

STRATEGIES for MINDFUL LIVING

Courtesy of UAB Employee Assistance & Counseling Center

We are often told to not fear or live fearlessly however, sometimes life can create fear, worry and anxiety. Seasons of adversity can often catch us off guard, but crisis can also provide opportunities for us to flourish.

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TOOL TIME: BECOME OPTIMISTIC BY STAMPING OUT NEGATIVE THINKING

1. Catch the negative thoughts flitting through your mind. Observe how they pull your mood down and make you feel helpless. Listen to what you say and write down any negative statement that explains how you view your life. Choose several automatic thoughts on which you want to intervene:

- > *I'm too lazy to do that.*
- > *I'm no good. I'm worthless.*
- > *I give up. I can't deal with this.*

3. Distract yourself from the depressing thoughts. Stop ruminating! Do something, get busy, and turn on some happy music. Do something other than think depressing thoughts.

- > *I'll change my mental channel. I refuse to dwell on this negative thought.*
- > *There I go perpetuating that error in thinking how worthless I am. How can I see this differently?*
- > *I refuse to give this thought free rent in my brain. I have better things to think about.*
- > *I'm going to get up and do something to get my mind off of my stinking thinking.*

2. Look for contrary evidence to the reoccurring thought. Remember and acknowledge all instances of how the statement is not true. Look at evidence that contradicts the negative belief and argue with yourself.

- > *Last week I did that job. I'm just too tired to tackle it now.*
- > *I'm kind to my kids. I give to charity. So I'm not too bad. Maybe my badness is beating myself up!*
- > *Well, so far in life I've dealt with a lot worse. I've handled a lot of difficult stuff and am still kicking so I'll get through this the best I can.*

4. Question underlying general assumptions and errors in thinking that create gloom and doom thinking. Challenge any thought that makes you beat up on yourself! Argue with yourself on the pessimistic thought — play Devil's Advocate with it until you realize it just isn't true. Negative thinking is a habit that can be broken.

Unproductive ways of thinking are learned and they can be unlearned. To break a habit, you must be conscious that you are doing it. Bring the negative thought patterns to your conscious mind where you can challenge them. Catch those downer global beliefs that you are at fault that keep you stuck.

So thoughts are you! What you think is what you are! No one else can change your thoughts except you. Challenge your friends to help you stop the stinking thinking. Change those negative thoughts to reflect optimism and see how your world brightens!