

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.¹
- 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**² 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?**”³
 - 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.⁴
- 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?⁵

1. David, S., & Congleton, C. (2013, November). Emotional agility. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2013/11/emotional-agility>

2. Brach, T. (2020, January 13). Blog: The rain of self-compassion. Retrieved from <https://www.tarabrach.com/selfcompassion1/>

3. Kaufman, P., and Schipper, J. (2018). Teaching with Compassion: An educator’s oath to each from the heart. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

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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