

# STRESS MANAGEMENT PACKAGE

## STRESS MANAGEMENT

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# coping with stress



## Stress and Stressors

Stress is something that is part of normal life, in that it is experienced by everyone from time-to-time. However, some people suffer from stress which is so frequent or so severe that it can seriously impact on their quality of life. Stress can come from a huge range of sources (*stressors*), such as:

- ◇ Relationships with others
- ◇ Work-related issues
- ◇ Study demands
- ◇ Coping with illness
- ◇ Life changes, such as marriage, retirement, divorce
- ◇ Day-to-day activities and tasks
- ◇ Positive events, such as organising holidays or parties
- ◇ Juggling many roles or tasks at the same time



Some people are aware of what tends to trigger their stress, and this increases their ability to either prevent stress or to handle it more effectively. Many others are less able to deal with stress, and identifying stressors is a key step in this. If you often experience stress, take some time to consider what tends to set it off for you.

## Symptoms of Stress

Some people do not even notice that they are stressed until symptoms begin to occur, including:

- ◇ Irritability or moodiness
- ◇ Interrupted sleep
- ◇ Worrying or feeling of anxiety
- ◇ Back and neck pain
- ◇ Frequent headaches, minor to migraine
- ◇ Upset stomach
- ◇ Increased blood pressure
- ◇ Changes in appetite
- ◇ Rashes or skin breakouts
- ◇ Chest pains
- ◇ Making existing physical problems worse
- ◇ More susceptible to cold/flu and slower recovery

These symptoms reduce quality of life, and people suffering from stress may notice that work performance or relationships suffer more as a result. You may be able to use some the strategies listed here, or you may find it useful to consult a professional for more help.

## Stress Management Tips

- 1) **Identify your stressors**, and see if there are some things within your control to manage better. Some things will be beyond your control, for example if you work a job that is based on working towards deadlines then you can't change this without changing jobs. But perhaps you can control some aspects, such as scheduling to have at least a short lunch break each day, or to go to bed earlier so that you have more energy to cope with the daytime.
- 2) Build **regular exercise** into your life - as well as being part of a healthy, balanced lifestyle and giving you more energy, many people find that working out at the gym or playing sport helps them to unwind.
- 3) Make sure that you **eat and sleep well**.
- 4) **Take time out** for family, friends and recreational activities. Most of us know that this is important but we do not all do it. If you find it hard to make time for this, perhaps you need to take deliberate steps to have time out, such as set aside one evening a week where you meet up with friends or enjoy a hobby, or set aside one day of the weekend for relaxing at home.
- 5) **Problem-solving techniques** can be a useful way of clarifying the problem, brainstorming possible solutions, and then choosing one to put into action after listing the pros and cons of each option. See the handout *Problem Solving* for more details about this.
- 6) **Learn calming techniques** such as controlled breathing and progressive muscle relaxation, to train your mind and body to become more relaxed. These techniques require practice but can be helpful with regular use. See handouts *Calming Technique* and *Progressive Muscle Relaxation*.
- 7) You may wish to speak to a professional about **assertiveness training and communication skills** which can help you to deal with challenging situations more effectively, thereby reducing stress. See the handout *Assertive Communication*.
- 8) Last but definitely not least, consider whether there is **negative thinking** which is contributing to your stress. Negative thinking can make us worry more than is necessary, increasing stress, and generally does not motivate us to take positive actions. See the handouts *Thinking & Feeling*, *Analysing Your Thinking* and *Changing Your Thinking*.



# Stress Management



**Stress:** an emotional and physical response to demanding situations, including symptoms that may include worry, a feeling of being overwhelmed, increased heart rate, headaches, sleep difficulties, procrastination, and more.

**Describe your largest source of stress, in detail.**


**Briefly list two other stressors you are experiencing.**

1
2

**Circle any symptoms you have experienced in response to stress.**

Anger / Frustration	Anxiety	Decreased Sex Drive	Drug or Alcohol Use
Fatigue	Headaches	Indigestion	Muscle Tension
Nail Biting	Over or Under Eating	Procrastination	Sleep Difficulties
Social Withdrawal	Teeth Grinding	Worry	Other



Contrary to popular belief, not all stress is bad. The stress response is a powerful tool used by your body to increase the odds of overcoming obstacles. It's when stress becomes too intense, or lasts for too long, that it becomes problematic.

# Stress Management

The negative effects of stress can be reduced with the use of social support, emotional management skills, maintaining a healthy life balance, and attending to basic needs. In the following pages, we'll explore each of these strategies.

## Social Support

Even when your social support cannot solve a problem, just talking can sometimes be enough. When we talk about our problems, hormones are released inside our brains that ease the undesirable symptoms of stress.

List three people who you can turn to for support.

Name:	How they can help:

How can you use social support to ease one of your current stressors?


## Emotional Management

Stress can trigger many emotions such as anxiety, self-doubt, and anger. When these feelings are ignored, they can exacerbate the original stressor. Remember, emotional management isn't about eliminating emotions—it's about dealing with them in a healthy way.

When faced with unpleasant emotions, do you have any habits or tendencies that *worsen* the situation?


List two ways that you have successfully handled unpleasant emotions in the past.

1
2

# Stress Management

## Life Balance

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Stress can be especially destructive if your life is heavily focused on one area. For example, a person who is only focused on a relationship will struggle if their relationship becomes rocky.

Rate each of the following life areas from 1 to 5. A "1" means that you devote little attention to this part of your life, while a "5" means that you devote a high amount of attention to this area.

Career	Family	Fun / Recreation	Spirituality
Socializing	Intimate Relationship	Education	Other

Based upon your ratings, are there any areas where you would like to devote more attention?


## Basic Needs

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During periods of high stress, many people take shortcuts when it comes to their basic needs. Examples include sleep, a healthy diet, exercise, and other forms of self-care. When basic needs are neglected, health and mental well-being deteriorate, which contributes to additional stress.

Circle any basic needs that you tend to neglect during periods of high stress.

Sleep	Healthy Diet	Exercise	Medical Adherence <small>medications, appointments, etc.</small>
Personal Hygiene	Social / Love Needs	Managing Addictions	Other

Describe the steps you can take to protect your basic needs during periods of high stress.


# Relaxation Techniques

When a person is confronted with anxiety, their body undergoes several changes and enters a special state called the *fight-or-flight response*. The body prepares to either fight or flee the perceived danger.

During the fight-or-flight response it's common to experience a "blank" mind, increased heart rate, sweating, tense muscles, and more. Unfortunately, these bodily responses do little good when it comes to protecting us from modern sources of anxiety.

Using a variety of skills, you can end the fight-or-flight response before the symptoms become too extreme. These skills *will* require practice to work effectively, so don't wait until the last minute to try them out!

## **Deep Breathing**

It's natural to take long, deep breaths, when relaxed. However, during the fight-or-flight response, breathing becomes rapid and shallow. Deep breathing reverses that, and sends messages to the brain to begin calming the body. Practice will make your body respond more efficiently to deep breathing in the future.

Breathe in slowly. Count in your head and make sure the inward breath lasts at least 5 seconds. Pay attention to the feeling of the air filling your lungs.

Hold your breath for 5 to 10 seconds (again, keep count). You don't want to feel uncomfortable, but it should last quite a bit longer than an ordinary breath.

Breathe out very slowly for 5 to 10 seconds (count!). Pretend like you're breathing through a straw to slow yourself down. Try using a real straw to practice.

Repeat the breathing process until you feel calm.

## **Imagery**

Think about some of your favorite and least favorite places. If you think about the place hard enough—if you really try to think about what it's like—you may begin to have feelings you associate with that location. Our brain has the ability to create emotional reactions based entirely off of our thoughts. The imagery technique uses this to its advantage.

Make sure you're somewhere quiet without too much noise or distraction. You'll need a few minutes to just spend quietly, in your mind.

Think of a place that's calming for you. Some examples are the beach, hiking on a mountain, relaxing at home with a friend, or playing with a pet.

# Relaxation Techniques

Paint a picture of the calming place in your mind. Don't just think of the place briefly—imagine every little detail. Go through each of your senses and imagine what you would experience in your relaxing place. Here's an example using a beach:

- a. Sight: The sun is high in the sky and you're surrounded by white sand. There's no one else around. The water is a greenish-blue and waves are calmly rolling in from the ocean.
- b. Sound: You can hear the deep pounding and splashing of the waves. There are seagulls somewhere in the background.
- c. Touch: The sun is warm on your back, but a breeze cools you down just enough. You can feel sand moving between my toes.
- d. Taste: You have a glass of lemonade that's sweet, tart, and refreshing.
- e. Smell: You can smell the fresh ocean air, full of salt and calming aromas.

## **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

During the fight-or-flight response, the tension in our muscles increases. This can lead to a feeling of stiffness, or even back and neck pain. Progressive muscle relaxation teaches us to become more aware of this tension so we can better identify and address stress.

Find a private and quiet location. You should sit or lie down somewhere comfortable.

The idea of this technique is to intentionally tense each muscle, and then to release the tension. Let's practice with your feet.

- a. Tense the muscles in your toes by curling them into your foot. Notice how it feels when your foot is tense. Hold the tension for 5 seconds.
- b. Release the tension from your toes. Let them relax. Notice how your fingers feel differently after you release the tension.
- c. Tense the muscles all throughout your calf. Hold it for 5 seconds. Notice how the feeling of tension in your leg feels.
- d. Release the tension from your calf, and notice how the feeling of relaxation differs.

Follow this pattern of tensing and releasing tension all throughout your body. After you finish with your feet and legs, move up through your torso, arms, hands, neck, and head.

## Types of coping strategies

1. **appraisal-focused:** Directed towards challenging one's own assumptions, adaptive cognitive.

\*occur when the person modifies the way they think,

for **example:** employing denial, or distancing oneself from the problem. People may alter the way they think about a problem by altering their goals and values, such as by **seeing the humor in a situation:** "some have suggested that humor may play a greater role as a **stress moderator** among women than men

## Types of coping strategies

2. **problem-focused:** Directed towards reducing or eliminating a stressor, adaptive behavioral

People using problem-focused strategies try to deal with the cause of their problem. They do this by finding out information on the problem and learning new skills to manage the problem.

Problem-focused coping is aimed at **changing or eliminating the source of the stress.** The three problem-focused coping strategies identified by Folkman and Lazarus are taking control, information seeking, and evaluating the pros and cons.



## Types of coping strategies

**3. emotion-focused:** Directed towards changing one's own emotional reaction

- involve releasing pent-up emotions, distracting oneself, managing hostile feelings, meditating or using systematic relaxation procedures. Emotion-focused coping "is oriented toward managing the emotions that accompany the perception of stress"

## Matching the Situation and Stressor

### Situation

**Controllable**



### Coping Response

**Problem-Focused**

- Problem solving
- Decision making
- Seeking information
- Goal setting

**Uncontrollable**



**Emotion-Focused**

- Venting/talking to others
- Reframing the situation
- Journaling
- Exercise/relaxation
- Meditation/spiritual practices
- Pleasurable activities

# Coping Skills

## Distraction

Conversation, listen to talk radio, read, do puzzles, TV, computer games, jigsaws, solve a problem, make a list, learn something new, cleaning & tidying, gardening, arts & crafts.

### Pros

Gives your heart & mind a break.  
Great for short term relief.  
Great to get through a crisis.

### Cons

Can't do it for too long. Doesn't resolve any underlying issues. Meds can make it hard to concentrate.

## Grounding

Use body & senses: smell fragrances, slowly taste food, notice the colours around you. Walk on the grass barefoot, squeeze clay or mud, do yoga, meditate, exercise.

### Pros

Helps slow or stop 'dissociation' (feeling numb, floaty or disconnected).  
Reduces physicality of anxiety.

### Cons

Sometimes it's better to stay a bit dissociated (that's how your mind protects you).

## Emotional Release

Yell, scream, run! Try a cold shower. Let yourself cry... and sob. Put on a funny DVD and let yourself laugh! Try boxing, popping balloons, or crank up some music & dance crazy!

### Pros

Great for anger and fear.  
Releases the pressure of overwhelming emotion.

### Cons

Hard to do in every situation. Feels odd. Some people might think you're acting 'crazier' (be selective with how & where you do this)

## Self Love

Massage hands with nice cream, manicure your nails, cook a special meal, clean your house (or just make your bed), bubble bath or long shower, brush hair, buy a small treat.

### Pros

Become your own best friend, your own support worker.  
Great for guilt or shame.  
You deserve it!

### Cons

Sometimes can feel really hard to do, or feel superficial (but it's not).

## Thought challenge

Write down negative thoughts then list all the reasons they may not be true. Imagine someone you love had these thoughts – what advice would you give them?

### Pros

Can help to shift long-term, negative thinking habits.  
Trying to be more logical can help reduce extreme emotion.

### Cons

The more emotional you feel, the harder this is to do. In particular, feelings of shame can make this very hard.

## Access your higher self

Help someone else, smile at strangers (see how many smiles you get back), pray, volunteer, do randomly kind things for others, pat dogs at the local park, join a cause

### Pros

Reminds us that everyone has value and that purpose can be found in small as well as large things.

### Cons

Don't get stuck trying to save everyone else and forget about you!

# 99 Coping Skills

1. Exercise (running, walking, etc.).
2. Put on fake tattoos.
3. Write (poetry, stories, journal).
4. Scribble/doodle on paper.
5. Be with other people.
6. Watch a favorite TV show.
7. Post on web boards, and answer others' posts.
8. Go see a movie.
9. Do a wordsearch or crossword .
10. Do schoolwork.
11. Play a musical instrument.
12. Paint your nails, do your make-up or hair.
13. Sing.
14. Study the sky.
15. Punch a punching bag.
16. Cover yourself with Band-Aids where you want to cut.
17. Let yourself cry.
18. Take a nap (only if you are tired).
19. Take a hot shower or relaxing bath.
20. Play with a pet.
21. Go shopping.
22. Clean something.
23. Knit or sew.
24. Read a good book.
25. Listen to music.
26. Try some aromatherapy (candle, lotion, room spray).
27. Meditate.
28. Go somewhere very public.
29. Bake cookies.
30. Alphabetize your CDs/DVDs/books.
31. Paint or draw.
32. Rip paper into itty-bitty pieces
33. Shoot hoops, kick a ball.
34. Write a letter or send an email.
35. Plan your dream room (colors/ furniture).
36. Hug a pillow or stuffed animal.
37. Hyperfocus on something like a rock, hand, etc.
38. Dance.
39. Make hot chocolate, milkshake or smoothie.
40. Play with modeling clay or Play-Dough.
41. Build a pillow fort.
42. Go for a nice, long drive.
43. Complete something you've been putting off.
44. Draw on yourself with a marker.
45. Take up a new hobby.
46. Look up recipes, cook a meal.
47. Look at pretty things, like flowers or art.
48. Create or build something.
49. Pray.
50. Make a list of blessings in your life.
51. Read the Bible.
52. Go to a friend's house.
53. Jump on a trampoline.
54. Watch an old, happy movie.
55. Contact a hotline/ your therapist.
56. Talk to someone close to you.
57. Ride a bicycle.
58. Feed the ducks, birds, or squirrels.
59. Color with Crayons.
60. Memorize a poem, play, or song.
61. Stretch.
62. Search for ridiculous things on the internet.
63. "Shop" on-line (without buying anything).
64. Color-coordinate your wardrobe.
65. Watch fish.
66. Make a CD/playlist of your favorite songs.
67. Play the "15 minute game." (Avoid something for 15 minutes, when time is up start again.)
68. Plan your wedding/prom/other event.
69. Plant some seeds.
70. Hunt for your perfect home or car on-line.
71. Try to make as many words out of your full name as possible .
72. Sort through your photographs.
73. Play with a balloon.
74. Give yourself a facial.
75. Find yourself some toys and play.
76. Start collecting something.
77. Play video/computer games.
78. Clean up trash at your local park.
79. Perform a random act of kindness for someone.
80. Text or call an old friend.
81. Write yourself an "I love you because..." letter.
82. Look up new words and use them.
83. Rearrange furniture.
84. Write a letter to someone that you may never send.
85. Smile at least five people.
86. Play with little kids.
87. Go for a walk (with or without a friend).
88. Put a puzzle together.
89. Clean your room /closet.
90. Try to do handstands, cartwheels, or backbends.
91. Yoga.
92. Teach your pet a new trick.
93. Learn a new language.
94. Move EVERYTHING in your room to a new spot.
95. Get together with friends and play Frisbee, soccer or basketball.
96. Hug a friend or family member.
97. Search on-line for new songs/ artists.
98. Make a list of goals for the week/ month/year/5 years.
99. Face paint.

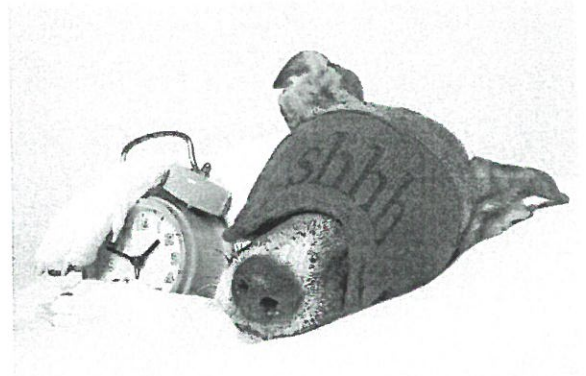
## 64 Ideas For Self Care When Life Gets Hard

BY KATHERINE HURST

When you're running low on energy, carrying too many burdens or just not feeling very resilient, it's vital that you nurture yourself in order to replenish your resources. If you need some inspiration, look to any one (or more) of these 64 quick and effective ways to practice self care.

1. Spend time with a parent or mentor—someone who makes you feel protected and inspired.
2. Volunteer to help a cause that means something to you.
3. Listen to music from one of the happiest periods of your life.
4. Practice a mindfulness exercise, even if it's just deep breathing.
5. Light some candles and enjoy a nice glass of your favorite wine.
6. Think of three positives associated with your current hardships.
7. Take a hot shower for at least 10 minutes, then change into some soft, clean clothes.
8. Do some creative writing—imagine a fantasy scenario, and lose yourself in it.
9. Go to bed early and make sure you get at least a full 8 hours of sleep.
10. Make an appointment to see a therapist. Even just one session of unburdening yourself could make a difference.
11. Say out loud “Nothing lasts forever. This too shall pass.”
12. Visualize a beautiful, calm location and spend 10 minutes imagining you're there right now.
13. Keep your hands busy with a repetitive activity like knitting, sewing or solving a puzzle.
14. Write down ten things in your life that inspire gratitude.
15. Sketch something, whether it's an elaborate drawing or just a doodle of patterns that appeal to you.
16. Go for a hike.
17. Plan a day trip and take photographs of 10 things you see that inspire you.
18. Look into local retreats where you can meet like minded people and escape from society.
19. Watch YouTube videos of cute animals.
20. Hug someone you love (friend, family member or partner) for 12-15 seconds—studies show this boosts immune system function and prompts the release of calming hormones.
21. Do some yoga—even just five minutes of very basic positions can help you feel calmer and stronger.
22. Go to a café, order your favorite delicious coffee (or some other kind of luxury drink), and read a book or magazine.
23. Find any reminders of bad times, and get rid of them—they're only adding negativity to your space.
24. Slowly file, buff and paint your nails, then massage soothing cream into your hands.
25. Make a playlist of uplifting songs, and know you can tune in to it whenever things get rough.
26. Let yourself cry if you need to—holding it back tends to make people feel worse instead of better.
27. Challenge yourself to write down 100 things you love about life. This is easier than you might think!
28. Just say “no” if someone is asking you to do something that feels too much.
29. Recreate a favorite date or day out with your partner or a good friend.

30. Take a full day (even if you have to call in sick) and just take care of yourself.
31. Eat a square of dark chocolate, which is proven to lower the levels of certain stress hormones.
32. Skip your household chores for a full day.
33. Watch several episodes of your favorite TV show, back to back.
34. Empty out your wardrobe, and donate old, ill-fitting or unappealing clothes to charity.
35. If you need to make a tricky decision, create a list of pros and cons.
36. Head for the gym and sweat out your stress with a serious workout.
37. Head to a beautiful, quiet place and watch the sun set. Bonus points if you can find somewhere by the water.
38. Dance to your favorite songs, and really put your whole body into it!
39. Watch a movie that is guaranteed to make you laugh.
40. Go cycling or running in a beautiful place (you'll get the endorphins flowing and expose your mind to natural beauty).
41. Get your favorite comfort food and savor it without any guilt—you deserve it.
42. Go for a drive with your music turned up loud. Sing along if you like!
43. Switch off from the internet for a full day.
44. Go shopping and treat yourself to one little item that you don't really need but that represents caring for yourself.
45. Take a long, slow walk, listening to some of your favorite relaxing music on your headphones.
46. Reset your brain and revitalize your energy stores by taking a 15-20 minute nap.
47. Plan a weekend away, whether it's by yourself or with some people whose company you love.
48. Make a cup of tea and just sip it in quiet stillness.
49. Cook a healthy meal that's packed with delicious, fresh vegetables.
50. Deliberately externalize your feelings of stress, sadness or frustration in a journal entry.
51. Interact with your pet, or go to a place where you can touch some animals (e.g. a petting zoo or cat café).
52. Pick up the phone and call someone who gets you.
53. Reorganize your workspace, getting rid of clutter. Research shows that this helps to declutter your mind too.
54. Smile at yourself in the mirror—you'll be surprised at how quickly the smile becomes genuine.
55. Read a good book (under a blanket if it's cold, or lazing in the sun if it's warm outside).
56. Offer to walk someone's dog for them.
57. Play a sport, or sign up to learn a new one—it's good for your social life and great for pent-up frustration.
58. Watch some trashy TV or read a trashy magazine—sometimes, we all need a little escapism.
59. Book a massage, a manicure, or a facial. If you can afford it, book all three!
60. Plan a night out (or a night in) with your favorite people.
61. If you are religious or spiritual, spend some time praying.
62. Take a hot bath with Epsom salts.
63. Sit by a river and watch the movement of the water.
64. Paint something—it can be as abstract or realistic as you like!

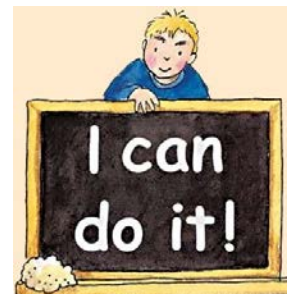


## Positive Self- talk / Coping Thoughts Worksheet



Positive statements encourage us and help us cope through distressing times. We can say these encouraging words to ourselves, and be our own personal coach. We have all survived some very distressing times, and we can use those experiences to encourage us through current difficulties. Examples of coping thoughts might be:

- Stop, and breathe, I can do this
- This will pass
- I can be anxious/angry/sad and still deal with this
- I have done this before, and I can do it again
- This feels bad, it's a normal body reaction – it will pass
- This feels bad, and feelings are very often wrong
- These are just feelings, they will go away
- This won't last forever
- Short term pain for long term gain
- I can feel bad and still choose to take a new and healthy direction
- I don't need to rush, I can take things slowly
- I have survived before, I will survive now
- I feel this way because of my past experiences, but I am safe right now
- It's okay to feel this way, it's a normal reaction
- Right now, I am not in danger. Right now, I'm safe
- My mind is not always my friend
- Thoughts are just thoughts – they're not necessarily true or factual
- This is difficult and uncomfortable, but it's only temporary
- I can use my coping skills and get through this
- I can learn from this and it will be easier next time
- Keep calm and carry on



Yes!

Write down a coping thought or positive statement for each difficult or distressing situation – something you can tell yourself that will help you get through. Write them down on a piece of card and carry it in your pocket or handbag to help remind you.

Difficult or distressing situation	Coping thought / Positive statement

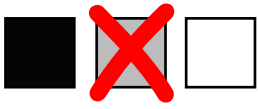
# Identifying stress-inducing attitudes

Which of the following do you find yourself dealing with (come on, be honest!)? Choose the columns that best describe your tendency to engage the attitudes and beliefs below and choose several to discuss at your next session.

<b>Attitude/Belief</b>	<b>Not much</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Frequently</b>
Rigidity			
Perfectionism			
Intolerance for myself and others			
Compulsion to overwork			
Messages of unworthiness (e.g., "I don't deserve ___")			
Obsession with envy			
Feelings of incompetence			
Phobias			
Fear of committing			
Non-acceptance of myself			
Non-acceptance of others			
Bitterness			
Unprocessed regret			
Sense that the world "should" be a certain way			
Distorted sense of control (either too much or too little)			
Lack of perspective			
Placing conditions on my happiness			
Lack of gratitude			

# Unhelpful Thinking Styles

## All or nothing thinking

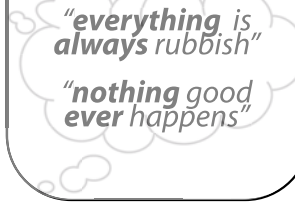


Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

*If I'm not perfect I have failed*

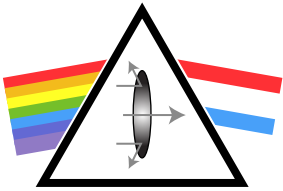
*Either I do it right or not at all*

## Over-generalising



Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

## Mental filter



Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

*Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes*

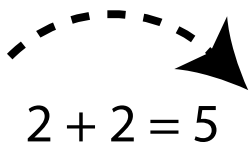
## Disqualifying the positive



Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another

*That doesn't count*

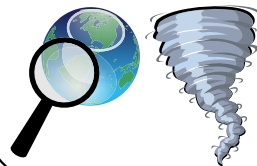
## Jumping to conclusions



There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:

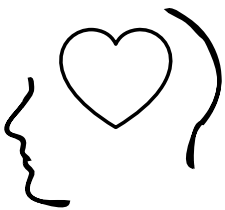
- **Mind reading** (imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling** (predicting the future)

## Magnification (catastrophising) & minimisation



Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

## Emotional reasoning



Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.

*I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot*

## should must

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration

## Labelling



Assigning labels to ourselves or other people

*I'm a loser*  
*I'm completely useless*  
*They're such an idiot*

## Personalisation

**"this is my fault"**

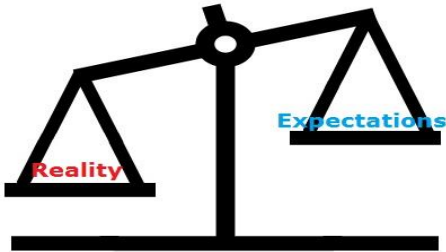
Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.



## TEN WAYS TO UNTWIST YOUR THINKING\*

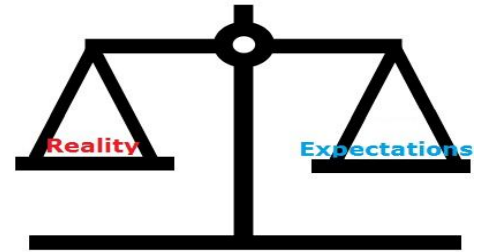
1. **Counter the Distortion:** Write down your negative thoughts so you can see which of the cognitive distortions you're involved in. This will make it easier to think about the problem in a more positive and realistic way.
2. **Examine the Evidence:** Instead of assuming that your negative thought is true, examine the actual evidence for it. For example, if you feel that you never do anything right, you could list several things you have done successfully.
3. **The Double-Standard Method:** Instead of putting yourself down in a harsh, condemning way, talk to yourself in the same compassionate way you would talk to a friend with a similar problem.
4. **The Experimental Technique:** Do an experiment to test the validity of your negative thoughts. For example, if, during an episode of panic, you become terrified that you're about to die of a heart attack, you could jog or run up and down several flights of stairs. This will prove that your heart is healthy and strong.
5. **Thinking in Shades of Gray:** Although this method might sound drab, the effects can be illuminating. Instead of thinking about your problems in all-or-nothing extremes, evaluate things on a range from 1 to 100. When things don't work out as well as you hoped, think about the experience as a partial success rather than a complete failure. See what you can learn from the situation.
6. **The Survey Method:** Ask people questions to find out if your thoughts and attitudes are realistic. For example, if you believe that public speaking anxiety is abnormal and shameful, ask several friends if they ever felt nervous before they gave a talk.
7. **Define Terms:** When you label yourself "inferior" or "a fool" or "a loser", ask "What is the definition of 'a fool'?" You will feel better when you see that there is no such thing as "a fool" or "a loser".
8. **The Semantic Method:** Simply substitute language that is less colorful and emotionally loaded. This method is helpful for "should statements". Instead of telling yourself "I shouldn't have made that mistake", you can say, "It would be better if I hadn't made that mistake."
9. **Re-attribution:** Instead of automatically assuming that you are "bad" and blaming yourself entirely for a problem, think about the many factors that may have contributed to it. Focus on solving the problem instead of using up all your energy blaming yourself and feeling guilty.
10. **Cost-Benefit Analysis:** List the advantages and disadvantages of a feeling (like getting angry when your plane is late), a negative thought (like "no matter how hard I try, I always screw up"), or a behavior pattern (like overeating and lying around in bed when you're depressed). You can also use the Cost-Benefit Analysis to modify a self-defeating belief such as "I must always try to be perfect".

# REALITY vs EXPECTATIONS



It has been said that happiness equals reality divided by expectations. If our reality is lower than how we expect life to be, then we're likely to feel unhappy or discontent.






This formula therefore suggests that our reality needs to be equally balanced with our expectations. The more we can get them in balance, then the happier, more content, accepting or peaceful, we are likely to be.



Therefore, in order to make positive change, we can choose to improve our reality, and/or lower our expectations.

Step 1 - Improve my Reality	Step 2 - Lower my Expectations
<p>Increase my coping skills:            What can I learn to do differently to help me cope? E.g. <a href="#">STOPP</a>, <a href="#">Mindfulness</a>, Problem solving, Goal setting, Thought record sheets (<a href="http://www.get.gg/freedownloads2.htm">www.get.gg/freedownloads2.htm</a>)</p> <p>Is there anything I can change about my situation?            What? How? When?</p> <p>Is there anything I can change about what I do? Can I do react in a different way?</p> <p>What help or resources do I need to change things?</p> <p>If I've done all I possibly can to change things for the better, then maybe this is just the way things are right now:            "It is as it is"</p>	<p>What do I expect my life to be like?            My home, my work-life, my relationships?</p> <p>What do I expect of the world, of others, of myself?</p> <p>Is there another way of looking at it?            What would I say to a friend in this situation?</p> <p><i>Am I thinking that I always need to go through life in top gear?            Struggling uphill in top gear won't do!</i></p> <p>How might I change down a gear and lower my expectations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home</li> <li>• Work / daily structure</li> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Finances</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>

# STOPP

<p><b>STOP</b></p> 	<p><b>Take a BREATH</b></p> 	<p><b>OBSERVE</b></p> 	<p><b>PULL BACK PUT IN SOME PERSPECTIVE</b></p> 	<p><b>PRACTISE WHAT WORKS</b></p> 
<p><i>Stop and step back from the situation, in your mind</i></p>	<p><i>Breathe slowly once or twice</i></p>	<p><i>What's happening? What am I reacting to? What am I thinking and feeling? What are the words that my mind is saying? What physical sensations do I notice in my body? Where is my focus of attention?</i></p>	<p><i>Is this fact or opinion? See the situation as an outside observer. Is there another way of looking at it? What would someone else see and make of it? What advice would I give to someone else? What's 'the helicopter view'? What meaning am I giving this event for me to react in this way? How important is it right now, and will it be in 6 months? Is my reaction in proportion to the actual event? What will be the consequences of my action?</i></p>	<p><i>What can I do that will be most helpful? Will it be effective and appropriate? Is it in keeping with my values and principles? What is best thing to do, for me, for others, for the situation?</i></p>

# Stress Management Plan

The main stressors in my life	My stress reactions (symptoms of stress)	Strategies for dealing with the stressor(s)	Support persons	Deadlines for implementing the strategies	Comments or evaluations
Ex: Divorce after finding that my spouse was cheating on me.	Digestive upset; broken sleep; low self-esteem; feeling alone and overwhelmed; difficulty concentrating; sense of loneliness.	Take a probiotic; begin doing meditation before bedtime; join local kayaking club; complete series of counselling sessions.	My friends Chris and Pat; also, my counsellor.	Begin probiotic and meditation by next week after consulting with experts; join kayaking club in three weeks after arranging childcare; finish counselling in eight weeks.	Getting all this going should help my self-esteem, but if I am still feeling "not okay" in two months, I will re-assess what else I need to do to feel better about myself.

Contract terms: I agree to enact the above health actions/behaviours to the best of my ability.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_