



Growth Through Reflection: Negative Thoughts

Thoughts are not facts. You may experience feelings of stress, anxiety, or depression if you accept negative thoughts as facts. It is important to recognize unhelpful thinking habits and to purposefully change your thinking to be more balanced.

Some common unhelpful thinking can include:

- Assuming you know what others are thinking and that they are thinking negatively about you.
- Comparing yourself to others and putting yourself down in comparison.
- Being critical of yourself (appearance, qualities, performance).
- Thinking that there can only be a bad outcome to an event and focusing on how that bad outcome may be detrimental.
- Ignoring what you did well and only focusing on what went wrong or wasn't good enough.

Identify a recent negative thought and how the thought made you feel:

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Recognize unhelpful thinking present in the thought:

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Identify evidence for and against the thought. Why is the thought true? Why is it false?

True:

False:

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If someone you cared about had the same thought, what would you tell them?

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Create a more truthful statement. One that contains negative, neutral, and positive components.

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Example Thought: People will think I'm stupid if I mess up this presentation. Makes me feel anxious.

Unhelpful thinking: I'm being critical of myself, assuming what others are thinking, and predicting a negative outcome.

Evidence for/against: I may mess up. I could stumble on a word or lose my train of thought./I know when I've seen others make a mistake in a presentation I am kind to them and understand they are human.

If a friend had the same thought: I would reassure them that they are smart and capable, and that making a mistake does not negate all of their good work and contributions.

More truthful statement: I could mess up during this presentation, that doesn't mean I'm stupid. Those who really look at my work will see I am capable.