

Tips to boost your emotional fitness



Stress is normal. We all experience it. Some people are able to handle it while others have a harder time. One reason is that some people have healthy thinking. Like learning a new sport or a new language, healthy thinking is a skill you can learn. Here are some ways to do that.

Be aware of your thoughts

- Change is inevitable in our lives. Change usually causes stress.
- Under stress most people experience negative self-talk. These are negative phrases you silently say to yourself in the back of your head.
- Negative self-talk “adds fuel to the fire” and increases your stress.
- Most people use these negative self-talk phrases 30 to 70 times per day. How would you feel if someone was following you around and said negative things this many time? Bad!
- Each person only has three to five favorite negative self-talk phrases. We use the same negative self-talk statement in multiple situations whether we drop a raw egg on the floor, get stuck in traffic or make a mistake in public.
- Once you identify these “favorite” negative self-talk phrases, you can use them as red flags to help you break this habit and create a new healthier one.

Know that change is possible

Even the strongest and healthiest people have negative thoughts about themselves or others when they are under stress. You will be able to handle stress better if you are not “adding fuel to the fire” by using negative self-talk. When you replace negative self-talk with healthy thinking, you will have fewer negative emotions and less stress.

Practice

To make healthy thinking a habit, you have to practice or you will not get positive benefits. It takes about 14 days to create this new habit. See the reverse side of this sheet for instructions. You can practice alone, but working with others can make it more fun.

EXAMPLES OF NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

I'm a failure
I can't stand it
He's undependable. She's bossy. They are stupid.

THESE CAN BE REPLACED WITH

I can learn from this mistake
This is unpleasant, but I can get through this
Everyone has good and bad qualities

NEGATIVE EMOTION

Sadness, despair
Fear, anger
Contempt, anger

POSITIVE EMOTION

Acceptance, hope
Self-confidence, interest
Understanding



My healthy thinking action plan

STEP 1

For one day or a few hours, use a sticky note to tally how many times you use negative self-talk.

- You will probably be surprised to see how much you do this!
- Most people use negative self-talk 30 to 70 times per day. These statements are neither accurate nor helpful.
- While you are making your tally marks, identify your three to five “favorite” negative self-talk phrases.

STEP 2

For 14 days, mentally raise a red flag when you find yourself using a “favorite” negative self-talk phrase.

- Replace it with reality-based, possibility thinking.
- You will now have a dependable, healthy habit of using your negative self-talk as a red flag to replace those statements with ones that are literally true.

EXAMPLES

We are getting new neighbors.

Negative self-talk: They will probably be noisy and not cut their grass.

Healthy thinking: We might like them, we like several of our neighbors.

This new workflow is difficult.

Negative self-talk: Every time I learn how to do this, they go and change the process.

Healthy thinking: I have learned other things and I can learn this, it will just take some time.

STEP 3

After one year, consciously practice your healthy thinking habit for another week or two to strengthen it.



The rewards

You can look forward to less stress and better moods!