

# Reframing Your Thoughts

Apply these simple reframing strategies to help exercise control over unhelpful thought patterns. Try each and practice the one that resonates with you most.



## Identify Your Thoughts

- **Notice your thoughts.** Pause when you have pain or a recurring situation and ask, “What am I thinking right now?” For example, “This hurts,” “I can’t do it,” or “I’ll never get better.”
- **Label your thoughts with an emotion.** Did the thought stem from fear, worry, anger, or sadness? This helps you to be more aware over time of the nature of your thoughts.<sup>1</sup>
- If you’d like, name the type of thought; **positive, negative, or neutral.**

## You Are Not Your Thoughts

Once you have noticed and named a thought, try one of the strategies below to put some distance between yourself and the thought:

- Imagine the thought out in front of your mind as if it were on a **movie screen**.
- See the thought as a bubble floating by, or like an image rushing by while you are **sitting on a train**.
- Visualize the thought **inside a balloon**, floating farther and farther away from you with each exhale
- Practice **RAIN**<sup>2</sup> with the thought:

**R**

**Recognize it**

Notice and name

**A**

**Allow it**

Don’t try to change it

**I**

**Investigate it**

Where is it from?  
Past pain, fear?

**N**

**Nurture**

Send self compassion  
to what arises

## Ways to Challenge & Change Your Thoughts

- Once you notice a thought, ask yourself, “**Is it true, is it useful, is it kind?**”<sup>3</sup>
  - It may feel true, but how can you change it to also be useful and kind? For instance, “I hurt right now, but I am getting better and I am strong” instead of “I hurt and I can’t change.”
- Use the present tense to think about the future you **want** to see: “I am strong” instead of “I want to be strong.”
- Ask yourself what you would say to a dear friend who is in pain or working on a new skill. Say **this** version to yourself instead.<sup>4</sup>
- Ask yourself these four questions:
  1. What is the thought?
  2. Can I **absolutely** know it’s true?
  3. How do I react when I believe the thought?
  4. Who would I be if the opposite were true?<sup>5</sup>

1. David, S., & Congleton, C. (2013, November). Emotional agility. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2013/11/emotional-agility>
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4. Neff, K. (2021). Self compassion guided practices and exercises. Retrieved from <https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#exercises>
5. Katie, B. (2020, August 21). Do the work. Retrieved from <https://thework.com/instruction-the-work-byron-katie/>

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