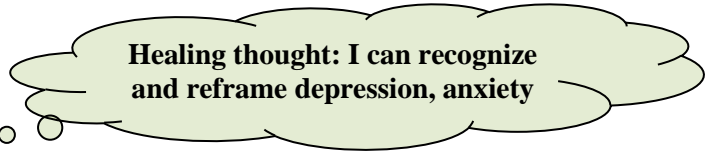
“I do not deny that I have this thought. I do not deny that I struggle with this mood disorder (depression, anxiety, PMDD, PMS, PTSD, OCD, etc.) I simply deny it’s power over me today. . This feeling is not a fact. This illness is not who I am.”

Separate your sense of who you are from the illness and all its symptoms.

Use the steps below to coach yourself.

Learn to challenge and reframe your negative thoughts:

- 1. Reality check: Is this thought a common symptom of my mood disorder?** Ask your health care provider if you are not sure and use the tests and materials on this website. Join the support offered through www.NAMI.org
- 2. What do I need?** Mood disorders are managed with a combination of, healthy lifestyle, support, cognitive reframing and medical intervention. Explore the choices. What are you willing to do? What additional resources or supports will you choose to heal this illness?
- 3. Reframe:** Respond to your mood disordered thought as you would when speaking to a friend or beloved. The success of your reframing will be evident in your improved insight and feelings of hope. Successfully reframed thoughts allow you to manage your mood disorder.



Mood Disordered Thought

- *“I’m afraid I will feel this way forever.”*
- *“I’m overwhelmed and exhausted.”*
- *“I’m losing it!”*
- *“Everything is irritating me!”*

Reframed thought with insight about illness

- *Yes, this feels like forever but feelings are not facts. I talked to my doctor and I am following the recommendations for this illness.*
- *Feeling overwhelmed and exhausted are symptoms of my illness. My brain and body are trying to heal. I have compassion for myself and huge respect for everyone who struggles with this diagnosis, myself included!*
- *Emotional pain from this diagnosis is no joke. I now know that smart, good people struggle with this illness because— here I am.*
- *My irritable mood is usually my first clue that my illness is talking to me. I am glad I keep a mood chart and figured that out. Now I know to practice my emotional tools when I feel snappish..*

