



Strategies for Managing your Emotions: Controlling your Thoughts

Managing your emotions is a key skill in Emotional Intelligence. You do not have to be dominated by your feelings. You can control your thoughts.

Negative thinking and self-criticism are bad habits. Like any bad habit, this takes conscious effort and a desire to change. To affect change in your behavior, you must be committed and practice.

When a negative thought comes up:

- 1. Acknowledge it.** Stop and tell yourself that you are focusing on a negative thought. Remember, you want to step back and be an observer of your thoughts and feelings.
- 2. Assess it for truth.** Look for absolutes like always, never, forever - these indicate extreme thinking, since very few absolutes exist. Most situations have many solutions and many possible outcomes; extreme thinking limits your actions. Absolutes might be a sign of a deeper, negative belief about yourself, such as worthlessness, undeserving, fear of failure, etc.
- 3. Identify the feelings behind the thought.** If you have trouble identifying the feeling, look at a feelings chart. This will help you realize the emotional context that brought forth this thought. Address the feeling to change the thought.
- 4. Reframe the negative to a positive.** This means looking at things in a way that promotes positive action. Mistakes can often turn out to opportunities, especially opportunities for growth. Change the wording of the thought to emphasize the positive.
- 5. Repeat these steps as necessary.**