



# 03 | COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING

# HOW TO BANISH Negative Thoughts

Who doesn't have negative thoughts now and then? But what if you had a negative thought which was pervasive and constant? Would you know how to get rid of it? Fortunately, there are many methods available to get rid of incessant negative chatter in our heads.

**Here is an effective step-by-step process that will work if you use it regularly.** As our ongoing example in this process, we'll use the negative thought, "I'm too dumb to do anything right."

1. Turn the thought into a mental image. Imagine looking and acting completely silly. Create the most exaggerated image of yourself you can. Start by envisioning yourself in ridiculous clothes that don't match. Maybe you're also banging your head against the wall or doing other foolish things. You could also be shouting silly phrases that don't make any sense. The image should be clearly visible on your mental screen. Include sounds, smells, and physical sensations as well. Keep at this until the original thought brings up this new image.

2. Choose an alternative thought. For our example, a good replacement thought would be, "I'm so intelligent I can do anything." Choose something that is the opposite of the original negative thought. Select a phrase that feels right to you, through your whole body.

3. Turn the new, positive thought into a mental image. You might imagine yourself dressed like Albert Einstein, shouting, “I’m brilliant. I can do anything.” Again, make the image outrageous. Keep at it until the positive thought automatically brings up that image.

4. Link the two images together. Now, imagine a way to get from your negative image to your positive image. This is almost like you’re the director of a movie; you want to find a way to connect the opening and the closing scenes.

- Perhaps in the first scene, you could imagine the image of the “dumb” version of yourself being struck by lightning and catching on fire. Then the new, Albert Einstein version of you rises from the ashes and goes into his “I’m brilliant. I can do anything” routine.
- Keep practicing until you run the entire scene in your mind quickly, with no hitches. This should take fewer than 2 seconds from start to finish.

5. Test out your new mental connections. When you think the original negative thought, the entire scene should flash through your mind. Your mental process should end with the moment where you’re thinking, “I’m so brilliant. I can do anything.” If you’re not there yet, repeat Step 4 until you are.

Although this may seem silly to you, this is a common mnemonic technique. The imagery must be outrageous. This makes your memory’s work much easier. Also, play around with the perspective. Most people find it helpful to view everything in the third person as if they were spectators watching themselves in a movie. But you may prefer imagining things from a first-person perspective, in which everything happens to you, as it would in everyday life. Try both perspectives to determine which works better for you. If you systematically deal with all your negative thoughts, you’ll eventually find that you have very few left. Imagine how your life could change! What might you do that you’ve always been too afraid to try? Now you’ll have the courage to do just that.

# Cognitive Restructuring

C. Circumstance (facts only)

T. Thought (what you think about the C)

F. Feeling (how you feel when you believe that thought)

A. Action (the actions you take when you feel that way).

E. Energy (the vibration from you take those actions)

R. Result (the result you create for yourself)

C

T

F

A

E

R

# Cognitive Restructuring

R

E

A

F

T

C



# THOUGHT AWARENESS

Observe your stream of consciousness as you think about a stressful situation. Do not suppress any thoughts. Let them run their course while you watch them, and write them down as they occur. While you're examining your thoughts, think of how your ancestral experience is affecting your thoughts and beliefs

Negative  
Thoughts

The next step is to rationally challenge the negative thoughts. Look at every thought you wrote down and ask yourself whether the thought is reasonable.

Rational  
Thoughts

Use rational, positive thoughts and affirmations to counter negative thinking. See if there are any opportunities that are offered by it.

Positive  
Thoughts

# COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING

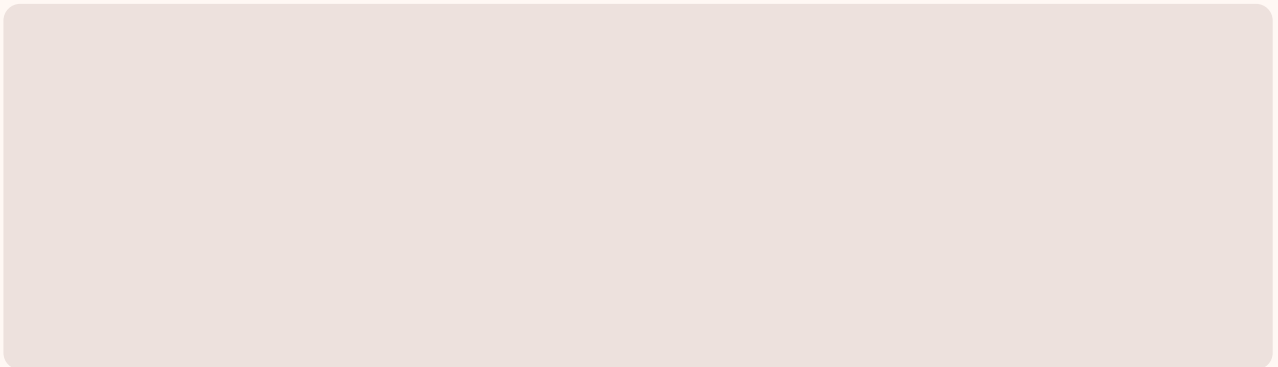


## Reducing Stress by Changing Your Thinking

Cognitive restructuring is useful for understanding what lies behind negative moods. These may undermine our performance, or damage our relationships with other people.

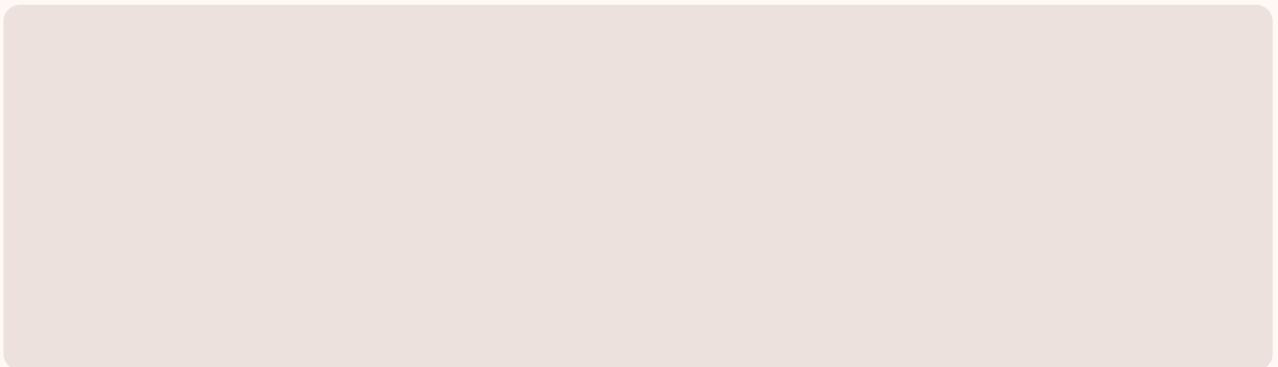
### Step 1: Identify the Situation

Describe the situation that triggered your negative mood.



### Step 2: Analyze Your Mood

Describe how you felt in the situation, and how you're feeling now.





### Step 3: Identify Automatic Thoughts

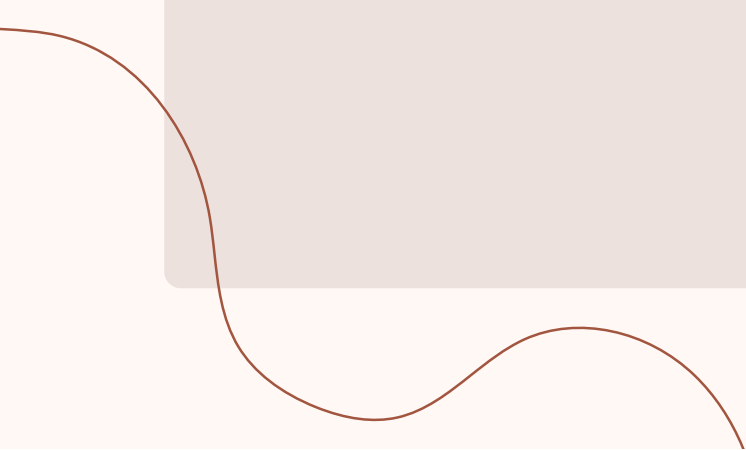
Make a list of your automatic thoughts in response to the situation.

### Step 4: Find Objective Evidence

Write down any evidence you can find that supports the automatic thoughts and any evidence that contradicts the thought.

### Step 5: Monitor Your Present Mood

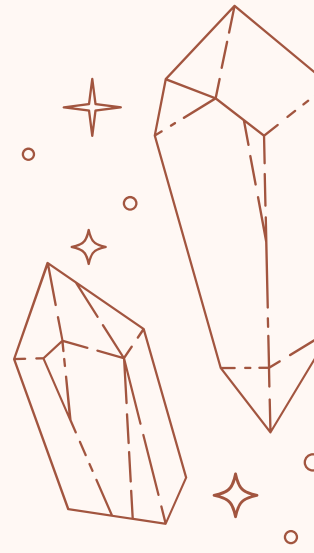
Take a moment to assess your mood. Do you feel better about the situation? Is there any action you need to take? Write down your present mood, along with any further steps that you need to take.





# Understanding YOUR PROBLEMS

Try to fill in something of your own experience. You may begin to understand your difficulties a little better. Particularly what patterns may exist and how things interact. Think about how your ancestral trauma may affect your life.



**Situation**

**Feelings**

**Thoughts**

**Physical Symptoms**

**Behaviours**

