



THE EMPLOYEE ENHANCEMENT NEWSLETTER



HELPFUL RESOURCES FROM YOUR
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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March Online Seminar

Disrupting Negative Thoughts

It's not negative thoughts themselves that are the issue; rather, it's when we believe those negative thoughts. Learn how to gain control over negative thoughts and turn them into positive ones.

Available on demand March 21st
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Changing Negative Thoughts About Yourself to Positive Ones

You may be giving yourself negative messages about yourself. Many people do. These are messages that you learned when you were young. You learned from many different sources, including other children, your teachers, family members, caregivers, even from the media, and from prejudice and stigma in society.

Once you have learned them, you may have repeated these negative messages over and over to yourself, especially when you were not feeling well or when you were having a hard time. You may have come to believe them. You may have even worsened the problem by making up some negative messages or thoughts of your own. These negative thoughts or messages make you feel bad about yourself and lower your self-esteem.

Some examples of common negative messages that people repeat over and over to themselves include: “I am a jerk,” “I am a loser,” “I never do anything right,” “No one would ever like me.” Most people believe these messages, no matter how untrue or unreal they are. They come up immediately in the right circumstance. For instance, if you get a wrong answer, you think, “I am so stupid.” They may include words like should, ought or must. The messages tend to imagine the worst in everything, especially you, and they are hard to turn off or unlearn.

You may think these thoughts or give yourself these negative messages so often that you are hardly aware of them. Pay attention to them. Carry a small pad with you as you go about your daily routine for several days, and jot down negative thoughts about yourself whenever you notice them. Some people say they notice more negative thinking when they are tired, sick or dealing with a lot of stress. As you become aware of your negative thoughts, you may notice more and more of them.

It helps to take a closer look at your negative thought patterns in order to check out whether or not they are true. You may want a close friend or counselor to help you with this. When you are in a good mood and when you have a positive attitude about yourself, ask yourself the following questions about each negative thought you have noticed:

- Is this message really true?
- Would a person say this to another person? If not, why am I saying it to myself?
- What do I get out of thinking this thought? If it makes me feel bad about myself, why not stop thinking it?

You could also ask someone else – someone who likes you and whom you trust – if you should believe this thought about yourself. Often, just looking at a thought or situation in a new light helps.

The next step in this process is to develop positive statements you can say to yourself to replace these negative thoughts whenever you notice yourself thinking them. You can't think two thoughts at the same time. When you are thinking a positive thought about yourself, you can't be thinking a negative one. In developing these thoughts, use positive words like happy, peaceful, loving, enthusiastic and warm.

Avoid using negative words such as worried, frightened, upset, tired, bored, not, never and can't. Don't make a statement like "I am not going to worry anymore." Instead say, "I focus on the positive" or whatever feels right to you. Substitute "it would be nice if" for "should." Always use the present tense, for example, "I am healthy, I am well, I am happy, I have a good job," as if the condition already exists. Use I, me or your own name.

You can do this by folding a piece of paper in half the long way to make two columns. In one column write your negative thought, and in the other column write a positive thought that contradicts the negative thought. You can work on changing your negative thoughts to positive ones by:

- Replacing the negative thought with the positive one every time you realize you are thinking the negative thought.
- Repeating your positive thought over and over to yourself, out loud whenever you get a chance, and even sharing them with another person if possible.
- Writing them over and over.
- Making signs that say the positive thought, hanging them in places where you would see them often, like on your refrigerator door or on the mirror in your bathroom, and repeating the thought to yourself several times when you see it.

Negative Thought	Positive Thought
I am not worth anything.	I am a valuable person.
I have never accomplished anything.	I have accomplished many things.
I always make mistakes.	I do many things well.
I am a jerk.	I am a great person.
I don't deserve a good life.	I deserve to be happy and healthy.
I am stupid.	I am smart.

It helps to reinforce the positive thought if you repeat it over and over to yourself when you are deeply relaxed, like when you are doing a deep breathing or relaxation exercise, or when you are just falling asleep or waking up.

Changing the negative thoughts you have about yourself to positive ones takes time and persistence. If you use these techniques consistently for four to six weeks, you will notice that you don't think these negative thoughts about yourself as much. If they recur at some other time, you can repeat these activities. Don't give up. You deserve to think good thoughts about yourself.

Source: U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (n.d.). Changing negative thoughts about yourself to positive ones. In Building self-esteem: A self-help guide. Retrieved February 20, 2017, from <http://www.samhsa.gov/>

Laughing is Good for You and Your Child



If your doctor said, “Take two jokes and call me in the morning,” would you laugh? You should—laughter is good for you and your child’s mental and physical well-being.

Some mental health professionals say humor is one of the best ways to relieve stress, and research proves that laughter plays a key role in human life. A good laugh loosens muscles, lowers blood pressure, and might lower levels of hormones that create stress and weaken immunity. When you laugh, your body moves blood to your heart and lungs, boosting your energy level and making you feel better instantly. It also aids communication and creates a sense of closeness between you and the people with whom you’re laughing.

Until recently, researchers knew that laughing was good for people, but they didn’t really understand how. New evidence points to changes in the brain—not the imaginary funny bone—as the source for laughter.

Researchers found that when people laugh, a part of the brain’s reward system is triggered. In this reward system, a person feels pleasure and wants to have the same pleasant feelings over and over again. The areas in the brain triggered by humor are the same ones that are triggered by drugs like amphetamines and cocaine.

What does this mean for you and your child? According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, one reason that young people choose to use drugs is simply to feel good. They seek new or thrilling things to have a good time. The good news is that the kids who use drugs to feel good are the ones who are most likely to respond to prevention messages that teach them about the harmful effects of drugs on their bodies. Teens also are swayed mostly by the powerful protective factor of having strong and loving parents who take notice and take part in all aspects of their lives. These kids have the best chances of being successfully taught to seek other ways of having fun.

Laughing and fun go hand in hand, and laughing together as a family will bring you closer together, improve your mental and physical health, and might help prevent your child from using drugs. Look for laughs to stay healthy!

Mobbs, D.; Greicius, M.D.; Abdel-Azim, E.; Menon, V.; & Reiss, A.L. (2003). Humor modulates the mesolimbic reward centers. *Neuron*, 40, 1041-1048.

Leshner, A.I. (Updated 2005, June 14). Why do Sally and Johnny use drugs? Washington, DC: National Institute on Drug Abuse.



Top 10 Tax Time Tips

It's that time of the year again. The income tax filing season has begun, and important tax documents should be arriving in the mail. Even though your return is not due until April, getting an early start will make filing easier. Here are the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) top 10 tips that will help your tax filing process run smoother than ever this year.

1. Start gathering your records. Round up any documents or forms you'll need when filing your taxes: receipts, canceled checks, and other documents that support income or deductions you're claiming on your return.
2. Be on the lookout. W-2s and 1099s will be coming soon; you'll need these to file your tax return.
3. Use Free File. Let Free File do the hard work for you with brand-name tax software or online fillable forms. It's available exclusively at <http://www.irs.gov>. Everyone can find an option to prepare their tax return and e-file it for free. If you made \$58,000 or less, you qualify for free tax software that is offered through a private-public partnership with manufacturers. If you made more or are comfortable preparing your own tax return, there's Free File Fillable Forms, the electronic versions of IRS paper forms. Visit <http://www.irs.gov/freefile> to review your options.
4. Try IRS e-file. IRS e-file has become the safe, easy, and most common way to file a tax return. Last year, 70% of taxpayers—99 million people—used IRS e-file. This is your chance to give it a try. IRS e-file is approaching 1 billion returns processed safely and securely. If you owe taxes, you have payment options to file immediately and pay by the tax deadline. Best of all, combine e-file with direct deposit and you get your refund in as few as 10 days.
5. Consider other filing options. There are many different options for filing your tax return. You can prepare it yourself or go to a tax preparer. You may be eligible for free face-to-face help at an IRS office or volunteer site. Give yourself time to weigh all the different options and find the one that best suits your needs.
6. Consider direct deposit. If you elect to have your refund directly deposited into your bank account, you'll receive it faster than waiting for a paper check.
7. Visit the IRS Web site again and again. The official IRS Web site is a great place to find everything you'll need to file your tax return: forms, publications, tips, answers to frequently asked questions, and updates on tax law changes.
8. Remember this number: 17. Check out IRS Publication 17, Your Federal Income Tax on the IRS Web site. It's a comprehensive collection of information for taxpayers highlighting everything you'll need to know when filing your return.
9. Review! Review! Review! Don't rush. We all make mistakes when we rush. Mistakes will slow down the processing of your return. Be sure to double-check all the Social Security numbers and math calculations on your return, as these are the most common errors made by taxpayers.
10. Don't panic! If you run into a problem, remember the IRS is here to help. Try visiting <http://www.irs.gov> or call toll-free at (800) 829-1040.

Source: Internal Revenue Service. (Updated 2012, September 10). IRS Tax Tip 2011-01. Top 10 Tax Time Tips. Retrieved January 24, 2013, from <http://www.irs.gov>.

