

Let's Talk About...

Thought-replacement techniques

Thought-replacement is a series of techniques that help you replace negative or anxious thoughts with positive ones. By practicing thought-replacement techniques, you can change the way you think and begin to feel better.

What thought-replacement techniques can I use?

One thought-replacement technique that may help is called “Changing the channel in your brain.” It uses thought-stopping and replacement thoughts to help you feel better.

When a TV show you don't like comes on, do you have to keep watching it? No, you can switch to a show you like better. The thoughts in your brain are like that too. When you get stuck on a bad thought — “This hurts so much. It's never going to go away, and I can't deal with this.” — you have the power to switch to a helpful thought. It takes practice, but you can do it.

You can also create a positive statement to repeat to yourself when a bad thought comes to mind. You might say:

- “I can handle this.”
- “I can do hard things.”
- “I have coped with this before.”



How do I practice thought-replacement?

- Sit or lie down in a quiet place and close your eyes.
- Notice when you have a thought that worries or upsets you or makes you feel worse. When you catch one, tell yourself, "That's a bad thought."
- After you've caught your bad thought, imagine yourself using a remote to change to a positive thought.
- Think about the thought you want to watch in your mind. Picture a good memory that makes you laugh or feel proud or happy. Build all the details so it feels like you're really there. Or think of something in the future you're looking forward to. Picture what it will look or feel like when you're doing that thing. Focus on all the details, like you're making a movie in your mind.
- Let your body relax as you focus on the new thought.
- Practice changing to a new thought in your brain whenever you catch your mind thinking unhelpful thoughts. Have a few different "shows" or memories you enjoy so you always have something good to switch over to when you need it.

Notes

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