

Self-Care Work Sheet #3: Balance Your Thoughts

What are your negative thoughts about yourself? (Some examples of negative thoughts: I'm stupid; I'm a bad parent or partner; I'm ugly; I can't do anything right.)

Depression leads to negative thinking. Before you were depressed, you might have changed or stopped such negative thoughts. Now you must work to change negative thoughts to positive ones. Pay special attention to guilt; depression often makes you dwell on past or present disappointments.

Depression can give you a selective memory. It's easy to remember all of your failures and mistakes. Focus on trying to remember all of your successes and accomplishments.

Think of your mind as having two parts: feelings and thoughts. The way you think about things affects how you feel about them. Feelings and thoughts influence what actions you take.

If you think you are depressed and will never get better, you are likely to feel hopeless. On the other hand, if you think your depression is temporary and it will improve, you will be more hopeful and willing to do things that will help you.

Because we know that depression does get better, no matter how bad we feel sometimes (hopeless, for example), it's very important to take action and to challenge our negative feelings even when we don't want to.

Negative thoughts lead to negative feelings. Read this example from a depressed person. You can see how she challenged or responded to some of her negative thoughts:

Self-Care Work Sheet #3: Balance Your Thoughts (continued)

Negative thought

“Talking back”

This depression will never change. I’m a total failure.

This is temporary. It will get better.

I could only walk for five minutes. I’m a total failure.

I walked for five minutes more than I did yesterday!
This is a good start, considering I’m depressed

I forgot to get the groceries. I cause my family terrible problems. I’m an awful person.

I forgot to get the groceries, but at least I got out of the house. I’m doing responsible things to change the way I feel. Just getting out will help my depression and thus, my family

MY PLAN

Write down your negative thoughts. Then write positive thoughts to counter them.
Carry the list with you so you can look at it when you feel worse.

Negative thought

“Talking back”
